LESSON 4: Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY OPTION 1</th>
<th>Introductory Skit</th>
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**OBJECTIVE this activity supports:** Introduction to lesson

**MATERIALS NEEDED**
- Appropriate Consumer Crew Characters
- Paper Bags for Puppets

**TIME**
2 to 3 minutes

**Responsible Rex:** I may be big, but I can’t count on my size to keep me from having problems with things I buy. Consumer rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. One can never take the place of the other.

**Choosy Charli:** Well, I know what’s right for me.

**Responsible Rex:** Knowing what’s right for you means knowing what you want from what you buy. The consumer rights I’m talking about are the rights we have to get information about products we’re buying. We have a right to know that what we buy is what we want... like knowing my in-liners are intended for people our age, which company makes them, and how you use them safely.

**Choosy Charli:** I see what you mean.

**Responsible Rex:** Consumers have other rights, too—like a right to safe products. But rights come with responsibilities! That means we are expected to use the things we buy the right, safe way.

**Choosy Charli:** But sometimes I get things that don’t work—even when I follow directions.

**Responsible Rex:** That’s why we have a right to complain, but we have a responsibility to know how to solve our consumer problems. Come with me, and we’ll learn more about being smart, safe consumers.

Rex and Charli are both pretty sharp consumers. They will be teaching us about our rights and responsibilities as consumers. Like Rex said, rights and responsibilities go together. We don’t have one without the other. In our activities today, we will learn ways to get and use information to help us be responsible consumers and how to act on our rights if we have problems.
LESSON 4: Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY OPTION 2</th>
<th>Safety First Worksheet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OBJECTIVE this activity supports: Youth will explore consumer rights, including rights to product safety, to accurate information, and to expect products to perform intended tasks.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Safety First Worksheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pens or pencils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TIME | 15 minutes |

Leader Preparation

Gather all the necessary supplies. Review the activity ahead of time to be sure you have all the information and supplies you will need. You will need one copy of the Safety First Worksheet for every two members of your group.

Instructions

Introduction: Consumers have a right to expect the things they buy to be safe. Manufacturers are responsible for making sure that the products they make and sell are safe.

We will learn about four federal agencies that are responsible for enforcing laws to protect consumers. The first one we’ll learn about is the Consumer Product Safety Commission. This agency gathers information about people who go to emergency rooms when they have accidents and how these people got hurt. If similar problems happen often across the country, then the Consumer Product Safety Commission will print a consumer alert to let people know that the product involved has a safety problem. The Commission also works with companies that make these products to get the product either taken off the market or repaired for the consumer.

Consumers are responsible for following safety directions on product packages and to use common sense in operating or using consumer products. Let’s find some ways that many people do not use products safely.

To Play

1. Divide the group into teams of two.
2. Give each team a copy of the “Safety First” picture.
3. Give the teams 2 minutes to circle the ways the consumer family in the picture uses products unsafely. Can they find at least 20 unsafe consumer habits?

Summary: Our consumer world can be as safe as we make it. Products can be made to be safe, but if they are used unsafely they can cause someone to be hurt.

Discussion Questions
If Responsible Rex had followed you today and watched you, what ideas might he have shared to help you use products more safely?

If Responsible Rex visited your home, what ideas might he share to help your family use products more safely?

Summary Points

- Responsible Rex reminds us that safety is both a consumer right and a consumer responsibility.
- Consumers have a right to expect the things they buy to be safe.
- Manufacturers are responsible for testing the products they make to be sure they are safe.
- Consumers are responsible for following safety directions on product packages and for using common sense in operating or using consumer products.
Safety First Worksheet Leader Answer Key

