LESSON 5: Shopping Skills: Know Before You Go & Read Before You Buy

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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY 1</th>
<th>Introductory Skit</th>
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<td><strong>OBJECTIVE this activity supports:</strong> Introduction to lesson</td>
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<tr>
<th>MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
<th>Paper bags for puppets</th>
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<td>• Appropriate Consumer Crew Characters</td>
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Shawn Shopper: I love to shop—that’s why they call me Shawn Shopper. The thing I don’t like is making a decision. There are too many choices! Like, boom boxes—that’s really what I want to buy with my birthday money.

Money Max: I don’t think too much can be a bad thing! Think about too much chocolate cake!

Shawn Shopper: Too much chocolate cake gives you a stomach ache. There are too many choices when it comes to boom boxes, and that can give you a headache. There are dual cassettes, compact discs, equalizers, tweeters, and boomers! Batteries, a/c adapter (and I don’t mean air conditioners), warranties, and guarantees. Is bigger better? Is convenience more important? What if something breaks? I’m so confused. I need to learn how to become a smart shopper!

Summary Points

Shawn is a chameleon. He can look one color now and move to another spot and look another color. When you shop, do you find that sometimes the thing you buy looks different when you get it home and try to use it? Shawn Shopper will show you how to check things out before you buy them—how to figure out before you buy which brand or style gives you most of the things you want. You’ll save money and be happier with things you buy if you use Shawn Shopper’s shopping tips we’ll learn in today’s lesson.
LESSON 5: Shopping Skills: Know Before You Go & Read Before You Buy

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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY 2</th>
<th>Famous People</th>
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<td><strong>OBJECTIVE this activity supports:</strong> Youth will tell how advertising affects young consumers.</td>
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<td><strong>MATERIALS NEEDED</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ads from magazines featuring a famous person, who endorses the product. Choose a variety of celebrities appropriate for the age group.</td>
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<td>• Tape or pins</td>
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Leader Preparation
Gather the necessary supplies.

Instructions
As the individuals arrive, pin or tape an ad to each person's back so he or she cannot see it. When all have arrived, play the game “Famous People” described in the introduction.

This mixer gets youth involved in finding out information about a product as they try to figure out what ad they have on their back. When most have guessed their ad, use the Summary Discussion Questions to see what they learned about the product from the questions they asked. Close the activity by reviewing the Summary Points.

INTRODUCTION
No sales person, ad, or friend will trick Shawn Shopper into buying something unless Shawn really wants it. But even a shopper as smart as Shawn can be fooled if shopping is done carelessly. To Shawn, shopping is like in-line skating with Responsible Rex. Shopping takes some safety tools. The helmet is like the information you put into your mind to know how much you can spend and what you expect from something before you buy it. The pads are information you get about a product to know what's inside the box, who makes it and how you can return it or get it replaced or repaired if it doesn't work. Smart shoppers think about all their options before they glide into the checkout line. Shawn Shopper's key to being a super shopper is to never be afraid to get information and to think carefully about what something will do in return for what it costs before buying it. An ad has been pinned on your back. You don't know what the ad sells. This game will give you practice in getting information about something before you buy it. When I say start, choose someone to be your partner. The two of you should ask each other a question about your ad. Your question must ask for a "yes" or "no" answer. For example, "Is it something people wear?" Then give that person a chance to ask you about his or her ad. If you both get a "yes" answer, ask another question. If either of you gets a "no" answer, you have to go to find another partner for your next question.

If you think you have figured out what your ad sells, ask, "Is it (your guess)?" When you guess the product shown in the ad, tell what famous person is shown in the ad to encourage you to buy it. When I say stop, we'll see how many people have figured out their ads and find out what you learned about the product from the questions you asked.

