

Supermarket Snoop

Description

The class takes a field trip to a supermarket, and students use research skills to gather information on products available to American consumers. The information gathered can be analyzed in activities throughout this unit, and adapted to other regions around the world.



Objective

To introduce responsible consumerism.

Materials

Life Lab journals



A *consumer* is someone who buys and uses things offered for sale, such as food, services, or clothing. We are all consumers. We choose what we consume, whether it is a certain TV program, a hamburger, a banana, or a new shirt. What are some things that influence our choices? (advertising, parents, friends, pretty packaging, health, and availability) To be good consumers, we must learn as much as we can about the products we are consuming, realize what influences our choices, and then make a responsible decision as to what we will and will not consume.



1. Plan a field trip to a local supermarket. If possible, arrange a time for the students to interview the manager. Be sure to plan time for students to do their own investigations in the store.
2. Divide the class into groups of three and have each group prepare a list of investigations to do at the store. Decide which questions they will answer themselves by investigating, which they will ask the manager, and which they will both investigate and ask the manager about.
Suggested investigations:
 - How many products are sold in the store?

- How many products are in their original form (not processed)?
 - How does the price of a nonprocessed food compare with that of the same food in a processed form, such as 1 lb potatoes and 1 lb potato chips?
 - How does the store try to draw your attention to certain products?
 - Which is the least expensive jar of peanut butter?
 - Which size and brand of peanut butter is the least expensive per ounce?
 - How many different breakfast cereals are sold?
 - How many of the breakfast cereals list sugar as the first or second ingredient?
 - What different materials are used to package foods?
 - What products from different countries are available?
 - What ten products do you think are shelved so that little kids can reach them?
 - What kinds of things are sold in the bins nearest the cash register? Why?
3. Discuss the information students have gathered.
 4. Make a class list of what students need to know to be good shoppers.



Why are you a consumer? Name one item you consume. What are three things that influence your choice of that item? Why do you think there are so many products in a store? Make up a checklist that would help you to be a good shopper.



1. Invite a consumer advocate to class. Many county and city governments have a consumer division. Find out what is investigated by consumer advocates and what consumers can do if they have a complaint.
2. Have students visit other types of food stores, such as a cooperative or farmers' market. Compare available products, prices, packaging, and atmosphere.
3. Have students research the history of supermarkets. They started in the 1930s. Where did people buy food before supermarkets existed?
4. Have students choose three different countries and research what people in those countries eat and how they buy their food.
5. Discuss being a producer vs. being a consumer. If you eat from your own garden, you're a producer. Make a list of producers and consumers.