1. Breakable items are not packed safely for storage in the attic.
2. The fan cord in the child's bedroom could cause someone to trip.
3. The protective grill has been removed from the fan in the child's bedroom.
4. The curtain in the child's bedroom is blowing near a lighted candle.
5. Items small enough to make a child choke are left on the floor, and the iron cord is within reach of the child's play area.
6. The iron is left plugged in when the mother is leaving the room.
7. The mother has items stacked too high to see where she is walking and is about to trip over the cat and fall down the stairs.
8. The vaporizer/steamer is set too high, making too much steam. It could go dry and ruin the appliance or be a burn hazard for the baby.
9. The cord for the electric hair dryer is too near the water in the sink and could cause electrical shock.
10. The radio plug is too near the bathtub, and, because the radio shelf sticks out over the tub, someone could hit his or her head when standing up.
11. A breakable bottle has been left on the edge of the tub where it could be easily knocked off and broken.
12. Water splashed on the floor from the tub has not been wiped up quickly to keep people from slipping and falling.
13. Medicines are in a cabinet that is not locked and is in a place where a child could climb up and get the medicine.
14. A rocking chair is used as a step-stool.
15. Papers are left near the fireplace and the furnace.
16. Electric cords are under the carpet and around the TV leg.
17. The stairs are littered with things that could make someone fall.
18. An electric cord crosses the stove top.
19. The handle of the saucepan is turned outward.
20. The kitchen cabinets do not have child-proof latches.

There are other unsafe practices shown in the picture, too. You and the youth may come up with other correct answers.
**LESSON 4: Consumer Rights and Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY OPTION 3</th>
<th>Safety Labels on Products</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OBJECTIVE this activity supports:</strong> Youth will explore consumer rights, including the rights to product safety, to accurate information, and to expect products to perform intended tasks.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **MATERIALS NEEDED** | • "Safety Labels on Products" Activity Sheet.  
• Variety of consumer goods for comparison. (Have at least one product in a plastic bag that carries a warning label about keeping it out of the reach of children.)  
• Pens or pencils |
| **TIME** | 25 minutes |

**Leader Preparation**

Gather the necessary supplies.

Have examples of consumer products with label information that tells consumers how to use the product safely (such as cereals, in-liners, boom boxes—at least two examples of each product). Save a plastic bag that carries a label about keeping it out of the reach of children. Put one of the products in the bag and make sure the youth see the warning.

Make enough copies of "Safety Labels on Products" activity sheet for the youth to have one for each type of product.

**Instructions**

**INTRODUCTION** When you look closely at labels on products, you will find lots of information. Labels show the size and weight of the product and how to use it safely. They tell who makes the product and if the product has a guarantee or warranty to repair it if problems come up while the warranty is good. Consumers have the right to expect product labels to have correct information. Label information should help consumers decide if the product is what they want. Consumers are responsible for following instructions, using label information to make wise consumer choices, and using products safely.
Many government agencies work to help make consumer products safe. We will look at three.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission keeps a watch on the kinds of accidents people have had when they go to an emergency room for treatment. If a product seems to be the cause of lots of accidents, the Consumer Product Safety Commission sends a consumer alert to news people and works with the manufacturer to take the product off the market or replace the ones consumers have bought with safer models.

The Food and Drug Administration tests products that are sold as a way people can improve their health. For a company to make such claims, tests have to show that the product is safe to use and can do what the maker says it will.

The United States Department of Agriculture checks many of our food products to be sure they are safe to eat. They use labels to show that the meat, eggs, or other foods are USDA-approved. Some foods also have a USDA label that shows the consumer the grade or quality of the food.

The activity we will be doing now will help you learn to spot information and government safety symbols on products. This information will help you find safe products when you shop.

To Play

Responsible Rex avoids consumer problems. Before he buys, Rex gets information from product labels and other reliable sources that test and certify products.

For the next 15 minutes, you will be Responsible Rex, shopping for: (list the types of products you’ve brought, like cereal, in-liners, boomboxes). On the “Safety Labels on Products” activity sheet, write what you can find out about each brand or style of the product. You may work alone or with a partner. Decide which brand or style is the safest for you to use. Be ready to explain your reasons for your choice.

SUMMARY Our consumer world can be as safe as we make it. Product labels give us clues about the safety of different choices we have when we shop. Products can be made to be safe, but when they are used unsafely they can cause someone to get hurt.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions to discuss the choices the young people made in the game.

✔ What information or instructions help a consumer safely use the product you chose?

✔ How much more or less did the safer product cost than the other choices?

✔ How can you use your consumer’s rights and responsibilities for product safety when you are shopping?

SUMMARY POINTS

Responsible Rex could just say “I’m so big and fearsome, I don’t have to worry about safety,” but he knows safety is every consumer’s right and responsibility.

