



CANADA'S CENTRE
FOR DIGITAL AND
MEDIA LITERACY

Dealing with Marketing: What Parents Can Do

Educate your kids about advertising and how marketers target young people

- Help kids understand that the main goal of advertising is to make them buy things—often things they don't need, and didn't even know they wanted until they've seen the ad.
- Explain that advertising is big business, one of the largest businesses in the world.
- Using the *Advertising Strategies* handout in the [Advertising all Around Us](#) lesson plan, talk about the techniques marketers use to target kids.
- Using the *Rules For Advertising To Kids* handout in the [You've Gotta Have a Gimmick](#) lesson plan, discuss what advertisers are not allowed to do when producing ads for kids. Examine commercials and print ads to see if they follow the rules.
- Using the [Talking to Kids About Advertising](#) tip sheet, start to integrate media literacy questions into the conversations you have with your kids about advertising.
- Using the Can You Spot the Ad? handout in the [Can You Spot the Ad?](#) lesson, help your children understand that branded characters are a kind of advertising even if they're not delivering a particular advertising message.
- Play the game [Co-Co's Adversmarts](#) with your children to help them recognize commercialized online environments and understand the tricks that they use to build brand loyalty and make you come back.

Challenge your children's definition of "cool"

Ask them the following questions:

- Do you ever feel bad about yourself for not owning something?
- Have you ever felt that people might like you more if you owned a certain item?
- Has an ad made you feel that you would like yourself more, or that others would like you more, if you owned the product the ad is selling?
- Do you ever worry about your looks? Have you ever felt that people would like you more if your face, body, skin or hair looked different?
- Has an ad ever made you feel that you would like yourself more, or others would like you more, if you changed your appearance with the product the ad was selling?



Encourage savvy consumer habits

- Encourage your kids to challenge advertisers' claims about their products. Do your own blind taste tests at home or buy a product and compare its performance with the claims made in the commercial.
- PBS Kids' [Loop Scoops](#) provides a series of fun videos for kids to help them think about the 'stuff' in their lives.
- The US Federal Trade Commission's [Admongo](#) is an interactive virtual world that teaches kids to recognize and decode ads in online environments.

Encourage your family to watch non-commercial television

- Young children should watch mostly non-commercial television.
- When watching commercial stations, pre-record programs so that you can fast-forward through the commercials.

Explain the effects of mass consumerism on the planet and society

- Talk about the effects of consumption on the planet, and how the world's resources are distributed very unevenly among the world's people.
- Make gifts whenever possible.
- Donate money, goods or time to environmental causes.
- Celebrate Buy Nothing Day in your home. Use it as a catalyst to talk about why we often buy things we don't need, and how we can become smarter consumers and better savers. You can have your children complete the Consumerism Diary from our [Buy Nothing Day](#) lesson to help them reflect on their own consumer habits.

Encourage non-commercial values in your kids

- Try to spend more time with your kids, not more money on them. What kids really want and need is time with their parents, not more consumer goods.
- Explain that there are children, even in your own community, who don't have many toys. Donate your old toys to a local women's shelter, or send them to an aid agency so they can be shipped to refugee camps in developing countries.

Put shopping into perspective

- Explain that shopping should not be viewed as a hobby or pastime. It's something we do when we need to buy something and then we come home.
- Get your kids involved in other activities, so they have less time to hang around the mall.

Promote positive examples of advertising

- Draw your kids' attention to fashion or food ads that promote positive body images.
- Visit the website [About-Face](#), which feature examples of advertisements that promote positive images of women and children.

