



## LESSON PLAN

<b>Level:</b>	Primary/Junior
<b>About the Author:</b>	MediaSmarts
<b>Duration:</b>	40 minutes

# Looking at Advertising: Brands and Mascots



This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>

## Overview

This lesson introduces students to the ways in which advertisers use mascots to make consumers feel a particular way about their brands. Working from ads taken from different media, students discuss how food ad mascots are created and for what purpose. Students then will create their own mascot to help understand how mascots communicate the “personality” of a brand.

## Learning Outcomes

Students demonstrate:

- awareness of the methods used by advertisers to sell food products.
- beginning awareness of how they are affected by food advertising.
- understanding of how food ad mascots are created and for what purpose across multi platform marketing tools.

## Preparation and Materials

Prepare to project or distribute the following:

- *Food Ad Mascots: Examples*
- *Food Ad Mascots: In Media*

Prepare to distribute the following handouts:

- *My Food Ad Mascot*
- *Gallery Walk* worksheet
- If you are doing the optional extension activity, prepare to project or distribute *Mascots in Social Media*



## The Lesson

---

### Guided Discussion: Advertisements

Begin by projecting or distributing *Food Ad Mascots: Examples*. Ask students:

- How many of these characters do you recognize?
- Do you remember where you first saw them?
- What brands does each one stand for?
- Why do they think food companies have mascots? How does a mascot make food ads work better?  
In the discussion of this question, make sure students understand that the main purpose of a lot of ads is to get you to *remember* a product and have *good feelings* about it. (Most people will decide what brand of cereal they like as children—and lots of people eat the same cereal for their whole lives; even if they don't, when they have kids they'll remember what kind of cereal they liked.) How do mascots help with that?
- Could you describe the personality of any of these characters? If so, what are they like? (For example: Toucan Sam is friendly, Tony the Tiger is encouraging, Lucky the Leprechaun is mischievous.)
- How does each mascot fit the brand they are being used for? (Have students think in terms of how the character looks — for instance the colours of Toucan Sam's beak representing the different colours of Froot Loops — and their personality.)

Project or distribute *Food Ad Mascots: In Media* and ask students why advertisers like to have their mascots appear in lots of different media, like YouTube or video games. Make sure they understand that the more different situations we see the characters in, the more memorable and “real” they seem to us. This means we have a stronger emotional attachment to them.

### Create your own brand mascot

Now tell students that they will be creating their own Ad Mascot in order to advertise for a specific product.

Distribute the handout *My Ad Mascot* to each student, and read through it as a class. Help them make a list of products that they are familiar with but don't currently have mascots (it may be funny for them to imagine mascots for products their parents or older siblings use, such as Apple or Instagram.)

Remind students that the purpose of mascots is to make you feel that the brand has a certain personality. Go through the list of personality words on the handout and make sure students understand each of them. If you like, you can ask them to identify a fictional character (not a mascot) who has each one of these characteristics.

Once you have read through the handout as a class, have students create their own mascots. (This can be done as homework if you prefer, and can be done individually or in pairs. If you would like to make this a more extended art project you can have them create the mascot with collage, digital graphics tools, etc.)



## Gallery Walk

Distribute the *Gallery Walk* worksheet.

Divide the class into four groups. The first group is the “artists” and the rest of the class is the “guests” in the “gallery.”

Have the first group tape their mascots to the wall and prepare to present their mascot to the guests in the gallery.

Divide the “guests” into smaller groups and have them visit each exhibit in the “gallery,” with each “artist” in the first group presenting the planning and design that went into their mascot. When they are done, the “guests “ move on to the next “artist.”

Have the “guests” fill out the *Gallery Walk* worksheet for four of the mascots they see.

When all of the students have seen the first group’s mascots, have them rejoin the class and have the second group become the “artists.” Repeat the steps above with the second, third, and fourth group as artists.

When all of the students have had a chance to present their mascots, have them review their *Gallery Walk* worksheets and lead a whole-class discussion on the following questions:

- How do designers get across a mascot’s personality?
- How does the mascot’s personality help to sell a product?
- What makes a mascot more likeable or memorable?

## Extension Activity for Older Students: Mascots on Social Media

Project or distribute *Mascots on Social Media* and tell students that putting mascots in online places like YouTube or TikTok is one of the most effective ways of building brand loyalty in kids.

Have students choose a social network they are familiar with (define “social network” broadly to include apps like YouTube or YouTube Kids) for the mascot they created earlier in the lesson. Then have them create three pretend social media posts that show the personality of the mascot. (These can be done on paper instead of being done on the actual social network. Photos can be drawn, and students can draw just a thumbnail to stand for a video.)