✔ Consumers have a right to expect the things they buy to be safe.

✔ Manufacturers are responsible for making sure that the products they make and sell are safe.

✔ Consumers are responsible for following safety directions on product packages and for using common sense in operating or using consumer products.

✔ Three federal agencies are responsible for enforcing laws to protect consumers. They are the Consumer Product Safety Commission, Food and Drug Administration, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY OPTION 4</th>
<th>Product Choice</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OBJECTIVE this activity supports:</strong> Youth will explore consumer rights, including rights to product safety, to accurate information, and to expect products to perform intended tasks.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Product Choice Activity Sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Products to compare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pens or pencils</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teen or adult helpers</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel time to and from the store and 20 minutes in the store.</td>
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Leader Preparation

Make arrangements with a local store for your group to compare items and make choices using product label information. Arrange to have a place for the youth to meet when they have made their choice and to share their decisions. Gather necessary supplies.

* One copy of the "Product Choice" Activity Sheet for each youth.
* A pencil or pen for each youth.
* Teen or adult helpers to go with the youth to different shopping areas in the store.

Instructions

**INTRODUCTION:** Consumers have a right to expect the things they buy to be safe. Manufacturers are responsible for ensuring that the products they make and sell are safe. Consumers are responsible for choosing products that carry signs of safety on their labels, following safety directions on product packages, and using common sense in operating or using consumer products.

Four federal agencies help protect consumers from unsafe products. The Consumer Product Safety Commission finds products that cause a lot of accidents and removes them from the market place. The Federal Trade Commission makes sure information on products is truthful, and that products can do what they claim to do. The Food and Drug Administration tests products that claim to improve our health, and they do not allow products to be sold that cannot do what they claim they can do in repeated tests. The United States Department of Agriculture checks foods for safety, making sure that places where food is processed use safe food handling practices. They also test meat, eggs, and other foods to be sure they are safe.

Product labels will have symbols to show if an agency has tested and approved them. Product labels also give consumers a lot of information that helps them decide which brand is the best buy. Labels show the size or age of the person who should be able to use it, how to use it safely, how to put it together if it comes in pieces, and who makes it. Labels will tell the consumer if the maker guarantees that it works and how long the consumer has to get it replaced or get his or her money back if the product does not work.

The activity we are doing today will give you a chance to discover the kinds of information you can find on product labels. You will use the information you find on labels of different brands of the same product to decide which one is the best buy.
To Play

1. Take a field trip to an area store (a shopping mall, a grocery store, etc.) where youth can compare three similar products to collect information for use in decision making. Make sure the youth understand that they will be comparing products, not stores.

2. Before you get to the store, ask the youth to think of an item they plan to buy soon at the type of store you will be touring. Give each youth a copy of the worksheet. Have the young people write what they want to shop for by "item." How much could they spend to buy the item when they buy it? Write the amount by "budget."

3. Now, take youth to the part of the store where the product they want to shop for is on display. Tell them to compare three items that are similar to the item they intend to buy. Use product information to compare the qualities they want or find in different brands of the same type of product.

4. Tell them that in 10 minutes you will meet them at a place in the store you have arranged to use. When you meet, the group will share what they found. They will decide how to make a wise consumer decision. Which brand is best? Why?

SUMMARY Many products in the store look alike. When you study information on the labels you can find out how they are different and who has tested them to be sure they are safe to use.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Group youth together who shopped for similar types of products.)

✓ What did you shop for and how much difference did you find in different brands?
✓ What kind of information about the product did you find on the labels?
✓ Using the information you found, which one did you decide was the best buy? Why?
✓ How can you use this shopping skill when shopping with your friends or family?

SUMMARY POINTS

✓ Consumers have a right to information about the products they buy... who makes them, who tests them for safety, how to use them safely, and what they can or cannot be expected to do.
✓ Consumers have a responsibility to decide before they buy what qualities they want in things they buy — what they can expect the products to do.
✓ Consumers have a responsibility to read labels and choose safe products that have the qualities they want.
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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY OPTION 5</th>
<th>How Do You Feel About Complaining?</th>
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**OBJECTIVE this activity supports:** Youth will explore consumer responsibilities, including using products in a safe manner, using information to make better decisions, and learning to take appropriate action when a product does not meet expectations.

