



Cybercitizen Challenge

It's in the box

Guiding level : Sparks / Brownies

Topic: Food marketing and packaging

This activity does not require a computer.

This activity makes girls more aware of how packaging and branding may influence their food choices.

Preparation:

For the main activity:

1. Make copies of the website handouts of Frosted Flakes and Froot Loops for each girl in the unit.
2. Have a pair of scissors for each of the girls
3. Bring glue and two larger sheets of paper to the meeting, for the girls to glue their characters and gimmicks on to.

For the taste-testing:

1. Bring in two pairs of full cereal boxes, including two well-known brand-names (such as Frosted Flakes and Froot Loops) and their generic (store-brand) equivalents – four boxes in total.
2. Have the cereals poured into bowls before beginning this activity (making sure to remember which bowl holds the brand-name versions and which are the generic brands).

At Your Meeting

1. Explain to the girls that at today's meeting, they're going to be looking at the kinds of websites for cereal they might see on the Internet. Show them the brand-name boxes for Frosted Flakes and Froot Loops. Explain that these are two very popular cereals and each one has a website where kids can play with Tony the Tiger and Toucan Sam – their spokes-characters. (Give the two website handouts to each girl.)
2. Ask them: "Why do you buy cereal? and "what makes cereal yummy?" (How it tastes!). This is to establish that the ultimate goal of buying cereal is to eat it.
3. Instruct the girls to look at their website handouts and, using their scissors, cut out everything that is **not** a picture of the cereal itself. (Younger girls may need guidance here. Encourage them to systematically cut out things such as the name of the cereal, branded characters, contests and gimmicks etc). They should be left with a remnant of the website that contains nothing but a picture of the cereal itself.



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4. When everyone has finished, ask: "Have you cut out any animals or cartoon characters? Show them to me!" Then ask "Is this something you can eat?" (To illustrate this, select one of the nearby cutout animals, and pretend to take a bite, and pretend to "spit it out" in disgust). The children are then invited to glue all the extraneous images and words on the big sheet of paper.
5. Have the girls paste their pictures of the cereal on the second sheet of paper (there will be fewer images here). Review the various things that are on the two pieces of paper and ask "Why do you think cereal companies put all of this stuff on their websites?" (Answers should relate to making the cereal look fun and exciting, making kids want to buy it, etc.)
6. Ask the girls, "Do these cereals still have the same yummy taste, even after we've removed the pictures on the website? Do the pictures on the Web page or the boxes change the taste of the cereal?" (Give the girls time to answer this.)

Continue: "Well, the only way we will know is by tasting them. But in order not to be influenced by all the glitzy things that were on the websites, you get to try two different types of the same cereal. (Show them the bowls.) Here I have two bowls of "Froot Loops" and two bowls of "Frosted Flakes." In each case, one is the Tony the Tiger or Toucan Sam brand, and the other is a cheaper, less glitzy store-brand version, which doesn't advertise. I'm not going to tell you which one is which. You'll have to let your taste buds decide"

7. Have each girl taste both cereals in each pair and put a checkmark beside the one she likes best. When all the girls have done this, see which cereals are the winners. Regardless of which cereals "win", congratulate the girls on letting their taste-buds decide and for not being influenced by fancy packaging, cartoon characters and other and gimmicks.

End the activity by taking the girls through the following action rhyme:

Rhyme	Action
A box is only cardboard,	<i>Mime being a square box,</i>
It's what's inside that counts!	<i>Raise your hands to open the box</i>
Mascots don't taste yummy,	<i>Pretend to eat something and make a "yucky" face</i>
And prizes won't fill my tummy,	<i>Hold your tummy</i>
So when I eat my breakfast,	<i>Mime eating cereal from a bowl</i>
I think I'll trust my mouth!	<i>BIG SMILE!</i>

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