



The big debate

Should kids be on reality television?

Shows featuring real kids are popular, but not everyone thinks they're a good idea.

What you need to know

- Reality television shows do not have scripts. They feature regular people being themselves, not actors who are playing a character.
- While reality shows are "unscripted," producers often encourage people to do or say certain things to make the narrative more dramatic.
- The first reality show with a cast made up entirely of children was *Kid Nation*, which aired in 2007. It caused controversy because there wasn't enough adult supervision on set.



TOP TV
Nearly 800 reality shows premiered last year, and about 80% of US viewers said they watch the genre.

There are hundreds of reality shows on streaming services and television, and many feature young people. Children compete on contest shows like *Kids Baking Championship*, *Lego Masters Jr.*, and *American Ninja Warrior Junior*. In other shows, like *Dance Moms* and *Old Enough!*, real children go about their lives while cameras follow and capture every moment. But some people say putting kids in reality shows can be risky. Unlike scripted programs, in which young actors pretend to be a character, young people on reality shows are putting their own lives on display for public viewing. What do you think? Should kids be on reality television?

Yes—it's worth their while

If kids enjoy being on a show and even competing in front of the cameras, they should be allowed to. It can be a fun, memorable experience for them. Besides, children are growing up at a time when people share everything about their lives on social media, so it's not a big deal for them. Reality TV producers can also take steps to ensure that the experience is a positive one for kids. They can keep the show upbeat, not mean-spirited, and have counselors on set to help the children handle being in the spotlight. Plus, kids can earn money, and that cash can be saved up or invested to pay for future expenses, like college tuition or buying a house.

No—it can't be undone

Kids are too young to decide for themselves whether they want to be on TV. It might seem like a good idea, but they don't fully understand the consequences and could regret it later. And anything they do on TV lasts forever. If it's embarrassing or makes them look bad, they can never outrun that. It could also expose them to insensitive or hurtful comments online. No child should have to put up with that. For child actors on scripted shows, there are legal protections in place, like special bank accounts that save their earnings for them until they're adults. But there are few protections like that for kids on reality TV.

YES

Three reasons kids should be on reality television

- 1 If kids enjoy doing it, they should be allowed to have that experience. Many of them are used to being in the public eye.
- 2 Producers can take steps to make the show a positive, safe experience for the kids who are on it.
- 3 Kids can earn money that could really help them out in the future.

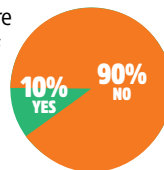
NO

Three reasons kids should not be on reality television

- 1 Kids aren't old enough to understand the possible consequences or make that decision for themselves.
- 2 Anything captured on camera will last forever, and that could come back to embarrass them later in life.
- 3 Kids on reality TV don't have the same legal protections as child actors.

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if kids should pay rent to their parents. Your thoughts on the question were clear: 90% of you said no, while 10% said yes.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think kids should be on reality television or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.