**MATERIALS NEEDED**
- "How Do You Feel About Complaining?" Activity Sheet

**TIME**
- 20 minutes

**Leader Preparation**

Gather the necessary supplies. As the youth arrive, ask three people to prepare to role-play each of the three situations shown on the "How Do You Feel About Complaining?" Activity Sheet. Each actor shows a different way the consumer might react.

When each role play is ended, have the other youth in the group show how they would react by standing by the person who acted as they would. Ask the youth to share why they would react that way. Which way would be most likely to get good results?

**Instructions**

**INTRODUCTION:** Consumers have a right to expect products to do what they claim they can do. Product makers are responsible for ensuring that their product can do the tasks it is intended to do. Consumers are responsible for taking the right action when a product does not do what it should do. Consumers have a right to complain when they:

1. have followed directions and used the product as it was intended.
2. are honest in reporting a complaint.

What steps should you take if you think you have a valid complaint? First, go back to the seller and describe the problem. If the seller doesn’t solve the problem, write a letter to the company. If the company does not resolve the problem, contact the agency that provides enforcement for that type of company.

Some of you have been asked to role-play some consumer problems. As each role play ends, you will show how you would react by standing by the person who acted as you would. Then we will share why we would react that way. Let’s see the first situation.

Would anyone have reacted in some other way? How? Which way do you think would be most likely to get good results? Why?

Has anyone had to make a complaint about something that did not work as it should? Please share how you handled the complaint. Would you do anything differently now if you had the same problem?

**SUMMARY** Responsible Rex reminds us that consumers have a right to expect products to do what they are made to do. Consumers are responsible for taking the right actions when a product does not meet their expectations.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

✓ When does a consumer have a valid complaint? (The product was used as intended, directions were followed, and consumer is honest in reporting.)

✓ What steps should you take if you have a problem with something you buy? (Take the product and your receipt and go back to the seller. Describe the problem. If the seller will not replace it or refund your money, write a letter to the company that makes it. If neither the seller or nor the maker helps you, contact the agency that enforces consumer policy for the type of product you bought.)

✓ Have you ever had a problem with something you bought? What did you do? What will you do next time this happens?

SUMMARY POINTS

☞ Read labels before you buy. Choose products that do what you need them to do.

☞ When products do not meet your expectations, return them for exchange or to get your money returned. Be sure to take your receipt.

☞ If the store does not correct the problem, write to the company that makes the product. If necessary, write to the government agency for the kind of item you bought.
**How Do You Feel About Complaining?**

Your leader has asked you to act out one of these situations with two of your group members. Each of you will show one way the consumer might react. After the role-play is over, the youth in your group will show how they would react by standing by the person who acted as they would. Their decision to stand by an actor is a choice about how they would act if they faced the situation in real life.

### Situation #1

You are eating dinner in a restaurant and order a baked potato. The waitress brings you french fries instead. You don't really like french fries, but the restaurant is crowded and the waitress is very busy. How do you react?

| You feel embarrassed, and you eat the french fries. | You ask the waitress to take the french fries back and bring a baked potato. | You get irritated, pound on the table, and yell. |

### Situation #2

Your favorite jeans are wearing out. They have the exact same jeans at the store where you bought the first pair. You pick out your size and try them on quickly for fit. When you put them on at home, someone notices that the seam in the seat is crooked and coming apart. How do you react?

| You tell yourself, “Too bad, it's my own fault.” | You take the jeans and the sales slip back to the store. You explain the problem and ask for another pair of jeans that has good seams. | You get angry and call up the store and give them a piece of your mind. |

### Situation #3

You are walking through a local department store and hear a friend arguing with a salesperson about the shirt he is trying to return because “it doesn’t fit.” You notice that it’s the same shirt he wore to the picnic on Saturday where he was playing volleyball and football. What’s your reaction?

| You think, “He’s a creep, but it’s not my problem.” | You tell him you thought it looked good on him when he wore it to the picnic Saturday. | You think he’s doing the right thing. |
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ACTIVITY OPTION 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is This A Valid Complaint?</th>
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**OBJECTIVE this activity supports:** Youth will explore consumer responsibilities, including using products in a safe manner, using information to make better decisions, and learning to take appropriate action when a product does not meet expectations.