Start the game. Stop in 5 minutes or as soon as everyone figures out his or her ad. Discuss their experience.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

✓ How many questions did it take for you to figure out what your ad sold? (Note that asking more questions even when we think we know what the product is can help a smart shopper get as much information as possible before making a decision.)
✓ What did you learn about the product from the questions you asked?
✓ What famous person tries to get you to buy this product?
✓ How does this person make you feel about the product?
✓ Does the ad push you to choose a want or a need?
✓ Which ad do you like? Why?
✓ Tell me about an ad you don't like. Why?
✓ How can ads help us decide what to buy?
✓ If you had the money to buy the product in your ad, would you buy it? Why or why not?
✓ How do ads influence what we buy? (Ads get us hooked on names, slogans, labels, famous people, jingles. Ads make us feel accepted, wanted, or happy, or they may make us feel we're missing out on something if we don't buy the product shown in the ad.)

Summary Points

♫ Shawn Shopper reminds us that, the more information we have about something before we buy it, the better decision we can make.
♫ Before shopping for something you should know:
  • what you expect the product to do.
  • if the product can do what you expect.
  • how much you are willing to pay for the product.
  • what information you will need to be sure the product is worth the price.

Don't let famous people, friends, ads, sales people, or other things pressure you into buying something that is not what you want or need or something that costs more than you are willing to pay.

Bonus Ideas

☆ Divide the group into two teams. Take turns with one team humming an ad tune and the other team guessing the name of the product associated with the tune. What words are used in the ad to make you want the product?
☆ Bring a poster and markers and let the group create an ad for recruiting other youth into the Consumer Critters Crew Project. Ask them to tell why they used the strategy they used.
LESSON 5: Shopping Skills: Know Before You Go & Read Before You Buy

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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY 3</th>
<th>There’s More to a Label Than a Name</th>
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<td>OBJECTIVE this activity supports:</td>
<td>Youth will gain skills in seeking quality for money spent.</td>
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| MATERIALS NEEDED | • Food, clothing, or cleaning products group members bring to the meeting.  
• Camp Over Game worksheet (bonus). |
| TIME | 15 minutes |

Leader Preparation

Gather the necessary supplies.

Instructions

Choose two or three product categories for this activity. Make sure to specify items with labels, such as canned or boxed foods, soaps, shampoos, cleaners, socks, garments, light bulbs, batteries. Ask each member of the group to bring one item, checking to make sure they know what their task is so you will be sure to have several different brands of each product. Have group members bring items labeled with the price. As they arrive, group similar products together. Cover the brand name if possible.

INTRODUCTION

Shawn Shopper could wear what his friends wear, eat what other Consumer Critters eat, and use cleaning and care products that his Consumer Critter friends use. Sometimes that is what happens, but when it does it’s because Shawn knows what he wants and reads labels to be sure he is getting what he wants. Sometimes Shawn wants and needs things other Consumer Critters don’t need or want, and that’s okay! In fact, Shawn helps other Consumer Critters be better shoppers by teaching them to know what they want and to study product labels to find the best way to get what they want and need. Let’s see how Shawn does this.
Food Labels
1. Give each person or team a canned or packaged food item, a blank sheet of paper, and a pencil. Youth can work as teams or individuals.
2. Ask the group members to list all the information Shawn and the other Consumer Critters can find on food labels:
   - the common name of the food.
   - consumer information, contact name, and telephone numbers.
   - contents and ingredients.
   - the amount of food in the package.
   - the unit cost per serving.
   - nutritional information.
   - other helpful information such as recipes, storage, illustration.

Clothing
1. Give out garments.
2. Ask, "If the Consumer Critters were shopping, what would they learn about these garments?"
   - Fiber content.
   - Care required—instructions must be readable and permanently attached to item.
   - Any special precautions or care.
   - Size.
   - Price.

Cleaning or personal care items
1. Give out the various items.
2. Ask, "If you were helping Shawn shop for cleaning or personal care items, what would these labels tell you about each product?"
   - Product name.
   - Manufacturer address or contact.
   - Safety precautions.
   - Ingredients.
   - Price.
   - Instructions for use.
   - Amount of product in package.
   - Whether packaging can be recycled.
Discussion Questions

✓ Shawn Shopper reminds us that there is more to a label than a name.
✓ What can you learn about a product from the label?
✓ Why would different brands of the same product cost different prices?
✓ How can a consumer know which one is the best buy?

