

Is It Worth It?

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Picture this: You are standing in the cereal aisle in your local grocery store, faced with the usual 100+ choices. Your kids swirl around you, excitedly telling you they want this one or that one. Do you get the Kellogg's cornflakes or the generic? The General Mills Honey Nut Cheerios or the generic O's version?

How do you decide? Not to mention, how do you ever get out of the store in one piece with so many choices in one food category, let alone the entire store? And how do you begin to teach your kids all that goes into your decision: price, taste, size, packaging, environmental considerations, moral scruples about corporate practices, which coupons you have, and so on? How can we help our kids understand that generics might prove to be a better alternative than the name brands seen in all the insistent TV commercials?



Why not put some products to the test? Give your kids a chance to decide whether big-name brands are really worth it.

When To Do It

After school or on the weekend

What To Do

A fun thing you can do with your kids is to have them compare generics and non-generics on a number of categories.

1. The next time you are in the grocery store, pick up both generic and name brand versions of some of your kid's favorite cereals or other foods. Keep the store receipts for use in comparing prices. (Tip: If your store provides cost-per-ounce info on the shelf price label, jot this down on a pad or on the package.)
2. Prepare a small worksheet for you and your kids to fill out for each product.

	PRODUCT 1	PRODUCT 2
Price		
Taste		
Ingredients		
Packaging		
Advertising		
Coupons		
Other		

3. Select one food category for the first round of comparison.
4. Set both the generic and name-brand items on the table, with proper utensils and bowls or plates, for your kids to examine, read, open, taste, and so on.
5. Have your kids review each product and record their findings on the assessment worksheet. You may have to help them fill it in or prompt them for ways to think about comparing taste, the box copy, nutritional information, and so on.
6. Once the worksheet is complete for the first two items, discuss what your kids uncovered in the comparison.
7. Finally, have your kids vote on whether the generic version is better than the name brand, based on your family's criteria.
8. You can rerun the exercise any time to compare other products.

BONUS: Do a blind taste test and see whether your kids can tell which is the generic and which is the name brand.

What You Will Need

Food items for comparison; store receipts
Pad of paper

Pencils or pens
Calculator (optional)

Talk About It

After completing a round of comparison, ask your kids what they thought of the exercise. Did they learn anything new? If so, what? Would they like to compare other products? What would they like to compare?