

ARE YOU PLUGGED IN?

Extension Activity

These classroom activities correspond to the **Don't Buy It** game, **Are You Plugged In?** at http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit/entertainment/pluggedin_1.html.

How much time do students spend watching TV, surfing the Web, or playing video games? What products do students consume? Is the advertising targeting students also influencing them?

Objective

- Develop an awareness of one's own media habits.
- Make connections between ads and one's own consumer behavior.

Materials

- Copies of **TV Diary** available at http://www.pbskids.org/dontbuyit/downloads/guide_tvdiary.pdf
- Copies of Parent Letter (below)

Procedure

Ask students to track their current TV and/or Internet viewing habits and video game time by keeping a TV Diary for one week using the blank diary sheets provided. They should track program name, time spent watching, and then rate the program. In a letter, let parents know that children will be participating in the media journal homework activity and ask them to assist their children in keeping the journal (See sample Parent Letter below).

- How many hours is the TV on in a given day?
- What do you like most about TV?
- What do you dislike about TV?
- When did you watch TV the most?
- Did you do other activities while watching TV?
- Did you channel surf?
- Did you use television as background noise?
- How did you feel after watching TV?
- Did you have many highly rated shows? Low-rated shows?

Ask students to pick one of the shows they watched during the week and consider the following as media consumers:

- Who is creating this message?
- What is their purpose in creating this message?
- What is the message?
- What other messages might different people take away from this?
- Who is the target audience?
- What techniques are used to gain or retain my attention?

After completing the media journal, have students compare and contrast media habits in the classroom and discuss the questions above.

Consumer Influence: Television is loaded with advertising, in commercials as well as more hidden product placements. Do these advertisements affect purchasing decisions?

- What items were advertised during the student's television viewing activity?
- Have they bought products (or asked others to buy products for them) advertised on the TV?
- What factors motivate them to purchase a particular product?

Alignments

— McREL Media Standards

Viewing Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media. Level 2 (Grade 3–5)

BENCHMARK: Understands basic elements of advertising in visual media (e.g., sales approaches and techniques aimed at children, appealing elements used in memorable commercials, possible reasons for the choice of specific visual images). BENCHMARK VOCABULARY: advertising, visual media, sales approach, technique, children, appeal, element, commercial, visual image.

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER

Dear Parents,

Today in your child's class we began studying media literacy. We're talking about television and how it impacts people's lives in a variety of ways. We're asking students to keep a television diary. I'm writing to ask for your help in this homework activity.

The purpose of this exercise is to explore how much TV we watch as individuals and as a class, and the ways the experience affects us. My intent is not to judge anyone's viewing habits, but to have students explore them and think more consciously about them.

Please see the "TV Diary" attached. Each night, please have your child fill out the diary before going to bed. Your child should keep track of what shows he/she watches, and for how long (half-hour, one hour, etc.). Videos should be included

in TV viewing time. Additionally, he/she should rate the program, using the scale shown.

We will examine our results next week, so please ask your child to bring the completed diary to class.

Should the activity spark your interest in getting more information on this topic, please see the family guide at <http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit/parentsguide.html#usingmedia>

Thank you for your assistance with this activity!

Sincerely,