

## Co-Viewing Guide



## Screen Smart<sup>®</sup>

Nicole Dreiske, ICMC Director and author of *The Upside of Digital Devices*, has distilled a special version of her viewing techniques just for teachers and parents.

It's no secret that, since the pandemic lock-down, many of us, including children, have exponentially increased our screen usage, leaving us dull-eyed, bored, and foggy.

The ICMC offers easy strategies that provides co-viewing opportunities for families that strengthen literacy and learning, as well as primo bonding time, while watching screens together.

### Using Screen Smart<sup>®</sup> skills to boost learning at home starts with the three “C’s.”

- **Communicate** - Watching and talking during screen time builds literacy, critical thinking, and social emotional skills.
- **Co-View** – When kids interact with others during screen time, they learn more.
- **Connect** the stories kids on screens to the stories they read in books.

Here’s the secret sauce: use your “storybook” voice. During co-viewing, relax into the same tone and tempo you use when reading a story aloud to a child. That way, you can encourage and tease out kids’ responses. Just like reading stories at bedtime, you’ll enjoy the contact and the cuddling, using a playful, curious tone.

### Four steps to boost academic success with shared screen time:

**1. Plan co-viewing (or co-gaming) for 15 minutes twice a week.** You’re already watching screens, so be present when you watch or play together some of the time! To start, pick a series your child loves, or a short video based on a book. Many Weston Woods and Rabbit Ears titles are available for streaming at your local library or on Commonsense Media through Kanopy. Story-based apps and games will work, too.

*Tip: For your first co-play or co-viewing experience, choose something you’ve seen.*



**2. “Prime” kids’ minds before viewing** - With a few simple words and some hand-play you can create positive expectations for this fun, new way of engaging stories on screens. The key is to make it sound entertaining so kids want to pay special attention. Starting out, say, “Today we’re going to do something fun and watch for the story in the video/movie/show.”

Then, use a combination of verbal and hand-play

cues. For example, you can say “To help us notice the story in the video, we need to use our energy (*put your hands close together, palm-to-palm, but not touching, and them move in a circular motion demonstrating “energy”*) and our concentration (*place index fingers on your temples “pointing” to your mind*) to keep our minds awake (*make two loose fists next to temples for “minds,” then open hands fully for “awake”*). Have children say it and do it with you!

“We need to use our energy (*circling hands*) and our concentration (*pointing to temples*) to keep (*closed hand at temple*) our minds awake (*fingers open wide*).

A fun exercise to really harness children’s energy and boost their concentration is “Shake/Stop.” You can prompt this by saying “Let’s use our energy and our concentration now!”

Here’s a quick description of the Shake/Stop hand-play:

- *Put your palms up with fingers straight 4-6 inches apart. Elbows are bent and hands are in front of you.*
- *Shake hands vigorously, but loosely from the wrist, careful to focus on just shaking the hands for 2-3 seconds.*
- *Then, STOP quickly, with hands in the original position – close together, not touching, fingers straight.*

*Tip: There are many variations of Shake/Stop that keep the exercise fresh, and hone children’s focus.*

**-Verbal cue:** Start by saying “Shake,” to cue the hands, then “Stop!” to cue the stop.

**-Visual cue:** Then, shake/stop without using the words. This will boost focus as children have to watch to know when to shake/stop.

**-Child Lead:** Let children lead **YOU** in shake/stop.

After doing a few rounds of Shake/Stop, repeat the “Energy & Concentration” hand-play, pausing at the keywords “energy” “concentration” and “minds awake” to let children say them. For example:

“Remember, we’re going to use our (*circle hands and let the child say “energy”*) and (*point to brain and let the child say “concentration”*) to keep our (*put closed hand at temple and let child say “minds awake” as hands are opening*).

Are we ready to watch with our minds awake?”

**3. While viewing, ask questions and interact.** Digital media are full of entertaining details that make perfect springboards for open-ended questions. You can ask questions while a program is running, or *pause and question*. (P&Q).



### **P&Q examples (and how they boost literacy and learning):**

“What do you think is happening here?” *Close analysis attention to detail in plot point.*

“Where did we see that character before? What’s changed?” *Recall and compare/contrast details about character.*

“Is that the same setting? What IS setting (*Where the story takes place*) Where are they now?” *Recall and compare/contrast details about setting.*

“What problem do the characters have now?” *Identify problem.*

“How can they solve that problem?” *Identify or suggest solution*

What do you think will happen next? *Make a prediction.*

Why? *Support prediction with evidence*

“How did the music make you feel at the beginning.” *Connect to social emotional learning.*

“When did the music change?” *Reference beginning, middle or end*

“Why do you think it changed.” *Formulate opinion based on evidence*

“Do you remember when we saw a..... at the park?” *Text to world connection.*

Just like reading a story together it’s fun to share what we notice!

*Tip: Make sure kids feel comfortable asking you questions, but turn the questions back to them whenever you can. For example, “Why do you think the character said that?” This validates their ideas and strengthens their ability to formulate opinions.*



**4. Drop knowledge bombs: Character – Plot – Setting** Start using the words, “character, plot, setting” when talking with children about a game or a video. If your youngest kids don’t understand, they may ask you what the words mean. Then, you have an opportunity to teach them or instruct them.

### **Some pocket definitions:**

**Plot** is ... what happens in the story.

**Characters** are...the people, the animals or the things in the story

**Setting** is....where and when the story takes place.

*Tip: Use those three literacy words when asking questions. Instead of “Why did the bear do that?” you can ask, “Why did the character do that?” Instead of “What’s special about that castle?” ask, “What’s special about that setting?”*

The beauty of these techniques is that you extend learning by talking *during* screen time the same way you do when reading a book to a child.

When we watch or play with screens together, children naturally react, share and express themselves. In doing so, they’re activating multiple learning centers in their brain. Plus, noticing details, and talking about them helps children process what they see.

The big bonus: they’re learning to be critical thinkers and observers, not just consumers of content!



Let's make the most of "sheltering in place" with our kids. Screen Smart Co-Viewing not only keeps your child's mind and cognition sharp, it's fun. You can get high-yield learning from two 15-minute sessions of co-viewing. That's a great payoff for a small investment.

Let us know your success stories by sharing them on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @ICMediaCenter #ICMC #ScreenSmart.

Need more assistance? The [Screen Smart Hotline](#) is free!

Nicole Dreiske is an educational innovator, children's media expert and the author of *THE UPSIDE OF DIGITAL DEVICES: How to Make Your Child More Screen Smart<sup>®</sup>, Literate and Emotionally Intelligent.*

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