Have students share their social network posts either with the whole class or with a partner, then discuss as a class:

- How do brands use social networks to make mascots feel like people you know?
- What kinds of mascot “personalities” do you think work best on social media? Why do you think so?
- Small kids often can’t tell the difference between fantasy and reality. Is it fair to show young children posts or videos that make mascots seem like real people? Why or why not?



**Extension: Wacky Media Songs**

For younger students, you may consider supplementing this lesson with the TVOntario Original Series *Wacky Media Songs*. These short videos explore a variety of digital media literacy topics, including advertising and marketing. Here are a few suggested videos and discussion topics:

[Creating a Brand!](#) From packaging to creating a cool mascot, everything about a brand should give us good feelings. Ava creates her own brand of cereal. Plus, she plays a wacky, singing llama!

Before the video, ask: What does it mean when we talk about a “brand” in ads?

After the video, ask: Can you think of any ads that try to make you like the brand instead of telling you what’s good about the product? What are some ways that they do that?

[Create the Hype!](#) There’s a whole marketing machine behind movies and they start to create the hype way before the movie even opens by selling us hoodies, toys, t-shirts and more! Guess what? We help create that hype when we wear or use their merchandise!

Before the video, ask: Do you have any clothes or toys that were made to promote a movie, a TV show or a video game? Have you first ever heard about a game, movie or show that way?

After the video, ask: Why do you think marketers use things like toys and clothes to build hype for games, movies or TV shows? How do you feel about giving them free advertising by wearing those clothes? (*It’s okay if they do! Kids love media and sometimes like being “brand ambassadors.” But they should understand that’s what they’re doing.*)

[Hiding in Plain Sight!](#) Have you ever watched movies or TV shows and seen brand-name products in them? That’s product placement - a sneaky way advertisers promote their products by showing them to us in the media we watch!

Before the video, ask: Have you ever noticed a product you recognized, like a cereal or a kind of chips, in a movie or TV show? Why do you think they were included?

After the video, ask: Why do you think advertisers pay to put their products in TV shows, games and movies? (They make us recognize and remember the products, and because we don’t know they’re ads we connect the good feeling of enjoying what we’re watching with the product.)

[We’ll Make Them Want It!](#) Packaging is the marketers’ last chance to convince us to buy their product. They have to grab our attention right away. Ava designs a package as she sings about the different packaging tricks marketers use to make kids say: “Wow! I want that!”

Before the video, ask: Have you ever seen something in a store that made you want to buy it (or ask for it)? What about it made you want it?

After the video, ask: Pause on this part of the video. Which box makes you want the cookies more? Why? (For example, bright colours, cartoon characters, fun logos and lettering.) Does it make any difference to how the cookies taste?



## Food Ad Mascots: Example

---





## Food Ad Mascots: In Media



The Bear is Back! Episode 4: Back in the Office



## My Food Ad Mascot

---

Imagine that you are advertising a product that doesn't have a mascot yet (so far as you know).

Now think about how you want people to *feel* about the product. If your product was a person, what would they be like? Circle at least two of the words below.



Why did you choose these words for this product?



**What kind of animal would your mascot be? If your mascot is human, what sort of job would they have?**

(Remember this should match the personality you want your brand to have: an owl means being wise, a doctor means being caring, and so on.)

**What colours or clothes does your mascot have?** (It could match something about the brand, like Toucan Sam's beak, or something the mascot does, like the Pillsbury Doughboy's hat.)