**MATERIALS NEEDED**
- "Is This a Valid Complaint?" Activity Sheet
- "Where to Go For Consumer Assistance" Activity Sheet
- Boxes of products like the ones in the product complaint list, if available. A store might loan them to you. (Boom box, clock, cereal box, new pencils in package, microwave popcorn, sunscreen)
- Sample complaint letters the leader writes
- Pens or pencils

**TIME**
15 minutes

Leader Preparation

Review the activity to understand the information and tools needed to lead it. Gather the necessary supplies. Sample boxes are not required, but, if they are available, the youth can find product information and manufacturer's names and addresses to use in writing their letters. This will help them connect product label information to the steps they take to solve a consumer problem. You might also make up sales receipts.

Instructions

**INTRODUCTION:** Consumers have a right to expect products they buy to do intended tasks. Manufacturers are responsible for ensuring that their products can do the tasks they are intended to do. Consumers are responsible for taking the right action when a product does not do what it should do. Consumers have a right to complain when they:

1. have used the product as it was intended.
2. have followed directions for use.
3. are honest in reporting a complaint.
The steps for complaining the right way are:

1. Go back to the seller and describe the problem.

2. If the seller doesn’t offer a solution you will accept, write a letter to the company that makes the product. Tell them about the problem and your attempt to solve it with the seller. Send copies of your receipts and warranty.

3. If the company does not resolve the problem, write to the agency that provides enforcement for that type of company. Tell them about the problem and the steps you have taken to solve it through the seller and manufacturer. Send copies of your letter to the manufacturer, your receipts, and the warranty. Always keep the originals of your receipt and warranty for your own records.

Solving problems can take weeks or months. The best solution is to shop carefully and avoid problems. However, almost every consumer will face a problem with something he or she buys. The activity in this lesson helps you know how to solve a consumer problem and feel good about doing so.

To Play

1. Give each youth the Activity Sheet, “Is This a Valid Complaint?” Be sure they know what the word “valid” means. They may work in teams of two or three.

2. First, they decide if the consumer has a valid complaint. If they think the complaint is valid, let them tell what they would do to solve the problem with the seller.

3. Pretend the seller did not solve the problem. Now, what would they do? If the seller does not solve the problem, which source of help listed on the back of the activity sheet would they write to for help? Let them choose to write a letter to the manufacturer or to the appropriate agency for the “valid complaint” of their choice.

4. Share your sample letters to help them see the examples of key facts to use in their letter.

5. After 10 minutes, lead the group in sharing their answers.

SUMMARY  When a product does not do what it was made to do and the seller will not solve the problem, consumers can write to the company that makes the product to ask to have it repaired or replaced. If the manufacturer does not solve the problem, then the consumer asks the protection agency that regulates the type of product involved to help solve the problem.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

✓ Have you ever had something you bought not work as it should? What did you do?
✓ To which source of help would you take the problem?
✓ What would happen if consumers did not return or report products that do not work as they should?

SUMMARY POINTS

❖ When you shop carefully and follow instructions to use the things you buy, you have the right to expect the things you buy to work.
❖ If you have problems with the things you buy, first go to the seller and then to the maker to try to solve the problem.
❖ If the seller and maker will not help you with problems you have with the things they sell you, contact the consumer protection agency that works with the type of product involved.
### Is This A Valid Complaint?

