



# Toy Ads on Television

Television advertisements are an important source of information about toys; they show children new products and help illustrate what these products can do. However, some children, especially young ones, may have trouble separating fact from fantasy in ads – figuring out how a toy works outside its imaginary setting or determining whether toy parts shown are sold separately.

To prevent disappointments, you can help your children better understand what they see on television ads.

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*Not all toys are appropriate for all children.*

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## Evaluating television ads

Help your children evaluate toy advertisements by talking about the following issues:

### **Toy ads may exaggerate a toy's performance.**

A toy on a television ad may seem to make elaborate sounds or move by itself, when it cannot. You may want to talk about how special sound effects, production techniques, camera work, or editing can be used to enhance a toy's operation. Many ads show toys being used in imaginary settings in ways that do not represent how they may work in your home. Help your children focus on the part of an ad that shows a toy's real life operation.

### **Toys may require special skills or extensive practice.**

In some ads, toys may look easy to play with or operate. In fact, they may require hours of practice before a child could use them as shown. Because of differing levels of skills and talents, not all toys are appropriate for all children.

### **Toys may not be sold with all the pieces displayed in the ad.**

You may want to help your child determine what pieces actually come with a toy. Some toys may be shown with parts from more than one package. Others may be depicted in elaborate play settings that you cannot



replicate at home. Tell your children to watch and listen for key phrases like "pieces sold separately" or "batteries not included."

### **Toys may have to be assembled.**

Toys in ads may look ready for play. The fact is that many require assembly before play can begin. In some cases, the assembly may be difficult or time consuming. Children should pay attention to whether an ad says "some assembly required."

## Buying toys

It is fun to buy, gift or receive toys. Here is how to make the most of toy purchasing and lessen the chances of frustration or disappointment:

### **Talk to your children about advertising they see on television.**

Once they own a particular toy, talk about its performance. Does it perform the way they thought it would? What kind of information do they need before they buy another toy? Is another toy a better buy?

### **Explain branding and co-branding.**

Companies use their brand name and logos so we recognize their products. A good example is a toy for the newest movie in the kid's meal at your local fast food restaurant. The hope is that the child will recognize the movie and want to eat at the restaurant. Or, that while eating at the restaurant the toy will make the child want to watch the movie.

### **Do research before making a purchase.**

Encourage your child to look carefully at a toy and its package in the store – and to ask friends for their experiences. Try to determine how the toy actually performs, what pieces come with it, and how much assembly is required.

### **Check the recommended age level on the toy package.**

This is the manufacturer's guide to appropriateness and required skill level.

### **For more information**

For additional information about children and advertising, write to:

**Children's Advertising Review Unit**  
**Council of Better Business Bureaus, 112**  
Madison Ave 3<sup>rd</sup> Fl.  
New York, NY 10016  
[ascreviews.org](http://ascreviews.org) (then click on CARU)

CARU was established by the advertising industry to review and evaluate children's advertising. Advertising to children is regulated to ensure that it meets defined standards of honesty and decency.

*For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact:*

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,  
Trade and Consumer Protection  
*Bureau of Consumer Protection*  
2811 Agriculture Drive, PO Box 8911  
Madison, WI 53708-8911

Email: [DATCPHotline@wi.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@wi.gov)

Website: [datcp.wi.gov](http://datcp.wi.gov)

(800) 422-7128

TTY: (608) 224-5058

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