



4-H Consumer Judging Guide

Evaluating Advertising

Advertising is one of the factors that influences the purchases you make. Learning to evaluate ads will help you make better consumer decisions.

Retailers and manufacturers pay advertisers to promote their goods and services. Advertisers want you to believe a particular product will make you happier, prettier, accepted by a particular group or even successful.

Advertising is not all good nor all bad. Advertising helps to keep prices low or competitive. It introduces you to new products. Advertising can also be a timesaver for you. Through advertising, you can compare prices and products. Advertising can save you money by telling you about sales.

The not-so-good part about advertising is that the information may mislead you. Ads give you some facts about a product, but they also try to give you a feeling about the product or service. For example, by using a famous person in an ad, the advertiser is saying to you, “This product must be good—look who uses it.” The message may suggest that you can be famous, too, by using the product. Remember, the famous person is getting paid to promote the product.

Advertisers also use words and numbers that may not tell you anything. For example, words used often are “new and improved.” Improved from what? What’s new about it? Another example may be a phrase such as “two out of five doctors say....” Did they interview five doctors? Did the doctors receive something for endorsing the product?

To evaluate ads, use the following points:

- **Ad Techniques** – Are the techniques for selling a product based on logic, creativity, testimonials or emotions?
- **Logic** – Logical reasons are given for preference of the advertised product over other brands, with emphasis on special ingredients, performance or unique qualities.
- **Creativity** – These ads play up to the consumer who wants to be treated as an individual.
- **Testimonials** – The product is used and endorsed by celebrities so consumers will identify with the celebrity. Testimonials usually result in some kind of compensation for the person who has made the endorsement.
- **Emotions** – These ads appeal to the consumer’s pride, attraction to the opposite sex, desire for status or belonging, variety or the ability to “keep up with neighbors.”
- **Information Presented in the Ad** – Does the information promote improvements or new features, tell where to get the product or service or list the cost or specifications or performance features related to the items? Is the information factual?

As you evaluate advertising, remember to study the advertisement carefully to make sure you have all the facts. If you feel the ad is misleading or false, contact the manufacturer of the product or the seller. If you do not get a satisfactory answer, work with the Better Business Bureau or the state consumer affairs office.

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