**Leader’s Key: Why Each Case Is or Is Not A Valid Complaint**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Description</th>
<th>Decision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A boom box was brought home in a sealed box. When the box was opened, the boom</td>
<td>Valid:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box had no control cord.</td>
<td>Consumers should expect all parts to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The advertisement said, &quot;Now at $20,&quot; but the store said the sign should have</td>
<td>Valid:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read $30.</td>
<td>Advertisements that are wrong should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be honored by the store.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A company advertised that you could get a Dallas Cowboys cap for two cereal box</td>
<td>Valid:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tops and $5.00. You sent your box tops and money and have received nothing.</td>
<td>If you have waited long enough to hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from the advertiser, write to them and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>send a copy of your letter to the Federal Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commission. It regulates truth in advertising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sunscreen you used caused a terrible rash.</td>
<td>Not valid:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The store may choose to replace it. The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>store and maker cannot be responsible for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>allergies we may have. Consumers should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>read labels to be sure products do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have anything in them that we know</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>causes us to have an allergic reaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A box of microwave popcorn you bought contained 3 packages. When you tried to</td>
<td>Valid:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pop the corn, only about half of the kernels in each package popped.</td>
<td>Not all popcorn kernels will pop, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>most of them should. Return it to the store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for replacement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You bought some yellow pencils for school. The first time you used the first</td>
<td>Not valid:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pencil, it broke.</td>
<td>The store cannot be responsible for how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>consumers use a product. If more than</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one broke in normal use, you might</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have a complaint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You bought a clock for your parents. It cost $40. When you put in batteries, it</td>
<td>Valid:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>didn’t work. The problem could be the batteries.</td>
<td>A new clock with batteries should run.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take the clock and batteries to the store.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You bought a box of your favorite cereal. On the box it said, &quot;Free pack of</td>
<td>Valid:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gum inside.&quot; You didn’t find any gum.</td>
<td>The store where you bought the cereal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>may or may not give you the gum. If other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>people had the same problem, they will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>probably believe you. If not, you may need</td>
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<td></td>
<td>an adult to go with you to convince the sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>person that you did not simply chew it or</td>
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<td></td>
<td>lose it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY SHEET: IS THIS A VALID COMPLAINT?

The word valid means justified, based on truth or fact or convincing evidence.

Read each product case and decide whether or not the consumer has a valid complaint. Put a check by your answer.

Then, when your group leader reads each case aloud, if you think the consumer has a valid complaint, stand up. If you think it is not a valid complaint, stay seated. If you're not sure, take a position between standing and sitting.

Be ready to tell your reasons for your choice. If you think it is a valid complaint, check the list on the back of this sheet and decide which agency you might contact for help after first trying to get the seller and the manufacturer to solve the problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Case</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>Where to Get Help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A boom box was brought home in a sealed box. When the box was opened, the boom box had no control cord.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The advertisement said, &quot;Now at $20,&quot; but the store said the ad should have read $30.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A company advertised that you could get a Dallas Cowboys cap for two cereal box tops and $5.00. You sent your box tops and money and have received nothing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sunscreen you used caused a terrible rash.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A box of microwave popcorn you bought contained 3 packages. When you tried to pop the corn, only about half of the kernels in each package popped.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You bought some yellow pencils for school. The first time you used the first pencil, it broke.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You bought a clock for your parents. It cost $40. When you put in batteries, it didn’t work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You bought a box of your favorite cereal. On the box it said, &quot;Free pack of gum inside.&quot; You didn’t find any gum.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY SHEET
WHERE TO GO FOR CONSUMER ASSISTANCE

Better Business Bureaus
Better Business Bureaus are non-profit organizations sponsored by local businesses. BBBS offer a variety of consumer education programs and materials, provide general information on companies, handle consumer inquiries, mediate and arbitrate complaints, and maintain records of consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction with individual companies.

Consumer Product Safety Commission
Room 410C
500 South Evay
Dallas, Texas 7520

The CPSC handles complaints about severe safety problems on common household and recreational products.

Federal Trade Commission
Dallas Regional Office
500 South Ervay
Room 452B
Dallas, Texas 7520

The FTC investigates complaints of deceptive selling practices, including false, untrue, or misleading advertising. It also investigates possible violation of the federal Truth-in-Lending Law.

Food and Drug Administration
3032 Bryan Street
Dallas, Texas 75204
214/749-2735

The FDA investigates complaints of contaminated or otherwise harmful food, drugs, or cosmetics.

United States Department of Agriculture
Office of the Consumer Advisor
Washington, DC 20250
202/382-9681

USDA checks companies that process food to be sure that safe food handling practices are used. They also test meat, eggs, and other foods to be sure they are safe.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20590

NHTSA is concerned with vehicle and traffic safety and is interested in reports of unsafe vehicles or vehicular products not corrected by local dealers or the manufacturer.

Educational programs of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age or national origin.