Summary Points

Shawn Shopper reminds us to study information about something before we buy it.

★ When you go shopping, you should know:
  • what you expect the product to do.
  • how much you are willing to pay.
  • what information you will need to make sure the product is worth the price.

★ When you are shopping, read labels to know:
  • who has tested or inspected the product.
  • who makes it (how would you return it to the manufacturer if you had a problem?).
  • care required.
  • whether the instructions tell you how to assemble or use it properly and safely.
  • whether the product can do what you want it to do for you.

We have many sources of information: ads, tv, radio, papers, friends, salespeople, consumer magazines, and product labels. Don’t let famous people, friends, ads, or salespeople pressure you into buying something you don’t want or need or something that costs more than you are willing to pay.

Bonus Ideas

★ Three issues—quality, quantity, and price—all affect our decisions of which brand to buy. Put a sign on three walls of the room, one side labeled “quality,” one “quantity,” and one “price.” Review the product decisions the group made in the earlier lesson activity, and have the youth move to stand by the sign that shows which they thought was the most important of the three in their choice. Let each group tell why they made their choice. (This activity has no right answers. It helps youth recognize what product information is most valuable to them in each consumer decision.)

★ Camp-over game: Have the youth divide into groups of three. Give each group $5 in play money to spend for their camp-over. They are to buy three items they will need for the night and the morning meal. Using the worksheet showing a variety of foods, have them work together as a team to choose three food items without spending more than $5. Teams then share their choices and discuss why they chose the foods they selected. During the discussion, ask, “Is there one right answer?” Remind them that we all have different needs and we choose the items accordingly.

Note: It is important to encourage youth to be open-minded in looking for solutions to everyday problems. We all learn from each other, and it is good to share our information and ideas with others.
Camp-Over Game Spending Money
**LESSON 5 Shopping Skills: Know Before You Go & Read Before You Buy**

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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY 4</th>
<th>Rating Products</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OBJECTIVE this activity supports:</strong> Youth will comparison-shop using product labels, expert reports, and magazine, newspaper, radio, and tv ads.</td>
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<td><strong>MATERIALS NEEDED</strong></td>
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<td>• Two brands of three products appropriate for the age group. Show some product choices as new or used items; some as a magazine, catalog, or newspaper ad; and some as a radio or TV ad scripts.</td>
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<td>• Copies of Consumer Reports that feature at least one of the products to be rated.</td>
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<td>• Product Rating Worksheets (three for each person, one for each product they rate).</td>
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**Leader Preparation**

Gather the necessary supplies or arrange to go to appropriate store(s). Have a selection of at least four brands for each type of product to be compared. You will need brand-name and store-brand examples of the products being rated.

If this is your first time to lead a group in product rating, you may want to observe a leader working with a consumer decision-making group or a leader in an animal project going through the process of setting up classes, rating, giving reasons, and scoring individuals and teams.

Involving youth of this age group in rating products introduces them to the idea that different people rate products differently because they look for certain features or signs of quality that meet their needs or wants within a cost they can afford.

At least 2 weeks before using this activity, choose three products that youth in your group would buy. Think of each type of product (sneakers, shampoo, T-shirts) as a product class. Gather product information to be familiar with the characteristics to compare for each product and the signs of quality. *Consumer Reports*, Extension publications, and references your community librarian can help you find will give you facts about the products that are based on product tests. Have the information in a notebook or file folder for the youth to use as a study guide. Ask local stores to loan you two different brands of each product class or use items you may have at home. Be sure you have two different product choices for each class (a brand name and a store brand, or a “high” grade and a “low” grade). Remove or cover the brand name and use labels marked brand “A” and “B.”

Before the group members arrive, set up three stations (tables) in the room: one station (table) for each product class. Having a parent or teen leader at each station to help young raters understand the process is important, especially if you have a large group and rate all three product classes at one time.

