

Little Advertising Directors

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Our kids are constantly inundated with messages and images for all kinds of things they could buy. Every day, TV, radio, magazines, billboards, and kiosk advertisements clamor for their attention.

Evaluating all of those messages and determining what is true and what may not be is pretty hard for young kids. One fun way to build kids' advertising evaluation savvy is to have them make their own ads. See whether your kids can tell truth from fiction when they build advertisements to your specifications.



When To Do It

Rainy day

What To Do

Getting ready

1. Set up your "advertising office" work area with papers, magazines, and art supplies.
2. Pull a favorite packaged food item from your kitchen cupboards. Look for things with some advertising messages on the packaging, like cereal or cookies.

Building the first ad: Truthful

1. Ask your kids to make an ad for the selected item that would make you want to buy it.
2. Instruct them to use real facts about the item that would make you really like it. These must be true qualities and benefits of the product.
3. Show them a sample ad, either real or one you've made to demonstrate the ad structure. Young kids need clear examples to model.
4. Suggest that each ad include the following elements:
 - Headline
 - At least one picture
 - A reason to buy
 - Price

If they like, your kids can add a slogan or other "pitches" (like the familiar "Great new look, same great taste!")

Building the second ad: Not so truthful

1. Now have them create a second ad that would make you want to buy the same item.
2. This time they must try to trick you into wanting to buy it with "false advertising" in words and pictures.
3. Show them a sample ad that is not completely truthful.
4. Suggest they use the same structure as in ad #1.

Consider looking at one ad (or more!) each week with your kids to keep up their practice in evaluating the truthfulness of advertising claims.

What You Will Need

- Favorite packaged food items to promote with the ads
- Sample print or online ads or ones you make up to help teach the key points of truthful and not-so-truthful ads
- Magazines with lots of food images
- Paper, colored pens and pencils
- Glue
- Tape
- Scissors

Talk About It

Was it hard for your kids to make up a good truthful ad? Was it hard to make up an ad that was not so truthful? Why do you think people make ads that are not truthful? How can we get better at evaluating ads?