



## LESSON PLAN

**Level:** Grades 2 to 5

**About the Author:** MediaSmarts

**Duration:**

*This lesson was created by elementary educator Ginie Waller. Parts of this lesson have been adapted from *News and Stuff*, by Don Hale (1996), produced by the Ontario Newspaper in Education Association.*

# Newspaper Ads

## Overview

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This lesson introduces students to advertising in newspapers. Each section can be adapted for younger or older students. It begins with a discussion about the differences between display and classified advertisements. Students will also look at why newspapers need advertising and how it may influence newspaper content. In groups, students explore the "tricks" used by advertisers to attract consumers. They then create their own ads, take a print advertising campaign and apply it to television, and look at the differences between print ads and advertising on the Internet.

## Learning Outcomes

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Students will demonstrate:

- an understanding of how advertising works
- an awareness of the role advertising plays in sustaining newspapers
- an awareness of how advertising may influence newspaper content

## Preparation and Materials

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Each student should have a whole newspaper to browse through and to clip ads from.

## Procedure

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### Discussion

Inside the newspaper are pages of stories and pictures. Often the pictures go with stories, but sometimes the pictures are advertisements, or ads. Ads are space in the newspaper devoted to selling something. The ads scattered throughout the paper are called display ads. They usually have pictures or graphics with them, and can be anything up to a full page in size.

Allow students time to browse through the paper and look at the ads. Keep them focused on the ads by asking:

- What makes you stop and look at the ads?
- Are the pictures in colour, or black and white?



- Which pictures do you like the best? Why?
- What kinds of things are being sold? Do you think you would buy them?
- Are there ads for things that kids would buy or use? Why or why not?
- How big are the pictures? Do they take up the whole page, or only part? Are they bigger or smaller than the stories on those pages?
- How many ads are in each section? Which section has the most ads?
- How many pages are there with ads? Without ads? Would you say that stories or ads take up the most space in the newspaper?

Ads are not only paid for by businesses. Sometimes ordinary people will pay to place classified ads into newspapers. Classified ads are different from display ads: they're all put into one section. Have students find the classified ad section of their newspapers.

- How are classified ads different from display ads?
- What types of classified ads are there? What sorts of things are being sold?
- Who has placed these ads?
- What are some of the methods people use to try to get your attention in ads like these?

Newspaper ads are also bought by the government, charities, and people offering services. Sometimes a group or organization wants to announce an event, or give its opinion on an issue. Find:

- An ad placed by the federal government
- An ad seeking a professional service
- An ad for a local meeting or fundraising event

Have students clip ads from the newspapers and keep them in a folder. The ads will be used in the following activities.

### The Influence of Advertising

Advertisements make up a big part of a newspaper. Why do you think there are so many? (Ads not only help businesses sell things; they also help the newspaper. The price we pay for newspapers only covers a small portion of the production costs - advertising helps to pay the rest of the costs. So newspapers don't only have to worry about what readers want to see in the paper - they also have to satisfy the needs of the advertisers. This can sometimes be tricky.)

- How do you think the task of keeping both readers and advertisers happy affects the layout of the newspaper?
- How might those two tasks conflict to influence the stories printed in a newspaper? (*Think of a case where this might happen. An example might be a safety problem with a car: a news story to announce the problem might clash with the manufacturer's need to advertise to sell cars.*)



One important point about newspapers is that they're businesses, and businesses need to make a profit. They can only do that if they have readers. So newspapers have to provide us with the most up-to-date information: news, features, and also movie listings, the weather, sports scores, etc. The greater the circulation, the more advertising a paper can sell - which means more profit, but less space for stories. Newspapers need to balance these needs.

- Think about the newspapers you've looked at. Do you think there's too much advertising in them?

## Activities

### 1. Deconstructing Advertising Techniques

Each student should now have a folder of advertisements. Ask them to spread as many ads as they can on their desks and look at them.

- Are there people in the pictures? What are they doing? Are they men, women or children? Do they look happy or sad? Why do you think these people are in these ads? What is the ad trying to sell?
- Which ad caught your attention the most? Why?
- How much do the things in these advertisements cost? Are there any prices?
- What kinds of ads do you like best? Why? Is it the pictures, or the language? How about the text format?
- How do the things being sold look in the ads - tasty, soft, comfortable or stylish? What does the way they look mean to you? Would you buy any of these things?

Help the students brainstorm the "tricks" advertisers use to sell their products, such as colours, logos, emotions, and celebrity endorsements. Also look at the language used to describe products and their functions. Do you think the descriptions are completely honest, or do they exaggerate to make the product seem better?

Advertisers use different attention devices to attract readers. Find an ad that uses:

- a headline
- a graphic or logo
- Layout
- body copy
- the price of goods or services

Another device advertisers use is emotional appeal. Find at least three ads that use:

- comfort,
- sex or romance,
- humour,
- "plain folks" appeal,
- patriotism,
- hero worship,



- honesty and integrity,
- progress,
- technology,
- economy,
- public service,
- success,
- security,
- conformity,
- adventure,
- brand loyalty,
- youth,
- high IQ

Here are a few more devices used by advertisers. Look for:

- An ad that uses the snob appeal approach - to convince readers famous, rich or important people use the product or service, so they should too.
- An ad based on the bandwagon approach, urging readers that everyone is doing it.
- An ad full of vague glittering generalities, using words like "terrific," "beautiful," "amazing" - but lacking prices or facts.

### **Write an ad for a make-believe product**

Have students invent a twist on a product, a strange product, or a product that doesn't yet exist (such as shampoo for astronauts). Have them list the important features of this product, then think up ways to entice someone to buy it. Use the appeals and graphic details discussed above. Students can either hand-draw their ad, or use software to design a more professional-looking ad.

### **Extension Activity**

#### **Print ads vs. television ads**

- In groups of four, have students select the best newspaper display ad among them.
- Plan and create a television commercial for their product. (As with the newspaper ad, students should start with the object or service they have in mind and list all its qualities.)
- List the elements that are important for TV viewers.
- Write up dialogue for the commercial, and/or a jingle.
- Use a video camera to record their commercial.



### Advertising on the Internet

- Have students compare TV, newspaper and magazine ads to advertising on the Internet.
- What is different about ads on the Web?
- How has the Internet changed advertising?
- Do all sites have advertising?
- What kind of advertising is on which sites?
- You can turn off Internet advertising. How do you do this? Can you do this with advertising in other media?
- You learned how newspaper advertising helps to pay for producing newspapers, and adds to the profits of the newspaper. What role does advertising play on the Internet?

*Note: For a background document on Internet advertising, see "Online Marketing Strategies" from the lesson [Online Marketing to Kids](#).*