LESSON 4: Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY OPTION 7</th>
<th>Complaining the Right Way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**OBJECTIVE this activity supports:** Youth will explore consumer responsibilities including using products in a safe manner, using information to make better decisions, and learning to take appropriate action when a product does not meet their expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sample Complaint Letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pens or pencils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TIME | 15 to 20 minutes |

**Leader Preparation**

Make copies of the sample letter with problem situations on the back of the letter.

Gather pencils or pens and blank paper for youth to use in writing a letter. Use a consumer problem you know youth in your area typically encounter and write letters to the manufacturer and the appropriate protection agency to have as examples for them to see. Use the sample letter in this activity guide to help make sure you include all the information needed in the letter.

**Instructions**

**INTRODUCTION**

Have you shopped carefully for something and followed the instructions for using it, but it still did not work as it should? When this happens, take the product and your receipt to the seller and describe the problem. If the seller doesn’t offer a solution you will accept, write a letter to the company that makes the product. Tell them about the problem and how you tried to solve it with the seller. Send copies of your receipt and warranty. If the company does not resolve the problem, write to the agency that enforces product safety laws for that type of product. Tell them about the problem and steps you have taken to solve it through the seller and manufacturer. Send copies of your letter to the manufacturer, your receipt, and the warranty. Always keep the originals of your receipt and warranty for your records.
Solving problems can take weeks or months. The best solution is to shop carefully and avoid problems. However, almost every consumer will face a problem with something he or she buys. The activity in this lesson helps you know how to get help from a consumer protection agency to help you solve a consumer problem and feel good about doing so.

To Play:

1. Divide the youth into three groups. Give each group a sample letter, blank sheets of paper, and a pen or pencil. Number the groups 1, 2, and 3, so each is assigned a different problem situation.

2. Tell the youth, “We’re going to pretend that someone in your group has experienced the problem you have been given. Each person will write a letter and share it with the group. As a group, come up with a final complaint letter to present to our total group.”

3. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for the groups to write their letters.

4. Bring the entire group back together and ask the sub-groups to share their letters by reading them aloud.

5. After all the sub-groups have read their letters, ask
   ✔ Group #3, if you received the letter from group #1, how would you answer?
   ✔ Group #1, how would you answer group #2’s letter?
   ✔ Group #2, how would you answer group #3’s letter?

SUMMARY: Responsible Rex knows that, even when we shop carefully, we can buy some things that don’t work as they should. When this happens, we first ask the seller to help us. If they can’t or won’t solve the problem, we write to the maker. We describe the problem and send copies of our receipt; we may even need to send the product. We give them time to answer, and let them know we know which agency to ask to help us if the maker does not solve the problem. If the company that makes the product does not repair or replace it, or does not refund our money, we need to write to the consumer protection agency for the kind of product involved. In letters to a consumer protection agency we need to tell them just the facts, and send them copies of the letter we wrote to the manufacturer, our receipt, and the warranty. The agency may or may not be able to solve the problem, but they cannot know consumers are having problems with a product unless consumers tell them. When they see that many consumers are having a problem with a product, they can take action.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

✓ What did you learn today that you will use if you need to write a letter about a problem with product you bought?
✓ Where could you find the name and address of the company that makes a product?
✓ What kind of information do you need to put in your letter?
✓ What might you have to send with the letter? Why would you not send the original bill?

SUMMARY POINTS:

✓ When you shop carefully and follow instructions to use things you buy, you have the right to expect the things you buy to work.
✓ When the seller cannot or will not solve a problem with something you bought, write a letter to the company that makes it.
✓ When writing a letter to the maker of a problem product, tell them:
  • exactly what the problem is.
  • how you tried to solve the problem with the seller.
  • what you expect the maker to do to solve the problem.
  • which agency you will ask to help you if the maker does not answer your letter.
SAMPLE COMPLAINT LETTER

Appropriate Person
President or Director of Customer Relations
Company Name
Street Address
City, State, and ZIP Code

Dear Sir or Madam:
The purpose of this letter is to tell you about my problem with (name of product with serial number or the service performed) which I bought (the date and location of purchase).

My complaint concerns (the reason for your complaint). To solve the problem, I would like (the specific action you desire for satisfaction).

