

# SEEING THROUGH TV COMMERCIALS



Two Hours or Less  
of Screen Time



## Teacher Directions

Studies show that the more TV a child watches, the higher his risk of becoming overweight. In addition to being sedentary, kids often eat while they are watching, and tend to eat more of the processed junk food products that are advertised.

Here is an activity to help students become more aware of how junk food products are being marketed to them.

**Objective:** Students will keep track of TV commercials, learning the marketing techniques used, and discover that the majority of ads promote junk food products instead of healthy foods.

Health

Language  
Arts

Media  
Literacy

Math

### Directions:

1. Instruct students to take their activity sheets home and keep track of all the food advertisements they see while watching one hour of television, either after school or on a Saturday morning.
2. Ask them to observe the techniques used to sell products such as:
  - 1 - free prize inside
  - 2 - a favorite star or athlete says s/he likes or uses it
  - 3 - it promises to make you look "cool" or be popular
  - 4 - it promises to make you strong or become a great athlete
  - 5 - it says that it is "natural," "contains real fruit," "is nutritious," or "is good for you"
  - 6 - they make it look incredibly delicious
  - 7 - they make it look incredibly fun
  - 8 - other
3. Have students report on the number of food commercials they saw and the selling techniques used.
4. Lead a discussion on the results. Ask students how many commercials they saw for nutritious foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Discuss why there were so few healthy foods advertised. Note: it is the processing and packaging of food products that give companies a brand name to sell. Food companies spent a lot more money advertising processed, packaged food products than they do for fresh, wholesome, "unbranded" foods.
5. Ask students if they think ads for processed junk food products should be limited, just like ads for cigarettes, since both tobacco and junk food products are hazardous to our health.



### Additional Activities:

1. If desired, have students make a pie chart showing how much of each product category is advertised.
2. Have students create their own TV advertisements, posters, songs, raps, or jingles to promote healthy foods using the same marketing techniques that junk food commercials use.

# SEEING THROUGH TV COMMERCIALS



**2**

Two Hours or Less  
of Screen Time

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Directions:

During one hour of TV watching after school or on Saturday morning, keep track of all the commercials you see. Every time you see a commercial for a food product, write the name of the product next to the appropriate category in the chart below. Then, add up the number of commercials for each category or product. And for each commercial, write the corresponding number(s) of the techniques used to sell each product:

- 1 - free prize inside
- 2 - a favorite star or athlete says s/he likes or uses it
- 3 - it promises to make you look "cool" or be popular
- 4 - it promises to make you strong or become a great athlete
- 5 - it says that it is "natural," "contains real fruit," "is nutritious," or "is good for you"
- 6 - they make it look incredibly delicious
- 7 - they make it look totally fun
- 8 - other \_\_\_\_\_

TV Program(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Time(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Channel(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Category	Name of Products	Total Number of Commercials	Technique Used to Sell Products
Candy			
Soda			
Fast Foods			
Sugary Cereals			
Chips & Cookies			
Fruits & Vegetables			
Other			

What category had the most number of commercials? \_\_\_\_\_

What category had the least number of commercials? \_\_\_\_\_