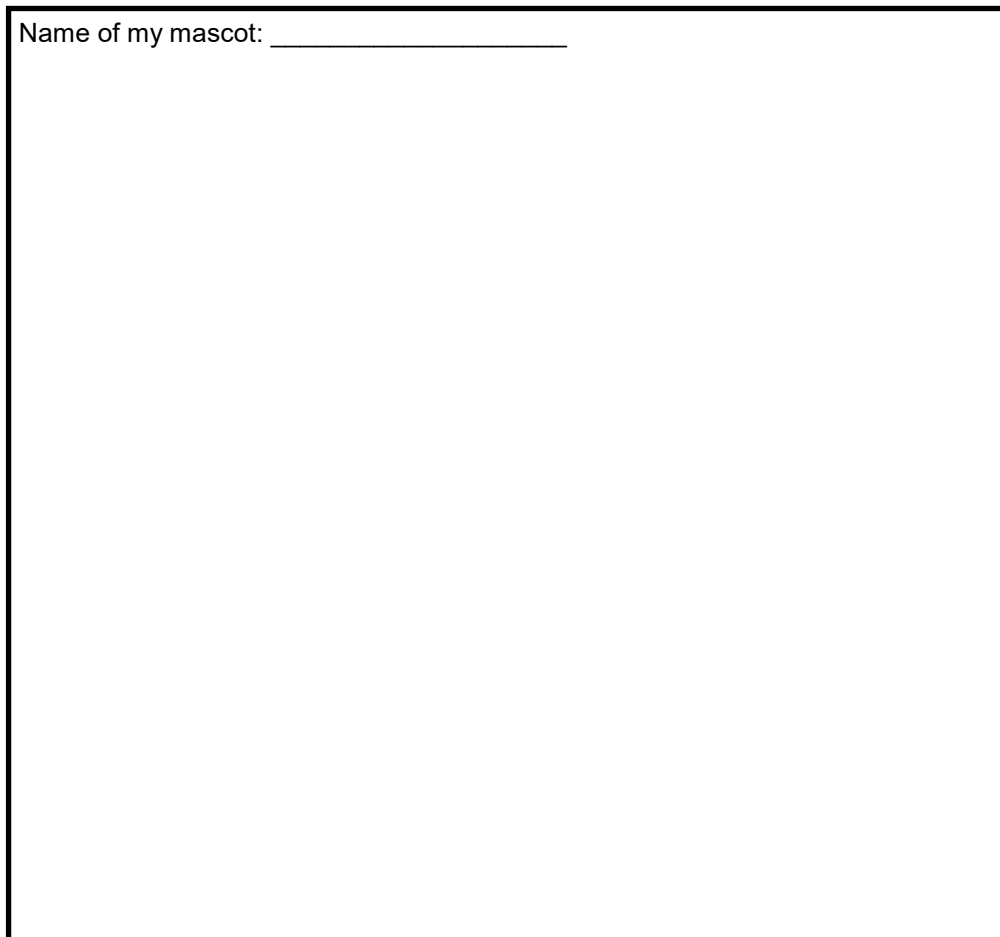
---

---

---

**Please draw your mascot in the box. Give as much detail as possible. When you are done your drawing, please label different parts of your character.** (Is it human? An animal? What part of its outfit is that? Is it smiling because it is friendly or mean?) Make sure your mascot matches the company you are advertising for, it wouldn't make sense for The Lucky Charms Leprechaun to be sad and gloomy for example.

Name of my mascot: \_\_\_\_\_





## Gallery Walk

---

### Mascot #1

What is this mascot's name?

What is this mascot selling?

If this mascot was a real person, how would you describe it? (Give at least two personality words.)

What makes you feel this way?

Is the mascot's personality a good match for the thing it's selling? Why or why not?

### Mascot #2

What is this mascot's name?

What is this mascot selling?

If this mascot was a real person, how would you describe it? (Give at least two personality words.)

What makes you feel this way?

Is the mascot's personality a good match for the thing it's selling? Why or why not?



**Mascot #3**

What is this mascot's name?

What is this mascot selling?

If this mascot was a real person, how would you describe it? (Give at least two personality words.)

What makes you feel this way?

Is the mascot's personality a good match for the thing it's selling? Why or why not?

**Mascot #4**

What is this mascot's name?

What is this mascot selling?

If this mascot was a real person, how would you describe it? (Give at least two personality words.)

What makes you feel this way?

Is the mascot's personality a good match for the thing it's selling? Why or why not?



## Mascots on Social Media



realcapncrunch

Subscribe 2,448

Home Videos Playlists Discussion About



Ms. Green M&M'S® @mmsgreen · Feb 21  
Just another day in the life of a @SI\_Swimsuit model. On news stands now!  
[pic.twitter.com/7YE4K0fzKT](https://pic.twitter.com/7YE4K0fzKT)



Expand Reply Classic RT Retweet Favorite More



mascots.to Mascots // Toronto · 9-4  
#LongWeekendVibes #raptors #fyp #summer Enjoy it!  
#WeTheNorth  
original sound - Mascots // Toronto



dominos Domino's Pizza · 7-14  
is it soda or pop please help #dominos #sodaorpop #pizza #fyp  
original sound - Domino's Pizza



3913  
225  
33



Tony the Tiger @realtonytiger · Mar 8  
Everyone always wants me to play goalie. #CatLikeReflexes #Gooooaaal  
[pic.twitter.com/ecXJWeALvZ](https://pic.twitter.com/ecXJWeALvZ)



Expand Reply Classic RT Retweet Favorite More