

Lesson Objectives

- Examine techniques used in TV and magazine food ads targeted at kids
- Record ads and techniques in a log
- Create a bar graph to illustrate findings from the log
- Compare foods observed in advertisements to the USDA Food Pyramid
- Develop a campaign to raise awareness of advertising techniques

Suggested Grade Levels

4–8

Time Frame

Two or three 45-minute periods

Health Education Standards

NPH — H.5–8.4

Students will analyze the influence of culture, media, technology, and other factors on health

NPH — YH.5–8.7

Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health (See Appendix)

Handouts

- *Food Advertising Strategies* (one copy per student)
- *Food Advertisement Log* (three copies per student)
- *Food Guide Pyramid* (one overhead)

Supplies

- Art supplies

We'll Be Right Back after These Messages

Setting the Stage

1. Prepare and administer a pop quiz with 5 to 10 questions on current food ads targeted at kids. Here's an example:
 - a. "Frosted Lucky Charms, they're _____!" (magically delicious)
 - b. Who is the cartoon mascot for Cheetos? (Chester Cheetah)
 - c. Toucan Sam is a fan of what cereal? (Fruit Loops)
 - d. Complete this soft drink slogan—"Do the _____!" (Dew)
 - e. At McDonald's, they "love to see you _____." (smile)
 - f. Who is always trying to steal Fred's Cocoa Pebbles? (Barney)
 - g. What drink is advertised by a big pitcher who says "Oh Yeah!"? (Kool-Aid)
 - h. Name the Rice Krispies triplets. (Snap, Crackle, and Pop)
 - i. Complete this cereal slogan—"Silly rabbit, _____ are for kids!" (Trix)
 - j. What kind of animal is pizza parlor mascot Chuck E. Cheese? (Mouse)
2. Go over the answers and have students score their quizzes. Ask students: *How many of you answered all 10 questions correctly? Nine? Eight? etc.* Stop once the majority of the class has raised their hands.
3. Ask students: *How did everyone do so well without studying?* Discuss student responses. Explain that while they may not have realized it, they've been absorbing messages from food manufacturers who want to influence what they eat. Tell students: *Our class is going to learn some of the strategies that food manufacturers use to make you want to buy their products.*

Activity Procedure

1. Divide the class into groups of three or four. Distribute the *Food Advertising Strategies*. Groups should discuss each strategy listed and think of an ad they have seen which employs this strategy. Reconvene the class and ask groups to share examples.
2. Distribute the *Food Advertisement Log* to each student and review the instructions. Assign students to watch two hours of *commercial* TV aimed at a mainly young audience, such as Saturday morning or after-school cartoons, and record every food ad in their log. (Students who may not watch TV can analyze magazine ads.) Students can change channels but should watch each channel, uninterrupted, for a minimum of a half hour. Students should then create bar graphs illustrating their findings for sections three and five of the log. Demonstrate how to create a bar graph, if necessary.

3. Share and discuss student findings in class. Ask students: *What strategies were used most often in the ads? Which strategy did you find most persuasive and why?*
4. Discuss whether students would be maintaining a healthy diet if they based all their food choices on the products and information in the ads. Show the overhead of the *Food Guide Pyramid* and talk about its different components. Review the products in the ads and decide where in the pyramid they belong. Ask students: *What components of a healthy diet would be missing if you ate only these products? Why isn't a more balanced selection of foods advertised? What kind of information do we need to make healthy food choices?*
5. Divide students into groups of four or five. Explain that groups will use their new knowledge to organize a campaign to raise awareness in other students at your school of how advertisers try to influence their food choices and the possible consequences of those choices on their health. Allow groups to choose the format of their campaign (e.g., posters, skits, print ads, or video). Groups will present their campaigns to another class.



Ad for Eagle Brand Condensed Milk, about 1890
 Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution

FOOD ADVERTISING STRATEGIES*

Food manufacturers use many different advertising strategies to try and convince you to buy their products. Carefully read each strategy below and write the name of a product that you think uses the strategy in its television ads.

Cool Kids

Everybody wants to be like these kids! They have the hottest haircuts, clothes, and toys. You can be like them, the ad suggests, if you eat this product.

Family Fun

This ad shows a product as something that instantly helps families have fun together. If mom serves this food, a regular weekday dinner turns into a party.

Excitement

This product is the key to amazing fun and adventure. One bite and you're surfing a giant wave or dancing onstage at a concert with your favorite band.

Star Power

A huge celebrity eats this product, so it must be the best of its kind!

Bigger Is Better

This ad makes a product look bigger than it actually is in real life. Who can resist a giant cookie or the thought of more for your money?

Repetition

Manufacturers hope that if you see a product or hear its name over and over again, you'll want it. Sometimes, the same ad is repeated several times during one hour.

Feel Good

This ad tells a story that makes you feel good. For example, a dad cheers up his daughter by taking her to lunch at their favorite fast food chain.

Sounds Good

Manufacturers use music and other sound effects to grab your attention and make an ad appealing. Have you ever noticed that ads are often louder than the program you're watching?

