



Level: Grades 4-6

About the Author

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Lesson Plan

Junk Food Jungle

Overview

This lesson familiarizes children with the nutritional value of foods advertised on television and in magazines. The lesson begins with a class discussion about different types of foods and where snack food fits into a healthy diet. Students then compare TV's version of a great meal to the kinds of foods that their mothers would recommend, and categorize the foods they enjoy according to whether or not they would be considered part of a healthy diet. In groups, students survey television and magazine food ads to determine what types of foods are promoted most often.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- an awareness of the disproportionate amount of snack food advertisements in magazines and on TV
- continuing awareness of the types of foods needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle
- a continuing awareness of the principles of balance and moderation in fitting snack foods into a healthy diet

Preparation and Materials

- Collect magazines for the food advertisement exercise.
- Read the Teacher's Master Sheet for "10 Great and 10 Not-So-Great Kids' Foods"
- For reference, use *Canada's Food Guide*
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/nutrition/pube/foodguid
- For extension activities about junk food advertising, print out the *Cereal and Junk Food Advertising* activities sheet.

Photocopy the following student handouts:

- *10 Great & 10 Not-So-Great Kids' Foods* (educational handout)
- *My Magazine Food Ad Log* (educational handout)
- *My TV Food Ad Log* (educational handout)

Procedure

Guided Discussion

Begin by asking your students:

- What is meant by a "healthy" diet? (*A balanced diet made up of a variety of foods from the categories in Canada's Food Guide. Moderation in the amounts of foods eaten.*)
- What are the four food groups that make up the rainbow in Canada's Food Guide? (*Grain Products, Vegetables and Fruit, Milk Products, Meat and*

- *Alternatives.)*
- Where do snack foods fit into our diets? *(If you have a balanced diet, a few snacks are all right.)*
- Why is too much snack food not good for us? *(They do not provide any real nourishment; they make us less hungry for healthier foods; too much salt, sugar and fat from snack foods can lead to health problems.)*

Next, have students think about TV commercials and print advertisements for food. On the board, list the types of foods that they have seen advertised. Most likely, when you have finished, there will be more snack food items on the board than regular foods. Ask your students:

- What is the problem with so much snack food advertising? *(Encourages poor eating habits; can make you think that some snack foods are more nutritious than they really are, for example, "juicers" passing as fruit juice, cereals that are "part of" a nutritious breakfast. And by the way, while you're sitting there watching all those food commercials, you're not doing your body any good either!)*

Activities

Activity One

- Imagine your television came to life at breakfast time and offered some advice on what you should eat. What would your TV say? What would your mother want you to eat?
- Using pictures from magazines and advertising flyers, make a collage of foods TV would suggest eating for breakfast. Make a second collage of foods your mother would recommend. How many foods are in both collages? What types of foods are they?

This activity is from the *Live TV Activity Guide*

Activity Two

Ask students what their favorite foods are and list them on the board. Distribute *10 Great & 10 Not-So-Great Kids' Foods* and give them an opportunity to categorize the foods on these sheets. Using your *Teacher's Master Sheet*, correct their lists and discuss why some foods are classified as "great" and others are classified as "not-so-great." *(For example, make sure that students understand the difference between whole and 1% milk; how regular hamburgers from food chains differ from extra-lean hamburger; how whole-grain, low-sugar cereals differ from their less nutritious counterparts.)* Referring to the list on the board, have students determine which categories their favorite foods fall under.

Activity Three

Divide your class into two groups and distribute copies of *My Magazine Food Ad Log* to students in one group, and *My TV Food Ad Log* to students in the other.

Group 1: TV Food Ads

Over the next week, students in this group will use the *My TV Food Ad Log* to track the food advertisements that appear during two hours of TV viewing. *(If the child watches ½ an hour of TV per day, it can be done over a four-day period; if the child is only allowed TV on weekends, it might be done in one hour on Saturday and one hour on Sunday. Teachers should encourage students to include different television stations, time periods and programming in their survey.)*

Group 2: Magazine Food Ads

Each student in this group will select four different magazines and survey which foods are advertised in them. The magazines should differ from one another, i.e., one might be a woman's magazine, one a magazine for kids, and another a general magazine like *People* (however, two students might survey different issues of the same magazine.) In their *Magazine Food Ad Log*, students will track which magazine the ads appeared in, and answer the questions included in the instructions.

When both groups have completed their surveys, give them sufficient time to compare their findings with other group members and to answer the questions on their sheets.

As a class, discuss the findings of both groups.

- For more classroom activities, use some of the ideas from the *Cereal and Junk Food Advertising* activities sheet.

Evaluation

- Television and Magazine Food Ad Logs.

Related Mnet Resources

- *Cereal and Junk Food Advertising*

Teacher's Master Sheet #1

Teacher's Master Sheet: 10 Great & 10 Not-So-Great Kids' Foods

The Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) has created a list of 10 great and 10 not-so-great foods for kids. Which list are YOU eating from?

10 Not-So-Great Kids' Foods	10 Great Kids' Foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soft Drinks• Hamburgers• Hot Dogs• Whole Milk• American Cheese (or cheeses with high fat content)• French Fries• Pizza (loaded with cheese & meat)• Chocolate Bars• Ice Cream• Bologna	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fresh Fruits & Veggies (especially carrot sticks, cantaloupe, oranges, watermelon & strawberries)• Chicken Breasts & Drumsticks (<u>without</u> skin or breading)• Whole-grain, Low-sugar Cereals (like Cheerios or Wheaties)• Skim or 1 percent Milk• Extra-Lean Ground Beef (or vegetarian burgers)• Low-fat Hot Dogs• Fat-free Corn or Potato Chips• Seasoned, Air-popped Popcorn• Whole Wheat or Animal Crackers• Non-fat Ice Cream or Frozen Yogurt

Cereal and Junk Food Advertising

Classroom Activities

Between their second and twelfth birthdays, Canadian children will see 200,000 television commercials. About 80% of food commercials aired on Saturday morning kids' TV shows are for products of low nutritional value. Ads for high-sugar products – for example, candy and cereals – form the majority.

