

ADVERTISING & MEDIA LITERACY

Managing the impacts of advertising on children is a challenge. Stealth marketing is everywhere!

Did you know?

- 💰 Young children cannot distinguish between advertising and app/program content. This distinction is even more difficult when advertising is disguised as content, a common practice in children's entertainment.^{1,4}
- 💰 Advertisers work to expose children to brands as early as possible, encouraging them to influence adults' purchasing decisions through nagging and attachment to branded characters.^{6,11}
- 💰 Researchers have found that children as young as two can recognize brands. (Marketers are aware of this as well!)^{6,10}
- 💰 The more advertising that children see, the more likely they are to demonstrate materialistic values.^{5,11}
- 💰 The business model of for-profit media leads many platforms to engage in manipulative and unfair practices. For example, YouTube's algorithm is designed with autoplay to keep kids watching video after video in order to serve more ads.
- 💰 Many "free" apps for young children exploit developmental vulnerabilities to make a profit by allowing children to play a very small portion of a game and requiring in-app purchases to access additional content, characters, or experiences.⁴
- 💰 Consumerism is associated with increases in anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem and can have negative effects on children's physical, social, emotional, and academic health.^{1,11}
- 💰 Companies apply strategies such as emotional and social manipulation to ads targeting kids. As young children work to understand and make meaning in the world, they are especially vulnerable to these deceptive techniques.¹

Explore more research on the impacts of commercialism on child development at fairplayforkids.org/beyond-brands/

Scan or [click](#) for full Screen Aware Kit!



Scan or [click](#) for research references and recommended reading!



Children need guidance to grow up healthy among countless advertising messages, images, and strategies.



Adults can help by...

Setting limits on children's screen time.

Choosing content that is age appropriate and free of commercial messages.

Teaching media literacy skills that help children make sense of the motives behind screen-based content.

Supporting initiatives for public policy solutions and corporate accountability.

ADVERTISING & MEDIA LITERACY

Modeling skepticism of advertisements and influencers

Children don't often see or hear how we think about pop-up ads, paid influencers, and other commercials. Identifying and discussing advertisements helps your child develop an understanding of how companies try to affect their behavior.

For example, if you see an ad for fast food, you might point out that the pictures look much different than if you buy it in real life. It looks yummier, bigger, fresher, etc in the ad. This is intentional because they want you to buy it. Saying it out loud helps children grasp these concepts.^{3,7,8,9}



Key questions to ask your child when they see an ad or influencer



- \$ What is this ad or influencer trying to get me to do?
- \$ How does this advertisement make me feel?
- \$ Do you remember the last <toy, game, etc> we bought after seeing it on an ad? Where is it now? How often do you play with it?

TIP: If your child insists they want what is being sold, you can ask “Shall we put this item on your wish list?” Often just putting an item on a list will help your child move on. They will often forget or be less excited by the time you get back to it.

Key questions to ask yourself before allowing a show or app

- 1 Why am I having my child watch or play on a screen?
- 2 Who are the role models and what values do they teach?
- 3 Is this trying to sell something to my child or train my child to nag me to buy something?
- 4 How does my child behave after watching this show or playing this app? Do I see scenes or scripts from the show or game reenacted in their play?
- 5 If it claims to be educational, how does it back up the claim? Is it supported by a trusted educator or educational organization?
- 6 Does this app contain in-app purchases, frequent ads, or pop-ups? Many apps marketed as “free” encourage or even require children to make in-app purchases or are full of ads. An ad-free app that costs a few dollars is often cheaper in the long run than “free” ones.

