

Do Babies Learn Vocabulary From Baby Media? Study Says No

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We all want our children to be smart. Why else would parents spend millions of dollars on videos and DVDS designed and marketed specifically for infants and young children every year? But do they work? NBC's 'Today' show recently suggested that claims from the manufacturers of baby media products may be overblown, and now a new study published in *Psychological Science* presents empirical evidence that infants who watched an unidentified baby video did not actually learn the words that the video purported to teach.

The researchers, led by Judy S. DeLoache of the University of Virginia, recruited 96 families with children between 12 and 18 months of age to participate in a month-long study. Some children watched a best-selling infant-learning DVD several times a week, half of them watching alone and half with a parent. Another group had no exposure to the DVD, but their parents were asked to try to teach them the words from the DVD in everyday interactions.

Before and after the month of vocabulary work, all of the children were tested on their knowledge of a list of words that appeared in the DVD.

The results were clear: Those infants who regularly watched the DVD over four weeks learned very little from their exposure to it, regardless of whether they had watched alone or with a parent. They knew no more of the words from the DVD than did children who had never seen it.

Interestingly, parents who enjoyed the DVD themselves believed that their children had learned more from it than did those who were less positive about the video. This could explain the positive testimonials on the videos' web sites and advertisements.

"Your children are going to learn language anyway," says DeLoache. Research has found that the best way to help them learn language well is by talking to them, in the ordinary way that parents talk to their children. "If you want to show your infant 'baby videos,' that's fine. Just don't expect the child to learn a great deal from it."

See Judy DeLoache explain the study here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lir_wF91VI4