

# Ready. Set. ACTION!

**R**eady. Set. ACTION! is an essential introduction to media education, designed to teach youth the basic tools for critically evaluating media messages. The module provides two activities:

**Media Likes and Dislikes** focuses on what youth like and dislike about media, their levels of use, and the media channels and formats they prefer. Use the results of this activity to tailor *MediaSharp* to youth in your class or group.

**Reading Media** introduces youth to: (1) the normalization and glamorization of unhealthy lifestyles, (2) seven critical media questions, and (3) media mapping. These provide the basics of media analysis which are applied across all modules so youth can practice and improve their skills.

## TERMS & CONCEPTS

**Entertainment Media:** Media that give people a pleasing diversion. The main entertainment media are television, radio, movies, music, magazines, books, games, and computers.

**Glamorization:** Presentation of tobacco and alcohol use as glamorous—sexy, romantic, popular.

**Marketing:** The use of advertising, promotional activities (contests, “freebies”), and event sponsorship in order to make people aware of, attracted to, and, ultimately, willing to buy a product or service.

**Media Literacy:** The ability to “read” and produce messages in a variety of print and electronic media.

**News Media:** Media programs that tell us about events in our community and our world. The main news media are television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and computers.

**Normalization:** Presentation of tobacco and alcohol as a typical and acceptable part of social gatherings.

## Objectives

### Youth will:

- identify the type, amount, and nature of their use of media,
- conduct a basic reading of tobacco and alcohol media messages by applying critical media questions,
- define and identify examples of “normalization” and “glamorization” in the media.

# Media Likes and Dislikes

## Focus

Assess what youth like and dislike about the media, with attention to actions and attitudes that are seen as “normal” and “glamorous.”

## Time:

45 minutes

## Materials:

- *Handout 1: Home Media Inventory*
- *Handout 2: Letter to Parent(s)/Guardian(s)*
- *Handout 3: Media Tips for the Home*
- *Handout 5: The Seven Critical Media Questions*

## Talking Points

- Television and other media have significant power to educate, inform, and influence the way we see ourselves and others. The media help define what is good, valued, expected, normal, and glamorous. These definitions often influence how we feel and act.
- The media send out lots of messages about lifestyle choices. Typically, there is no presentation or discussion of the harmful outcomes of smoking or drinking, such as cancer, heart disease, or alcohol-related car crashes. The learning unit we’re starting today is designed to develop skills in analyzing the media.

## Action Steps

1 Discuss which media youth use and like most:

? **What types of media do you like most? Least? Why?**

### EXAMPLES:

Television, radio, music CDs and cassettes, movies, magazines, books, newspapers, computer games and programs, online services, the Internet.

? **What particular media programs/content do you like most? Least? Why?**

### EXAMPLES:

MOVIES/TV: sitcoms, dramas, romances, adventures, sci-fi, talk shows, sports.

MUSIC/RADIO: rap, pop, rock 'n' roll, country.

MAGAZINES: sports, beauty, fitness, fashion, music, cars.

? **What media characters do you like most? Least? Why? Are their behaviors healthy or unhealthy?**

? **What media personalities/actors do you like most? Least? Why? Are their behaviors healthy or unhealthy?**

# Reading Media

## Talking Points

- More than ever, the ability to think, read, and write are important to personal success. By helping us to gather information, make informed choices, and convey our personal thoughts and feelings, these skills help us interact with others effectively.
- Because of a tremendous increase in use of new media technologies—such as digital, interactive, and other computer-generated innovations—*literacy* means more today than being able to read and write printed text. We need to be able to interpret *and* produce messages using these electronic technologies. In short, we need to be *media literate*.
- Over the next few days/weeks, we will be examining ways to “read” and produce multimedia messages, including TV, radio, music, videos, and photographs, as well as traditional print media such as newspapers and magazines. We will also focus on the ability to read *behind* messages to identify the underlying intentions of specific messages. In particular, we will explore what media messages want from us—what they want us to believe, feel, and do.
- We’re going to begin today by examining the key skills necessary to being a sophisticated reader of *all media*.

## Action Steps

**1** Have youth exhibit the examples of the advertisements they found. For the moment, exclude those that promote tobacco and alcohol.

Have youth classify their ads into categories. For example, identify all those that feature people versus just the product, those focusing on men and women together versus just men or women, those focusing on groups of people versus one or two people. Discuss the following:

- ? **Which ads do you like the best? Least?**
- ? **Why do you feel the way you do about specific ads? Do you think the way these are created have anything to do with your feelings about them?**

### Focus attention on:

- featured models/characters
- ethnicity/race
- gender and age
- physical appearance and clothing
- setting or activity shown
- size and content of the text
- colors used
- picture angle/distance

**2** Distribute *Handout 4: Glamorization Appeals*. Discuss the appeals to ensure youth understand them. Discuss how they may be used to make product use appear “normal” and “routine.” Have youth identify additional appeals and examples of each type of appeal in their collected ads.

### Focus

Provide a basic introduction to advertising methods for normalizing and glamorizing products, with a particular emphasis on tobacco and alcohol.

### Time:

90 minutes. (This could be a two-period activity.)

### Materials:

- Advertising examples
- *Handout 4: Glamorization Appeals*
- *Handout 5: The Seven Critical Media Questions*
- *Video—Part I*

**3** Now focus on the tobacco and alcohol advertisements. Classify glamorization appeals in these ads. Discuss how these ads compare with the ads discussed in Step 1.

**4** Distribute and review *Handout 5: The Seven Critical Media Questions*. Discuss the nature and purpose of each question. Have youth select one tobacco or alcohol advertisement and analyze the ad using the relevant questions.

*OPTIONAL: If you didn't show the Video—Part I during Activity 1, it may be useful to show it here as a demonstration of the pervasiveness of tobacco and alcohol messages.*