



## LESSON PLAN

**Level:** Grades 5-7

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# You've Gotta Have a Gimmick! A Lesson in Junk Food Advertising

## Overview

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To familiarize students with the marketing techniques used in television and magazine snack food ads.

## Learning Outcomes

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Students demonstrate:

- an awareness of the different techniques applied in selling snack foods
- a beginning awareness of the format and structure of advertisements
- an understanding of their own reactions, as consumers, to these ads

## Preparation and Materials

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- Each student is to select and bring in 3 or 4 food advertisements from magazines
- Prior to class, photocopy and distribute 3 copies of the handout: *My Food Commercial Log* to each of your students. Using these sheets, students are to identify their three favourite food ads on TV. They are only to answer the first two sections of their logs: the written description of the products that are being advertised, and the step-by-step outline of what happens in each commercial. Explain that the Advertising Strategies section will be completed in class.
- For class, photocopy student handouts *You've Gotta Have a Gimmick!*, *Rules For Advertising To Kids* and *Food Advertising Strategies*.
- A video camera (optional)
- An excellent introduction to this unit is the video *Buy Me That 3! A Kid's Guide to Food Advertising*. (Check for it at your school board's media center)



## The Lesson

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### Guided Discussion

Begin by asking your students:

What is advertising? Why do manufacturers put large amounts of money into it? Why is there advertising in TV programs, magazines and newspapers? (*To pay for TV programming and magazine and newspaper publications and distribution.*)

How many different types of advertising can you think of? (*i.e., television, magazines, bill boards, sponsorships, radio, licensing of logos.*)

Discuss how advertising is BIG business, that often, the advertisements that kids see on TV cost more to produce than the shows that they are watching. For example, the cost of advertising during the 2018 Superbowl was \$166,666 a second!<sup>1</sup> Advertisers spend a lot of time and money creating profiles of the people who they want to sell their products to (the target audience). They also research and test different methods to sell their products to consumers.

Distribute and discuss the three handouts.

*You've Gotta Have a Gimmick!* deals with the fairly straightforward marketing techniques of premiums, sweepstakes, and kids clubs. Have the students discuss their own experiences with these gimmicks:

- What products were they featured with?
- How satisfied were they with their experiences?
- Did these activities encourage them to buy a certain product?

Regarding kids clubs, have any students ever joined clubs on commercial websites for kids?

What did they have to do to join? (What information did they have to submit? Were their parents involved?)

- What did they get for joining?
- Did they enjoy their experience?
- How is the Internet a boon to marketers when it comes to gimmicks such as sweepstakes and kids clubs? (The Internet provides easy and immediate access to promotions like these. A child who may be unlikely to mail in an application to a club can join at the click of a mouse online.)

*Rules For Advertising To Kids* outlines the rules that manufacturers must follow when advertising to children.

- Ask students if they can think of examples of advertisements that don't follow these rules. As these are Canadian guidelines, they may have seen advertisements on American channels that break the rules.

*Food Advertising Strategies* looks at the more devious side of advertising, sometimes called 'hidden persuaders'-- the selling of lifestyles or images as a way to convince consumers to buy products.

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1 Lynch, Jason. "NBC Sports Is About to Make \$1.4 Billion in 22 Days Thanks to the Super Bowl and Winter Olympics," *Adweek*, January 29, 2018. <<http://www.adweek.com/tv-video/how-to-make-1-4-billion-in-22-days/>>.



- Ask students about their favourite commercials. What is it that they like best about them? What makes a good commercial?
- Review the techniques on the *Food Advertising Strategies* handout with students to make certain they understand the concepts.
- How are these strategies related to the advertising rules that we have just discussed? (*Even though they might be interpreted as being sneaky, they fit within the guidelines. Kids have to be on their guard, even when advertisers are playing within the rules!*)

### Activity 1

Ask students to refer to the *My Food Commercial Log* handouts that were partially completed prior to the lesson. As a class, brainstorm the strategies that have been used in a few of these advertisements (use the techniques in the other handouts as a reference). Have each student choose one or two of the commercials that they have described and complete the third section of their logs by identifying the food advertising strategies used to sell the product, why they think each strategy was used, and how successful they think the strategy has been in this particular ad. (To be handed in.)

