

When discussing why the food and beverage industry needs stricter regulation in marketing to children and even less of a presence in schools, here are some talking points which will help support your argument when writing letters to newspaper editors and op-ed columns, or pitching a story to a journalist:

**Food and beverage marketing works.**

Research has found that food and beverage marketing impacts children's food choices. The Institute of Medicine report "Food Marketing to Children: Threat or Opportunity?" concluded that there is "strong evidence that TV advertising of foods and beverages has a direct influence on what children choose to eat." But the real evidence that marketing shapes kids' preferences comes from the industry itself: if marketing didn't influence demand, the food and beverage companies wouldn't pour billions of dollars into it each year.

**Children's advertising promotes junk.**

The food and beverage industry focuses their marketing efforts on promoting junk food to kids; not healthful foods. A recent analysis of television food advertising by Healthy Eating Research, a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, found that nearly all (98 percent) advertisements viewed by children and 89 percent of advertisements viewed by adolescents were for products that were high in fat, sugar or sodium.

**Exploiting young children**

Young kids can't tell the difference between televisions advertising and programming. They simply cannot effectively comprehend the persuasive intent of marketing messages. As a result, young children are a captive audience, and food and beverage companies are capitalizing on this opportunity to build brand loyalty at a very early age.

**Industry and government must act to protect kids' health.**

Arresting the current trends in children's diets and marketing require strong and active leadership and cooperation from *both* the public and private sectors. Government must pursue stricter regulation of food and beverage industry marketing and industry should stop opposing policy aimed at safeguarding children's health."

**Industry self regulation is not enough.**

With the introduction and rapid growth of digital advertising, which goes largely under the radar of parents and government, marketing approaches have become too sophisticated for self regulation to work — if it ever did. Industry's current token efforts at self- regulation undermine children's health, as well as parents ability feed their kids' healthfully.

**Government should assess and, where necessary, regulate food and beverage advertising to children.**

The Federal Trade Commission should accept responsibility for maintaining a watch on the food and beverage industry's effect on children's health. The FTC should institute strict and mandatory guidelines for products that can be marketed to children.

Government also can offer industry incentives (e.g., tax breaks) to develop healthy products.

**Work cited:**

*Food and Beverage Marketing to Children and Adolescents Research Brief*, October 2008  
Healthy Eating Research: A National Program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation