

Who's Immune to Influence?*

Objectives

Advertisers know how to get consumers interested in a product and influence their buying habits. Children are particularly vulnerable to advertising strategies. The following activity will help your child develop critical thinking about marketing, which may encourage them to choose one product over another.

Preparation

Product packaging influences our choices. The same product is more likely to be chosen by a consumer if its packaging is attractive rather than boring. As an example, ask your child:

- If you had to choose between two boxes of cereal at the grocery store, what would you base your choice on?

Steps

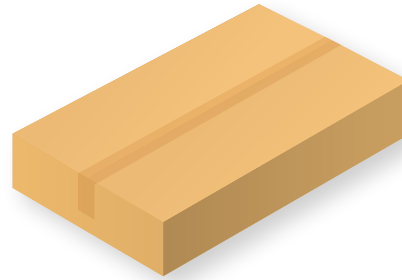
1. Show your child these two images. Ask them:
 - ▷ If it was your birthday today, which of these two gifts would you like to receive? Why are you making this choice?

* This activity is inspired by the educational activity guide *D'un commerce agréable et équitable*, published by Établissement vert Brundtland.

Gift 1



Gift 2



Your child will likely choose the first gift, because it's bigger than the other and has bright colours, a pretty ribbon, stars, etc.

The second box will probably be less attractive to your child because it's smaller, its colour is neutral, and it doesn't have the other box's visual appeal.

2. Ask your child:

▷ What do you think is in each of these boxes? Why?

Your child probably assumes that the content of an attractive box is as appealing as the packaging. So, in their eyes, the content of the first box should be more interesting, and that's one reason why your child chose it to start with.

3. Show your child the content of each box, as depicted in [next page](#).

4. Ask them the following questions:

▷ Are you surprised by the content of each box?

▷ Are you happy or disappointed with the content of the box you chose?

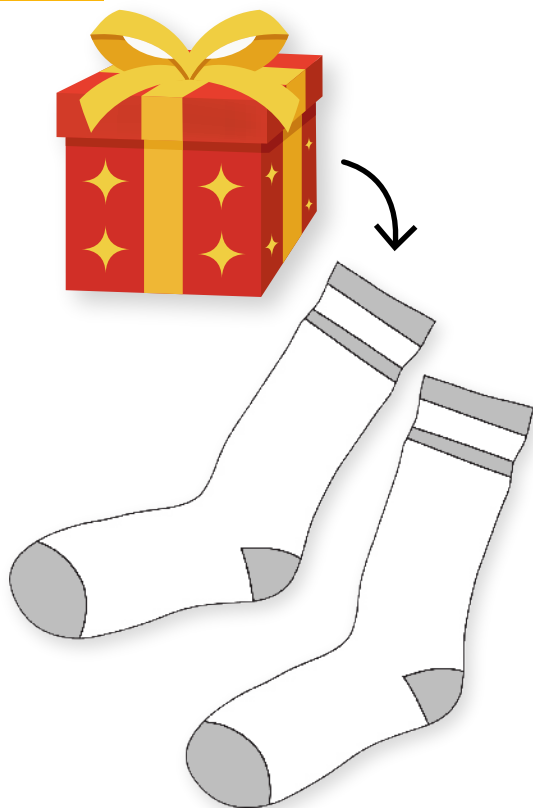
▷ In your view, what's the connection between the packaging of each box and its content?

5. There are factors that have a great deal of impact on our choices. To help your child realize this, draw a parallel between the packaging of the two gifts and advertising: "Earlier, you chose the gift you found more attractive, because it looked better on the outside. Afterward, you saw that it was not necessarily the more desirable choice. You let yourself be influenced by the gift's appearance. Do you think advertisers use the same approach to make us want something and get us to choose their product?"

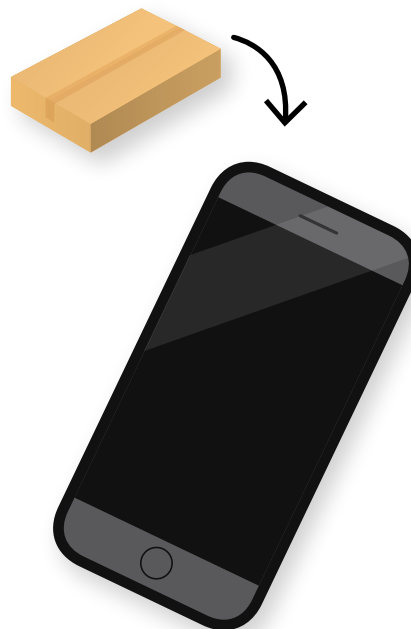
6. Ask your child what factors, apart from advertising, influence their choices and their desire to buy something.

Potential answers: Factors can include family members (“My older sister has one, why not me?”), friends (“All my friends are going to the amusement park. I want to go too!”), fashion (“I want a cap, it’s all the rage!”), financial resources (“I’ve got money in the bank, I’m allowed to have some fun.”), and so on.

Gift 1



Gift 2



Conclusion

To conclude, ask your child what they are taking away from the activity.

Remind them that the best way to guard against the influence of advertising and other factors is to start by properly determining their needs, then to stick to these. The bigger the hold that advertising has on us, the less free we are to make the choices that are right for us.