

Smarter than your average teen!

handout #2

a Media Literacy Curriculum for
DWI & Underage Drinking Prevention

Ad Decoder

(What Advertisers Don't Want You To Know)

The most common ways Advertisers get you to like their ads are:

1. **Using Humor**—The funnier an ad the better. When people are laughing, they're not usually thinking. Once an advertiser can shut down the thinking part of the brain, there's no limit to the crazy stuff people will believe is true.
2. **Being Cool**—Cool is it! The latest, hottest, hippest, trendiest, most outrageous, exciting, popular, in, stylin', super, extra, dupe, cool as cool can be, like ice, dude. Advertisers make their money by getting you to think something is cool. Whatever it takes to be the coolest, is what you'll see in ads that target teens.
3. **Don't Be Geeky**—The total opposite of Being Cool. Once advertisers can convince your friends that something is cool, they try to make you feel like a geek if you don't go along with what your friends believe. Some ads shame teens into using their products by saying they'll be geeks if they don't use the cool stuff they're selling. A spin-off on the Don't Be Geeky theme are ads telling you that some people just aren't cool enough to use their product, no matter how hard they try.
4. **Sexy Too**—Like a dog gnawing a bone, advertisers and media tells us most teens can't help thinking about or trying to be sexy. So ad after ad either has sexy people in them or promises that you'll be sexy if you just use their product.

5. **Even More Risky**—Here's the rub. Once your ads set up your product as successful and everybody thinks using it is cool, then a product or ad is seen as stale, over-hyped, or commercialized—right? So advertisers have to create ads that are even more cool in order to stay in business. They usually do this by showing people doing riskier and riskier things. So what if anybody gets hurt trying to be this cool? It's only advertising. Since ads try to be funny, we can laugh it off if people get hurt. And according to the ads, you can never be too cool no matter what it costs you. After all, advertisers don't have to pay the bills when people get hurt trying to do the stuff they sell.



"Here's a composite of our target consumer."