Write in the product class for each station on the product rating worksheet master and have a copy for each youth.

Each person rates each product. Let the group decide what characteristics are important to rate for each product class. They can write this information on the worksheet before judging begins. When rating products, start with “appearance” characteristics first, because youth like products that look good. In the end, however, the item may not work well or taste good.
Allow 2 minutes for youth to judge the products in the class they have on the table in front of them. When the ratings are completed, take one product at a time and ask the youth to stand at the end of the table (left end for brand A, right end for brand B) to show which brand they think is the best buy. Let each group tell why they think their choice is the best product for the price. After each group has shared, rotate tables and repeat the process three times. Information about product ratings from earlier rounds gives youth in later rounds the benefit of opinions of “other experts” in the group. Wait until all the products have been rated to let youth know the brand names.

**INTRODUCTION**  
Shawn Shopper loves to go to the store. Every store is filled with so many different types of food, clothes, toys, and almost anything else you could want or need. At first it’s like a dream—you think “Wow, this is great!” Then comes the nightmare, how to choose the product you really want, the one that will do what you want or need it to do and costs no more than you have to spend.

Shawn Shopper does more than slip down the aisles and grab the first item in sight. Shawn learned the hard way that everything that looks alike isn’t alike. Shawn can change colors to look like a tree trunk or to look like a leaf. He has found that many times what looks like the best buy can be the worst buy. To find the best buy, Shawn has learned how to rate products before buying.

Sometimes Shawn can find how experts have rated different brands of products like cameras, bicycles, radios, or in-line skates. Our library has this kind of information in a monthly magazine, *Consumer Reports*, and *Zillions*, a Consumer Reports magazine for children. (Show a copy of one from your study guide notebook or file that features one of the products to be rated.)

Often Shawn wants to buy things that are not rated by an expert. That’s when Shawn’s product-rating skills are most important. Shawn says the secret to being an expert product-rater is to know what characteristics are important to you—what you want the product to be able to do—and then see which product comes closest to having all the characteristics you want at the lowest price. Shawn found out, after wasting money, that paying more doesn’t always mean getting a better product and paying less money doesn’t always mean saving money.

Give youth instructions for becoming product raters. Use the first product they rate to learn the steps of deciding characteristics, comparing brands, choosing, and then sharing their choice. Having the youth share and discuss their choices demonstrates that different consumers want different features in the same product. They will learn that these differences are due to differences in the ways consumers plan to use the product. They will also learn from each other how to find “signs” that a brand has the characteristics they want. With each new round of rating, they will become more skillful in deciding characteristics to rate and in rating products to find the best quality for the price.

After they have rated all products, direct their attention to the products rated by *Zillions* or *Consumer Report*. Share how the experts rated the product and let them talk about the differences in their ratings. Do they basically agree with the experts? If not, why? What does this tell us about using the experts’ advice without doing our own rating?
Discussion Questions

✓ What information about the products helped you rate them? (How you plan to use them, how long you plan to use them, the care they must have to stay useful, their cost, their ease of use, etc.)

✓ How was your rating of the first product different from your rating of the last product?

✓ If you could give a friend some clues for shopping for something, what clues would you give for rating products before buying?

✓ When you shop for something or help your mother or father shop for something in the future, how will you rate your choices before you buy?

✓ Where can you find out how experts may have rated products you plan to buy?

✓ How does a smart shopper like Shawn use the ratings made by experts?

Summary Points

Shawn Shopper knows we have many brands and types of the same product to choose from and reminds us to compare different brands of a product before we buy it.

✓ Decide which product characteristics are important now and for the time you think you will use the product (a year from now, tomorrow, etc.).

✓ Check as many options as you can and rate how close each one comes to meeting your needs as well as which has the best price.

✓ Use expert ratings of products when you can find them to guide your own rating of products you find where you shop.

