

UNDERSTANDING ADVERTISING



AGENDA

- SESSION 1
 - Starter
 - Demand and More Demand
 - Ad It Up!
- SESSION 2
 - Ad It Up! (continued)
 - Complaint Department
 - Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will identify advertising as a source for building consumer wants.

Students will examine advertising messages critically.

Students will recognize advertising techniques.

Students will consider their rights and responsibilities as consumers.

Materials Needed

- Session 1: Five advertisements, with the product names removed, cut from magazines or newspapers or printed from a website (Starter)

- Session 1: One copy of the “Products for Advertising Campaigns” activity sheet, cut into pieces according to the directions (Part II)
- Session 1: One copy of the “Advertising Techniques” activity sheet for each student (Part II)
- Session 1: Additional commercials, radio spots, internet ads, and/or print advertisements (Part II)
- Session 1: One or two large pieces of construction paper for each group and colored pencils, pens, and/or markers (Part II)
- Session 2: One copy of the “Advertising Campaign Evaluation” activity sheet for each group (Part I)

SESSION 1

Starter (2 minutes)

Ask students to take out a piece of paper and number it from one to five. Explain to students that you will test their consumer awareness. Show them five advertisements with the product names removed and have students identify the associated products.

After students have identified the ads, ask them what their content shows about consumers. Explain to students that the purpose of advertising is to inform and to sell. Explain that as consumers, it is important that we make informed decisions and that we do not allow ourselves to be manipulated by advertising.

Part I Demand and More Demand (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify advertising as a source for building consumer wants.

1. Students define “advertising.”

Ask students to identify platforms used by advertisers. Write student responses on the board. Examples can include television, radio, podcasts, news publications, magazines, movies, and the internet.

Ask students how much money they think it costs to air a 30-second commercial during the Super Bowl. Have them suggest reasons why the costs are so high. Lead students to recognize that information in the media is sent to many people at once, so it’s a great way to make a point or to promote a product.

2. Students recognize that businesses want to increase demand to sell more products.

Ask students to consider how businesses and corporations make money. Elicit from students that businesses create demand by convincing consumers to alter their tastes and to spend money on a product. Increasing demand increases sales and revenue.

3. Students recognize that companies increase demand through advertising and the media.

Ask students to imagine that they own a business. How would they increase the demand for their product or service? Elicit from students that advertising is an excellent way to increase demand for a product or service.

Say, “Advertising is an influential aspect of life. Video ads, online banners, podcast ads, billboards, and newspaper ads are everywhere.”

4. Students discuss the pros and cons of advertising.

Explain to students that there are different views of advertising. Here are two views:

- Some believe that advertising leads to extra profits because consumers make unnecessary impulse purchases. These people tend to believe that ads are responsible for extra borrowing and the problems associated with consumers' going into debt.
- Others believe that advertising makes consumers wiser by providing important information about prices, quality, and availability.

Ask students what they think. Discuss and debate the issue, making sure that students support their positions with facts and logic.

Part II Ad It Up! (35 minutes)

Purpose: Students critically examine advertising messages and recognize advertising ploys and techniques.

1. Students identify persuasive techniques used in advertising.

Before beginning this activity, have one copy of the “Products for Advertising Campaigns” activity sheet cut into strips and placed in a container.

Explain to students that no matter where companies choose to place their advertisements, there are some basic techniques that they employ in their ads to persuade consumers to buy.

Distribute one copy of the “Advertising Techniques” activity sheet to each student. Ask volunteers to read the six techniques. Discuss the techniques with the class.

2. Students identify persuasive techniques used in current advertisements.

Have students use the ads from the starter, as well as others you have found, to identify the techniques that each advertisement employs.

Discuss how students recognized the techniques and what makes each technique effective or ineffective.

3. Students create ad campaigns using advertising techniques.

Divide the class into groups of four or five.

Explain that each group will be developing an advertising campaign that must include a print ad and a video or radio/podcast commercial. The campaign must use at least one of the advertising techniques they have studied. Explain to students that part of the task is to determine the benefits of the product and its target audience—the type of consumer who would want the product.

Ask a volunteer from each group to draw a product that will be the focus of the group's ad campaign. Distribute the art supplies to groups.

Tell students that they have the rest of the class period to create their print advertisement and their commercial. Inform the class that commercials are rarely longer than 30 seconds. Suggest that they use what they know works in advertising as a springboard. Encourage them to be innovative, use their creativity, and have fun.

SESSION 2

Part I Ad It Up! (continued) (30 minutes)

1. Students present their advertising campaigns and evaluate each other's presentations.

Give students 10 minutes to complete their advertising campaigns and to polish their performances.

Distribute the "Advertising Campaign Evaluation" activity sheet to each group. Then have each group perform its commercial and show and explain its print ad. After each performance, have groups comment on the effectiveness of the advertising campaign.

Part II Complaint Department (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize their rights and responsibilities as consumers.

1. Students understand that it is their responsibility to be informed consumers.

Explain to students that while we cannot be experts on the safety and quality of all goods and services, we can be informed consumers. Ask students to suggest actions that we can all take to make wise decisions about what to buy. Write key points of the discussion on the board. (Students might respond: define the product or issue, gather information about the product, read reviews, consider alternatives, and weigh options and consequences.)

Direct students to understand that by reading the fine print, researching on the internet and in other reference materials, and talking to well-informed individuals, they can gather information that will help them with their consumer decisions. Point out that they can also use their decision making skills when purchasing products and services.

2. Students learn about private and governmental consumer groups.

Tell students that there are consumer organizations that can help them get the product information they need.

