

## Rules For Advertising to Kids

In Canada, there are rules that advertisers must follow when advertising to children.

- ◆ **Advertisers must not use words like “new” or “introducing” to describe a product for more than one year.**

New products always seem more exciting, so advertisers are only allowed to promote a product as “new” for a year.

- ◆ **Advertisers are not allowed to exaggerate.**

Some advertisers want to make you believe that their product is bigger or faster or better than it really is.

- ◆ **Advertisers may not promote craft and building toys that the average kid can’t put together.**

When you get a kit that is supposed to be for kids, a kid should actually be able to put it together with very little or no help.

Also, your finished project should look like the picture of the finished product that appears on the box.

- ◆ **Advertisers are not allowed to sell products that aren’t meant for kids.**

For example, a commercial that sells vitamins or drugs should be aimed at adults, not kids. Check out some ads for adult products—do they use cartoon characters, jingles or images that would attract kids?

- ◆ **Advertisers are not allowed to recommend that you have to buy their product, or that you should make your parents buy it for you.**

In commercials, advertisers cannot say things like: “Hey kids, tell mom and dad to run down to the store and get you one now!” or “You must have our product, or you won't be cool!” But they are still going to try to make you want to do these things, so watch commercials closely to see how they make you feel this way without telling you directly.

- ◆ **Advertisers may not use well-known kids’ entertainers (including cartoon characters) to promote or endorse a product.**

Although advertisers can create their own characters for kids, like “Tony The Tiger” or the “Nestlé Quick Bunny,” they cannot use performers or characters from kids’ shows in their TV commercials. This rule does not apply to packaging, so you might find cartoon characters or famous people on the front of your favourite cereal box.

- ◆ **Advertisers cannot make you believe you are getting everything shown in the commercial. In their ads, advertisers have to tell you exactly what you are getting when you buy the toy, and what it will cost, e.g.:**
  - The complete price of every part of the toy they are showing, whenever the price is mentioned in an ad.
  - Any parts of the toy shown in the commercial that cost extra.
  - Any other toys in the commercial that are sold separately.

Next time you watch a toy commercial, see how the advertiser obeys the rule, while still giving a false impression. Look for really small writing on the screen at the end of the ad saying “Batteries not included,” or an announcer’s voice talking very fast.

- ◆ **Advertisers are not allowed to show kids or adults doing unsafe things with the product.**

Unless it is part of a safety message about what not to do, advertisements cannot show kids or adults doing dangerous things that children might try to copy.

- ◆ **Advertisers cannot suggest that using their product will make you better than other kids.**

They also cannot make kids think that people will make fun of them if they do not use the product.

- ◆ **Advertisers cannot show more than one commercial for the same product in a half-hour period.**

In other words, No Brainwashing Allowed!

*Sources:* The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) *Broadcast Code For Advertising To Children* (1993) and Media Awareness Network <http://www.media-awareness.ca>