

What is the best distance to view a TV?



When television was invented in 1927 many people were worried that watching TV would damage their eyes. Your own parents might have said to you “Don’t sit so close to the TV. You will go blind”.

But the reason you *really* needed to sit further away from the TV was that the picture quality was poor (compared to today’s standards) and the picture appeared sharper if you sat further away.

Modern High Definition televisions (HDTV) have improved screen resolution so you can sit closer and see the picture clearly.

The best distance to sit from a TV depends on the TV size, the screen resolution, the size of the room and the location of furniture.

⇒ A common recommendation for minimum viewing distance is 1.5 times the length of the diagonal of the TV screen. For example, a 43-inch TV has a screen diagonal of about 109cm; therefore you should sit at least 164cm from a 43-inch TV.

⇒ This recommendation is similar to research showing that the minimum acceptable viewing distance is 2x the screen width¹, the preferred viewing distance is 3-4x the screen width¹, and visual fatigue is least when sitting at a distance 3-4x the screen height².



Screen Diagonal size:



What if I can’t see the TV clearly from the recommended distance?

This is a problem for many people (did you know that more than 500 000 Australians have low vision³ and cannot see with the same clarity as someone with normal vision?). The solution is to sit at a distance that *you* feel comfortable and can see clearly, or get a larger TV so that the picture is bigger and easier to see when viewed from your favourite chair or lounge.



Is it OK for children to sit close to the TV?

Children often sit close to the TV because they watch TV while playing on the floor. Sitting close to the TV won’t damage a child’s eyesight. But if a child persistently sits close to the TV or appears to be struggling to see the TV at a longer viewing distance, then they should have an eye examination to check their vision is normal and their eyes are healthy.

REFERENCES: 1. Lee (2012) *App Ergo* 43: 151-156 2. Sakamoto et al (2010) *J Human Ergol* 39: 1-13 3. Taylor et al (2005) *MJA* 182: 565-568

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