✓ Learn from each shopping experience. Remember which brands seem to live up to their claims and which ones seem not to be what they claim to be.
**Product Rating Worksheet**

Shawn Shopper makes good choices by checking specific product and service characteristics, price, and overall quality before he buys a product. Use the scale below to rate each brand for one type of product during your group lesson. Then show your family how to shop carefully. Remember, the highest price is not necessarily a guarantee of the best quality.

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<tr>
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Which product did you like better? _____________________________

Brand name of Product "A" __________________________ Price $ ________

Brand name of Product "B" __________________________ Price $ ________

Does the price match the quality of the product?  Product Price __________________________

Why or why not? __________________________________________

**Source:** My Money, Myself, 1990. Consumer Economics and Housing, Martha Van Rensselaer Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.
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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY 5</th>
<th>Concluding Skit</th>
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<td>OBJECTIVE this activity supports: Conclusion to lesson</td>
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Penny Pig: Cool boom box, Shawn Shopper!

Shawn Shopper: Thanks, Penny! Once I learned how to be a smart shopper, I could look for more information about boom boxes. When I used the decision-making process to decide my needs, check out the possibilities, and weigh the consequences, making a decision was kind of fun. I even saved enough money to take you out for ice cream.

Penny Pig: Great! Now what flavor do I want...chocolate makes me itch, strawberry turns my ears purple, bubble gum sticks to my teeth...

Shawn Shopper: Oh, no, here we go again!

Summary

Shawn Shopper has really earned his name. His friends notice that the things he buys usually work, and he always seems happy with the things he buys. In one lesson today, Shawn showed us some smart shopper skills you can use to buy almost anything and be happy with what you buy. You practiced using your list of wants and needs to help you know what you want before you buy. You gathered information about your options, thought about what could happen if you chose each one, and figured out which one was best for you. Now it's your choice when you shop. If you check your choices against your list of wants and needs, check how experts have rated those products, and check what the labels tell you about the product's maker and any warranty offered, then you can be a smart shopper just like Shawn.
Family Page

Shopping can be a rewarding learning experience for youth. It can also be a nightmare for the adults involved! The lesson on shopping skills has taught your Consumer Critter to follow three basic steps in making consumer decisions:

- gather information about the items and situation involved.
- identify the choices you have.
- think through the consequences—which is the best choice now and which is the best if needs and wants change.

Making small decisions builds a young person’s self-esteem and confidence. Daily practice prepares him or her for making bigger decisions in the future.

A basic life skill this lesson develops is the ability to recognize signs of quality in products and services. The shopping choices worksheet used in today’s lesson is printed on the back of this letter for your use as you guide your Consumer Critter through new types of consumer choices. You will notice that it helps youth choose quality products for the purpose or need at the time. It guides them to think about the product features that are important for the buying situation. It helps them gather facts about the product features and content from labels, advertisements, people who sell or own it, instruction manuals, and product-rating experts.

The primary goal is to build the young person’s ability to question and to decide the best price and quality for the situation. We call this developing comparison-shopping skills. Rather than being persuaded to buy what the seller or their friends may think they should buy, good comparison-shoppers learn to look at each buying choice and decide what is best for the money they have or want to spend.

I’d be very interested in knowing what changes you see in your Consumer Critter’s shopping skills as the steps taught in this lesson are used in buying decisions made over the next few weeks. You will be seeing math, problem-solving, and decision-making skills in action. We hope you will also see your Consumer Critter using these skills in making other decisions about how he or she uses time and energy as well as money.

I encourage you to give your Consumer Critter new shopping responsibilities as you shop for your family. Your praise for good decisions and your thoughtful questions to help guide better decisions will help build a critical life skill that will benefit your child for years to come.
Product Rating Worksheet

Shawn Shopper makes good choices by checking specific product and service characteristics, price, and overall quality before he buys a product. Use the scale below to rate each brand for one type of product during your group lesson. Then show your family how to shop carefully. Remember, the highest price is not necessarily a guarantee of the best quality.

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Why or why not? ____________________________________________