Divide the class into groups. Have students within each group identify the strategies used in the magazine advertisements that they have brought in and discuss their reactions to each of these ads.

### Activity 2

Each group is now an advertising agency. They have been hired to create a commercial for a new food product. (Students can be as creative as they want regarding their new snack, but it must be edible!) They must decide:

- What food product are they selling?
- Who are they selling their product to? (Target Market)
- What advertising strategy/strategies will they be using, keeping in mind their Target Market.

Above all, they must remember that they want to convince their customers to buy their product.

Each group will produce:

1. A product profile, identifying the food product to be sold, the target market and advertising strategies.
2. A script for their commercial.
3. The commercial itself.

Each group will perform or screen their videotaped commercial for the class. Members of the audience try to identify the strategies that are used to sell the product.

### Evaluations:

- Completed food commercial logs
- Group productions of food commercials



## **My Food Commercial Log**

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### **Product**

Name and describe the product:

### **Summary**

What happens in this commercial?

### **Advertising Strategies**

What advertising strategies are used in this commercial? Do you think that they are successful?



## You've Gotta Have a Gimmick!

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Three popular methods of marketing foods are *Premiums*, *Sweepstakes*, and *Kids Clubs*.

- 1) **Premiums** are "free" gifts that you get when you buy the product. They might be stickers or candy in a box of cereal, or bigger gifts that you can get when you collect and mail in a specific number of "proofs of purchase" from a product.
- 2) **Sweepstakes** are contests that you can enter to win great prizes. Many advertisers put the contest details on the inside of the package, so that you have to buy the package first, in order to enter.
- 3) **Kids Clubs** encourage kids to join a club that is connected to a food product. They usually offer membership cards, newsletters, and special offers to club members.

**Ask yourself, "How are these effective in marketing food products?"**

Source: Adapted with permission from *A Practical Guide for Parents: Advertising, Nutrition and Kids*, a guide created by The Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) and The International Food Council (IFIC)



## Rules For Advertising to Kids

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In Canada, there are rules that advertisers must follow when advertising to children.

Here they are:

- 1. Advertisers must not use words like "new," "introducing" and "introduces" to describe a product for more than one year.**
  - New products always seem more exciting, so advertisers are only allowed to promote a product as "new" for a year.
- 2. Advertisers are not allowed to exaggerate.**
  - Some advertisers want to make you believe that their product is bigger or faster or better than it really is.
- 3. Advertisers may not promote craft and building toys that the average kid can't put together.**
  - When you get a kit that is supposed to be for kids, you should be able to make it yourself.
  - Also, your finished project should look like the picture of the finished product that appears on the box.
- 4. Advertisers are not allowed to sell products that aren't meant for kids.**
  - For example, a commercial that sells vitamins or drugs should be aimed at adults, not kids. Check out some ads for adult products – do they use cartoon characters, jingles or images that would attract kids?
- 5. Advertisers are not allowed to recommend that you *have* to buy their product, or that you *should* make your parents buy it for you.**
  - In commercials, advertisers can't say things like: "Hey kids, tell mom and dad to run down to the store and get you one now!" or "You must have our product, or you won't be cool!" But they are still going to try to make you want to do these things, so watch commercials closely to see how they make you feel this way without telling you directly.
- 6. Advertisers may not use well-known kids' entertainers (including cartoon characters) to promote or endorse a product.**
  - Although advertisers can create their own characters for kids, like "Tony The Tiger" or the "Nestlé Quick Bunny," they can't use performers or characters from kids' shows in their TV commercials. This rule does not apply to packaging, so you might find cartoon characters or famous people on the front of your favourite cereal box.
- 7. Advertisers can't make you believe that you're getting everything that's shown in the commercial.**

In their ads, advertisers have to tell you exactly what you are getting when you buy the toy, and what it will cost. Advertisers are supposed to clearly state:

  - The complete price of *every part* of the toy they are showing, whenever the price is mentioned in an ad.
  - Any parts of the toy shown in the commercial that *cost extra*.