Help students learn the following:

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversees the safety of foods and drugs. No drug can be sold for human use without the FDA's approval. This agency also ensures that pet food is safe.
- The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) enforces standards for advertising, selling, and other business practices. If an ad misrepresents a product or service, the FTC investigates. The FTC also accepts complaints from consumers regarding products or services.
- State and local governments also handle consumer issues. Their agencies look into problems with insurance, real estate, or utilities, among other industries.
- Private consumer organizations such as the Better Business Bureau (BBB) provide valuable assistance to consumers and field complaints. The BBB keeps files on local businesses and can help consumers resolve problems.
- The American Medical Association (AMA), the American Dental Association (ADA), and the American Bar Association (ABA) are organizations that maintain ethical standards for their professions and process complaints against doctors, dentists, and lawyers.
- National organizations also provide consumer information. The best known is the Consumers Union of the United States, which publishes the magazine *Consumer Reports*.

3. Students practice using good communication skills to make consumer complaints.

Point out that it is a consumer's responsibility to use good communication skills to inform businesses that they are not satisfied with a product or service.

Explain that to do so effectively, consumers must produce evidence that there is a problem and that the company is responsible. These are the facts that they must communicate:

- The transaction: where, when, and how they purchased the product or received the service
- The product or service: what they bought, including the model and the serial number
- The problem: the details of the problem and how they were inconvenienced
- Attempted solutions: what they did (if anything) to try to solve the problem, or the names of people they may have spoken to about it already
- The solution: what action they want taken (e.g., a refund, a replacement, or an apology)

Point out that consumers should always be thorough, clear, and courteous when they are stating a complaint.

Have students write business letters stating a consumer complaint. Remind them to use the appropriate form for business letters.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to review the role of mass media in the American consumer's life. Have students describe important advertising techniques. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Advertising influences the demand for products.
- By recognizing advertising techniques, people can become better-educated consumers.
- Governmental and private organizations can help consumers find information and solve problems.
- Consumers have a responsibility to inform businesses about poor products and services.

Student Assessment

SESSION 1

1. Identify three platforms used by advertisers.
2. List two positive and two negative effects of advertising.
3. Describe a commercial or an ad from a magazine. Explain the persuasive techniques that this advertisement uses.

SESSION 2

1. List three things that you can do to be an informed consumer.
2. List three organizations that keep consumers informed. Describe the information that each organization provides.
3. Describe an ineffective consumer complaint and an effective consumer complaint.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“You can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisements.”

Display several advertisements for the class. Have each student select an ad and write a short essay about what the ad says about our culture. Is the ad’s message positive or negative? Is it accurate or inaccurate?

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Ask students if they believe that teens are accurately portrayed in advertisements. Say, “Are there any good teen role models in ads?”

Discuss the issue as a class, and then have students create an advertisement that accurately portrays teens.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students look through their wardrobe. Have them count how many items have brand names or cartoon characters on them or are endorsed by sports figures, sports teams, organizations, etc.

Have students make a list of the items that are endorsed by famous people, have brand names, etc.

Discuss the influences that impact our decisions as consumers.

Using Technology

Explain to students that product placement in films is an important form of advertising and supplies money to filmmakers. Advertisers pay a lot of money to have their products shown in a film.

Discuss other advertising strategies, including advertising on the internet. Have students write a short paragraph about these strategies.

Homework

Have students tally the number of advertisements that they encounter in one day and make note of how much time elapses between these ads.

Discuss the number of items that companies are trying to sell to the American people on a daily basis.

Additional Resources

Have students read an issue of *Consumer Reports* and note which articles they find interesting or surprising.

Have students discuss what they read and identify reasons why reading reviews and investigating product claims are important.

ADVERTISING TECHNIQUES

Appeals to emotions: This technique exploits consumers' fears, misgivings, and parts of themselves they may be self-conscious about. The message targets vanity and creates doubt. The solution offered is, of course, to buy the product advertised.

Bandwagon approach: This technique tells people to do what everyone else is doing. It takes advantage of people's desire to conform. The bandwagon approach often exploits one's fear of missing out (or FOMO). Consumers don't want to be the odd one out by not buying the product.

Testimonials: This form of advertising uses well-known people, such as athletes, actors, and musicians, or even ordinary folks to endorse products. The concept is that if these people like the product or service, the average consumer will like it, too. These ads also imply that some of the fame of the celebrity might just "rub off" on the user.

Retargeting Ads: These ads use information collected about consumers online based on their interests, search habits, and products they have viewed. This technique is used to create an algorithm that repeatedly displays online ads of products that the consumer is more likely to buy, as opposed to static ads found in television commercials, on billboards, and in print media.

Superiority appeal: This technique implies that it would be flattering or prestigious to be like the rich person in the ad. It suggests that the consumer can become superior to friends and neighbors by purchasing the product. Many luxury car advertisements use this technique.

Brand names: A brand name is a word or logo for a product or service. Many companies know how powerful brand-name identification is, so they spend a lot of money advertising and building consumer awareness of their product. Consumers are influenced by names they see frequently in newspapers and magazines or on television.

ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN EVALUATION

Group Members

RATING SYSTEM:

**** outstanding ** good
*** excellent * poor

GROUP	PRODUCT	ADVERTISING TECHNIQUE	WHAT WAS EFFECTIVE	WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	RATING

PRODUCTS FOR ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

Directions: Cut the following product descriptions into strips so that group volunteers can each draw one.

Basketball that does not bounce

Candy that tastes like sawdust

A light bulb that lasts only five minutes

Music app that only plays songs backward

Dog collar that makes the dog bark

Suntan lotion that causes sunburn

Automobile that gets only six miles per gallon of gas

Soft drink that makes you tired

A smartphone with a one-hour battery life

Clothing detergent that leaves your clothes smelling like dirt

Perfume that smells like gasoline