

Analyzing Advertising

A Discussion Guide for Parents and Kids



4 Discussion Points and Tips for Talking

Every day, kids see around 3,000 advertisements.¹ They're bombarded by billboards, internet ads, text messages, junk mail, TV commercials, and many other media. How can you teach your children to make sound judgments regarding the advertisements they see? Use the tips below to help your kids develop sound reasoning skills to apply to advertising.

Discussion Points

1. Discuss with your child the ways advertisements attempt to persuade us that a certain product will make us healthy, happy, or more secure, then talk about whether or not “stuff” can actually do these things.
2. Point out how advertising influences you. Explain how you decide what to buy and what not to buy. Be careful that you don't make the claim that advertising doesn't influence you. It does, even in subtle ways. Be honest.
3. Say something when you see an offensive ad. Some ads are sexist or perpetuate negative stereotypes, and others make outrageous claims. Talk about this with your kids so they can learn that not all advertising is helpful.
4. Ask your child how she handles all the pop-up ads on the Internet. Some are sexually suggestive. Some are downright offensive. What catches her eye?

Sources

1. Michael Brower and Warren Leon, *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices: Practical Advice from the Union of Concerned Scientists* (New York: Random House, 1999), 17-18.

Take It Further

ParentFurther discussion guides are created to help you talk with your kids about tough topics. Visit www.ParentFurther.com for more discussion guides and additional resources.

Tips for Talking

- **Occasionally watch TV with your child (or sit with her when she's online) and ask questions about the ads, like “What is the message of this ad?” “How does it make you feel?” and “What is the advertiser not telling us?” Point out that advertising often makes people feel like something is missing from their lives.**
- **Do an advertising count—spend one day keeping a running total of the number of advertisements you and your child see. Make sure to point out ads that are less obvious, like a flyer that comes with a bill in the mail, a cell phone text message, or an announcement for a sale at a store.**
- **Talk about how you've seen advertising change since you were young. Discuss with your child how the goals and strategies of advertising have changed and what this might mean for the future.**

The ability to think critically about advertising is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child. Because kids are exposed to more advertising now than ever before, it's critical that they are able to analyze what they're being told and whether or not it's true.