

Turn off the tube for family fun

As six-year-old Judy and her little brother Greg fought all afternoon, their mother began to question the wisdom of restricting their TV viewing to half an hour a day.

Too much television isn't good for children, she and her husband agreed. But the past few days she'd yearned for the peace and quiet she used to have while the children watched their afternoon cartoons.

According to Joan Lamberson, Extension Home Economist, Judy and Greg's parents are not alone in their dilemma. Like many parents who decide to control TV viewing, they just don't know how to channel their children's activities when the TV is off.

"The average American watches television somewhere between 20 and 30 hours each week," says James E. Van Horn, Extension family sociologist at Penn State. "Watch is the word, because little thought and no physical

activity is involved, unless you count eating. Communication between family members watching TV is negligible. Close to 80 percent say they don't talk to each other while they are watching television."

"Many parents, because they want to spend more of their leisure time doing things with their children, have tried to restrict TV viewing to a limited number of hours each day. This attempt too often fails because no one knows what to do when the TV isn't running," says Van

What does he suggest?

"First, you might talk to each other and share the events of the day, plans for tomorrow or the future," he says. You may find that your children know little about their family history and are anxious to learn.


"Writing letters or stories, writing in a diary, reading aloud or silently, listening to music, or finding out what kinds of music

other family members like, are all possibilities.

"Don't forget games," Van Horn notes. "Board games, puzzles, card games, charades can be played by family members of all ages."

In good weather families can take field trips right in their own neighborhoods, go jogging, bicycling or hiking together.

"Doing things together in the family is good investment of time, especially in the critical years when children are forming values, interests, and attitudes," says Van Horn.



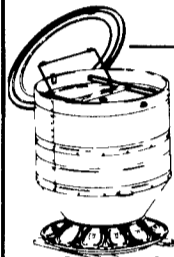
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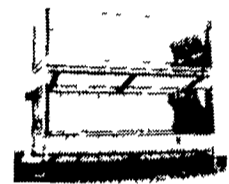
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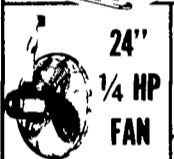


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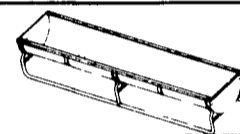


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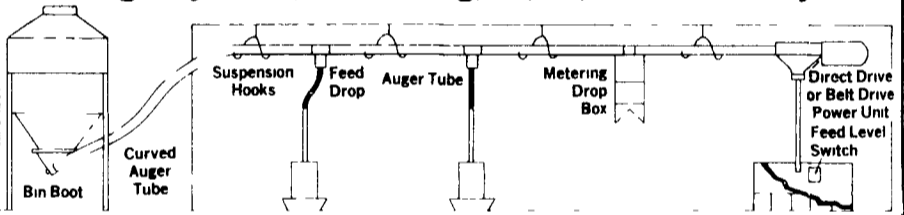


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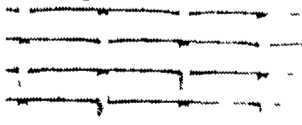


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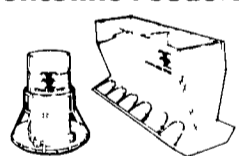
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