- Any other toys in the commercial that are *sold separately*.

Next time you watch a toy commercial, see how the advertiser obeys the rule, while still giving a false impression. Look for really small writing on the screen at the end of the ad saying "Batteries not included," or an announcer's voice talking very fast.

**8. Advertisers are not allowed to show kids or adults doing unsafe things with the product.**

- Unless it's part of a safety message about what *not* to do, advertisements can't show kids or adults doing dangerous things that children might try to copy.

**9. Advertisers can't suggest that using their product will make you better than other kids.**

- They also can't make kids think that people will make fun of them if they don't use the product.

**10. Advertisers cannot show more than one commercial for the same product in a half-hour period.**

- In other words, No Brainwashing Allowed!

**BE AN AD DETECTIVE! SEE HOW WELL ADVERTISERS FOLLOW  
THE RULES FOR ADVERTISING TO KIDS!**



## Food Advertising Strategies

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Advertisers have many methods to try and get you to buy their products. Lots of times, what they are selling is a lifestyle, or an image, rather than the product. Here are some tricks of the trade.

**Ideal Kids (or families)** - always seem perfect. The kids are really hip looking, with the hottest fashions and haircuts, and toys. Ideal families are all attractive and pleasant looking -- and everyone seems to get along! Ideal kids and families represent the types of people that kids watching the ad would like themselves or their families to be.

**Family Fun** - a product is shown as something that brings families together, or helps them have fun together; all it takes is for mum or dad to bring home the "right" food, and a ho-hum dinner turns into a family party.

**Excitement** - who could ever have imagined that food could be so much fun? One bite of a snack food and you're surfing in California, or soaring on your skateboard!

**Star Power** - your favourites sports star or celebrity is telling you that their product is the best! Kids listen, not realizing that the star is being paid to promote the product.

**Bandwagon** - join the crowd! Don't be left out! Everyone is buying the latest snack food: aren't you?

**Scale** - is when advertisers make a product look bigger or smaller than it actually is.

**Put Downs** - are when you put down your competition's product to make your own product seem better.

**Facts and Figures** - are when you use facts and statistics to enhance your product's credibility.

**Repetition** - advertisers hope that if you see a product, or hear it's name over and over again, you will be more likely to buy it. Sometimes the same commercial will be repeated over and over again.

**Heart Strings** - are ads that draw you into a story and make you feel good, like the McDonalds commercial where the dad and his son are shovelling their driveway and the son treats his poor old dad to lunch at McDonalds when they are done.

**Sounds Good** - music and other sound effects add to the excitement of commercials, especially commercials aimed at kids. Those little Jingles, that you just can't get out of your head, are another type of music used to make you think of a product. Have you ever notices that the volume of commercials is higher than the sound for the program that follows?

**Cartoon Characters**- Tony the Tiger sells cereal and the Nestlé's Quick Bunny sells chocolate milk. Cartoon like these make kids identify with products.

**Weasel Words** - by law, advertisers have to tell the truth, but sometimes, they use words that can mislead viewers. Look for words in commercials like: "Part of..." "The taste of real...." "Natural...." "New, better tasting...." "Because we care..." There are hundreds of these deceptive sayings -- how many more can you think of?

**Omission** - is where advertisers don't give you the full story about their product. For example, when a Pop Tart claims to be "part" of a healthy breakfast, it doesn't mention that the breakfast might still be healthy whether this product is there or not.

**Are You Cool Enough?** - this is when advertisers try to convince you that if you don't use their products, you are a nerd. Usually advertisers do this by showing people that look uncool trying a product and then suddenly becoming hip looking and doing cool things.