(Prime Time Parent workshop kit by the Alliance for Children and Television, 1995)

Ask your students to watch one hour of Saturday morning cartoons, counting the number of commercials and making note of how many of them are for food. How many are advertisements for cereals and how many are for 'junk food'? Ask the students to note the time of year as well. Around Christmastime there will be more toy commercials than food commercials. Teach the students to create graphs using these statistics.

Have students make lists of misleading phrases or "weasel words" which are used frequently in food commercials – such as "part of a complete breakfast". (Take a look at the **Watching for Weasel Words** handout from the Prime Time Parent Kit)

Check your school or school board's media center for the video *Buy Me That 3! A Kid's Guide to Food Advertising* (If the video isn't available, it can be ordered through the Center for Media Literacy) . This informative, entertaining, briskly-paced video takes on the issue of food advertising by examining cola taste tests, product packaging, sports drinks, the work of food stylists, nutritional claims and sweepstakes contests. (There are two more videos in this series – *Buy Me That! A Kid's Survival Guide to Advertising* and *Buy Me That Too!* – look for them at your school board's media centre or library.)

An idea from *Buy Me That 3! A Kid's Guide to Food Advertising* is a "taste test." Are your students influenced by taste or by advertising? Have your students conduct their own "Brand Name" face-off. Taste tests can include popular foods and drinks such as soft drinks, potato chips, chocolate chip cookies, chocolate milk mixes, french fries—just be sure to include cheaper, generic brands along with the assorted name brands.

Another idea from *Buy Me That 3! A Kid's Guide to Food Advertising* is to conduct a "Snack Food Chemistry Class." Have kids create lists of ingredients used in different snack foods, and take a look at what's really in your favourite snack food—we guarantee that it will be nothing like the snacks that Mom makes! Also, take note of the amounts of different ingredients that are in a product. There are many different ways of saying "sugar"—try measuring exactly how much sugar (or glucose, or corn syrup, or honey) is in your favourite cereal.

Check out the kids consumer magazine *Zillions* at your local library. Consumer goods and foods are tested and rated by kids in this youthful version of *Consumer Reports*.

Look at the profile of the American youth activist known as the **No Junk Food Kid**, and discuss with students what they could do to promote healthy eating at their school.

Check out the web site of CBC's awarding-winning youth consumer show *StreetCents*. Each year the show gets tons of mail about food—everything from how it tastes to what it costs. To check out their food shows from present and previous seasons just click the "guide" button on the *StreetCents* Web site, <http://cbc.ca/streetcents/>.

Student Handout #2

10 Great & 10 Not-So-Great Kids' Foods

The Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) has created a list of 10 great and 10 not-so-great foods for kids. We've mixed them all up to see if you can put these foods under the right headings!

**Skinless Chicken Breasts &
Drumsticks
Whole Milk
Seasoned, air-popped Popcorn
Chocolate Bars
Skim or 1% Milk
Hamburgers
Extra-lean Ground Beef or Veggie
Burgers
Low-fat Hot Dogs
Ice Cream
Whole Wheat or Animal Crackers**

**Whole-grain, Low-sugar Cereals
Hot Dogs
Soft Drinks
Cheesy, Pepperoni Pizza
Fresh Fruit & Veggies
Bologna
French Fries
American Cheese
(like cheese slices)
Fat-free Corn or Potato Chips
Non-fat Ice Cream or Frozen Yogurt**

10 Not-So-Great Kids' Foods	10 Great Kids' Foods
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.

Student Handout #3

Magazine Food Ad Log

Instructions:

- Choose four magazines. (Make sure that you have a variety of magazines, including at least two magazines that are geared to kids or teenagers.)
- As you go through each magazine, record any food ads that you see on the chart below. (For food products, you can use general categories, such as "soft drinks" or "potato chips" -- for fast food companies, list them by name.)
- When you have finished, compare the number of advertisements for snack food, to advertisements for healthy food.
- Which magazines have the most ads for snack foods? Which have the least? Why might one magazine have more snack food ads than another?
- Look at the words and images that are used in these ads. Do you notice any common messages in the ads for snack foods? What about the ads for healthy foods?

Product Advertised	Magazine 1	Magazine 2	Magazine 3	Magazine 4

Student Handout #4

Television Food Ad Log

Instructions:

- Over the next week, watch two hours of television.
- Every time you see a food commercial, record it on the chart below -- along with the show you are watching, the date, the time slot, and the channel you are on. (If the same ad is repeated during a program, record it each time.)
- When you have finished, compare the number of advertisements for snack foods, to advertisements for healthy foods.
- Did you notice more snack food advertisements at a certain time of day? Were they more likely to appear with shows for kids? For teens? For adults?
- What about TV stations? Do some stations have more ads for snack foods? Do some have more for healthy foods? Which ones? Why might this be so?
- Look at the general tone of the ads you saw. Do you notice any common messages in the ads for snack foods? What about the ads for healthy foods?

TV Program	Date	Time Slot	TV Station	Product Advertised