I look forward to your reply and resolution to my complaint. I will allow two weeks before referring it to the appropriate consumer agency.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your Name

Enclosures: (Include copies of all related records. Do not send originals!)
PROBLEM SITUATION 1
You sent for the cassette tape "The Top 40" that was advertised on TV. When you opened the package, you discovered the tape was in three pieces.
Write a letter explaining the situation and ask for a replacement tape.

The Top 40
Box 492
Lyon, NY 20631

PROBLEM SITUATION 2
You purchased a frozen pizza which was labeled "Ma's Super Supreme." When you opened the package, you discovered the pizza had only cheese on it, even though the package listed cheese, mushrooms, pepperoni, and sausage.
Write a letter to the company asking for a refund.

Ma's Pizza
104 Lincoln Avenue
Perryville, NJ 01562

PROBLEM SITUATION 3
You purchased a shirt at Maines Brothers' Department Store. The first time you washed it (according to the directions on the care label), it fell apart. The store would not exchange it or give you a refund because it was on sale.
Write a letter to the shirt manufacturer asking for a refund or replacement.

Mr. John Monroe, President
Kay's Manufacturer
311 Hill Avenue
Colby, KS 26457
LESSON 4: Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY OPTION 8</th>
<th>Concluding Skit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OBJECTIVE this activity supports:</strong></td>
<td>Conclusion to lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MATERIALS NEEDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Puppet faces for Choisy Charli and Responsible Rex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Paper bags for puppets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TIME</strong></td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Closing Skit

**Choosy Charli:** Rex, now I understand why you make sure you’re wearing your helmet and pads for your elbows and knees when you’re in-line skating—you’re being responsible as a consumer!

**Responsible Rex:** It pays to use my rights to product information before and after I buy. Sometimes, though, it’s good to know we have rights to safe products. If we just look for the symbols that show us something has been tested to be sure it’s safe, like my electric robot, we can “buy safe.”

**Choosy Charli:** Well, after today’s lesson, I’m sure going to be more responsible. I’m going to feel better about going to the store and returning things that don’t work and reporting things that aren’t safe—like my little brother’s stuffed animal that has button eyes that came off. He almost ate them!

**Responsible Rex:** You know, being a smart consumer is a big responsibility...even for a big guy like me.

Consumer product safety is both a right and a responsibility. Products in the store are expected to be safe. Consumers are expected to use them safely. When problems happen, the consumer has to take action. First try to work out the problem with the seller, then with the company that makes the product. If they will not work with you, write to the consumer protection agency that enforces laws to protect consumers from problems with products like the one you have. If consumers do not report problems, the agency will not know about the unsafe product. Being a safe consumer is a big responsibility—it’s a sign that you are a responsible person.

Ask the youth to complete the lesson evaluation.

Explain the family activity sheet for this lesson. Be sure they take home the activity sheets you chose to use in the lesson. Encourage them to tell other family members how to use product information to choose safe products and use them safely, and how to get help in solving problems that are valid complaints. Remind them that, if they have consumer problems they cannot solve, they can call their county Extension agent, who will guide them to other sources of help. Be sure to write the Extension agent’s name and phone number on the family activity sheet.
Family Page

Your child took a big step today in growing up. We learned about consumer rights and responsibilities. You can continue this learning experience when you shop together and when your child experiences problems with things he or she buys.

The activity sheet, "Product Choice," can be used when your child wants to buy something. Encourage your child to search for information about the product to match it with his or her needs and wants and to make a safe product choice. Which one is the right size, for the right age level, safety-tested, serviced locally, or has a guarantee?

The complaint letter written in today's lesson can be kept as an example to use when problems come up with something your child buys. Remind him or her of the steps to take to explain the problem and what is expected for a good solution. First talk with the person they bought it from, then write to the manufacturer or an appropriate agency, if necessary. If you have questions or need information about agencies that help consumers with a different type of problem, let your child's group leader know. Our county Extension agent can help us locate the agency that covers the type of problem your child or your family is experiencing with a product.

Helping your child experience the responsibility of choosing safe products and solving problems encountered with products is a big step to building skills for solving other types of problems to be found in life. Our goal is to help youth learn to exercise both their rights and their responsibilities as consumers.