What's Missing?

This ad doesn't give you the full story about the product. For example, an ad that claims a pastry is "part of this healthy breakfast," doesn't mention that the breakfast would still be healthy without the pastry.

Cartoon Characters

Catchy cartoon characters help you remember a product by putting a face to it. Everybody knows what Tony the Tiger thinks is "Grrreat!"

Weasely Words

By law, advertisers have to tell the truth. But sometimes they use words or phrases that are misleading. For example, a product "with the taste of real lemons," may not have any actual lemons in its recipe, just ingredients that imitate lemon flavor.

**Based on materials produced by the Media Awareness Network
<<http://www.media-awareness.ca>>*

FOOD ADVERTISEMENT LOG Your Manner: SMARTY'S GUIDE TO FOOD

Use this log to record information about the food ads you see on TV in a two-hour time period.

- In the first box, write the name of the product.
- Make a mark in the second box each time you see an ad for this product.
- Circle all the advertising strategies used in the ad in the third box.
- Answer "yes" or "no" to the questions in boxes four and five.

Product name	Number of times ad appeared	Circle all the strategies used in the ad	Did the ad make you want to buy the product?	Do you think this product contains a lot of sugar?
		Cool Kids Bigger Is Better What's Missing? Family Fun Repetition Cartoon Characters Excitement Feel Good Weasely Words Star Power Sounds Good		

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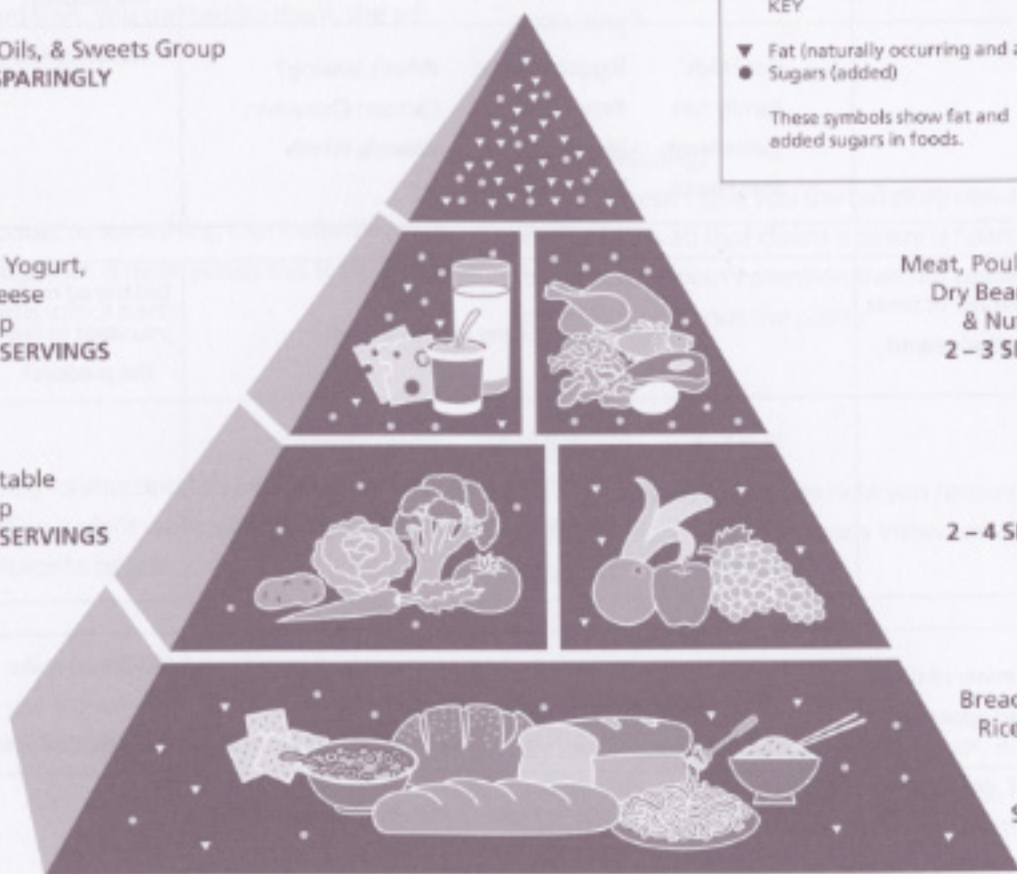
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FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID

Fats, Oils, & Sweets Group
USE SPARINGLY

Milk, Yogurt,
& Cheese
Group
2 - 3 SERVINGS

Vegetable
Group
3 - 5 SERVINGS



KEY

- ▼ Fat (naturally occurring and added)
- Sugars (added)

These symbols show fat and added sugars in foods.

Meat, Poultry, Fish,
Dry Beans, Eggs,
& Nuts Group
2 - 3 SERVINGS

Fruit
Group
2 - 4 SERVINGS

Bread, Cereal,
Rice, & Pasta
Group
**6 - 11
SERVINGS**