



**Level:** Grades 6-8

**About the Author**

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## Lesson Plan

# Who's on First? Alcohol Advertising and Sports

## Overview

In this lesson, students participate in a survey that will help them better understand their attitudes and perceptions regarding sports and advertising. In particular, students will focus on how alcohol companies use sports and sporting events to promote their products and influence consumers. On Day One, students will complete the survey and tally the answers. In groups, they will calculate percentages for responses. On Day Two, students will analyze classroom trends and discuss responses in more detail. For homework, students will research the sports sponsorship portfolios of five beer companies. Day Three focuses on issues surrounding sponsorship of sporting events by alcohol companies.

## Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

an appreciation of:

- the ways in which sports enhances the lives of young people

an awareness of:

- the positive attributes associated with sports and athletes
- the ways in which advertisers use sporting events to influence consumer habits and attitudes
- how advertisers create positive associations with a brand by linking it to sports
- a beginning awareness of how alcohol companies use sponsorship of sporting events and athletes to promote products
- their own attitudes towards alcohol advertising during sporting events
- the negative consequences of drinking

additional skills

- math skills in calculating and applying percentages

## Preparation and Materials

- Before beginning this lesson, read the teacher backgrounder [Alcohol Advertising and Sports](#)
- Photocopy the [Sports Survey](#) for students
- Photocopy five copies of the [Sports Survey Tally Sheet](#) – one for each group and a master answer sheet for yourself
- Photocopy and distribute the [Letter to Parents](#) for Day Two's homework assignment

## Procedure

### Day One

On the first day of this lesson, students will complete the [Sports Survey](#) and tally their results in order to determine percentages for classroom responses.

### Introduction

Today we're going to look at a different side of sports – the relationship between sports and alcohol. In the fall of 2003, the Center for Science in the Public Interest conducted a survey about alcohol advertising and sports on TV. We're going to complete a mini-version of this survey to see what your opinions are. Remember there are no wrong or right answers. What I'm looking for is your honest opinion, so answer the questions according to how you feel, not what you think I want to hear.

(Distribute the [Sports Survey](#) to students. Once they've completed their surveys, have them pass their sheets to a neighbour and, as a class, count responses to each question. Assign four students to fill in class totals on the [Sports Survey Tally Sheet](#) as you do this.)

Divide the class into four groups – with one completed [Sports Survey Tally Sheet](#) of class totals per group.

Have students determine percentages based on student responses.

- Group One will calculate percentages based on student totals for questions 1-4
- Group Two will calculate percentages based on student totals for questions 5-8
- Group Three will calculate percentages based on student totals for questions 9-12
- Group Four will calculate percentages based on student totals for questions 13-16

Take up percentages and have each group complete their Sports Survey Tally Sheet using information provided by other groups.

## Day Two

Based on their responses to the survey, discuss students' feelings and attitudes towards sports and the advertising of alcohol during televised sporting events.  
General discussion points:

- For questions 1-5, you might want to see if there's a significant difference between the responses of girls and of boys. (*According to Reginald Bibby's 2001 study of Canadian teens, nearly 40 per cent of teenage boys follow hockey, basketball, football and wrestling on TV – compared with just over 10 per cent of teenage girls.*)
- What is it about a team or an athlete that makes you a fan?
- Those of you who believe that participating in sports is an important part of youth development, why is this important?
- What are some of the characteristics that sports helps to develop in kids?
- Those of you who think kids can learn important values by watching or attending sports events, what values can they learn? Those of you who disagree, why do you feel this way?
- Questions 6 and 7 ask whether or not your parents watch televised sports with you and how often they do this. Why do you think these questions were included in a survey about TV sports and alcohol advertising? (*Researchers have found that kids who watch sports TV with their parents and talk to them about sports programming – including sponsorship and commercials – have a more balanced perspective about media messages. Because of this, they are less influenced by positive marketing messages connecting drinking with sports. This is especially true for younger kids.*)
- Those of you who watch sporting events on TV with your parents, do you ever discuss what you see on the screen?
- In question 8, what types of products were mentioned the most? Think about these products:
  - Are any directly related to sports? (*For example, athletic equipment, running shoes, and so on.*)
  - Which are more for adults and which are for kids?
- Now think about the sports you watch on TV.
  - What are some words you associate with participating in and watching sports? (Record these words on the board.)
  - Do any of these words apply to the products being advertised?
  - If you were an advertiser, which of these words would you want to have associated with your product?

- Those of you who remember seeing ads for alcohol, what type of alcohol did you see advertised most often?
- If you were an alcohol company, which of these words would you want associated with your beverage? Are they the same as for the other products?
- What about when alcohol companies sponsor teams? What do they get out of this? *(In addition to getting exposure for their brands, alcohol companies promote their sports sponsorships as a contribution to the community. When describing their involvement with sports, company literature paints a picture of the company as the ultimate fan, using words such as "passion," "pride," "commitment," "team spirit" and "tradition." Words you don't hear are "profit," "promotion," "product placement" and "positioning.")*
- Let's look at beer for a minute. Beer companies are very active when it comes to advertising during sporting events and sponsoring sports teams. In fact, in the United States, four beer companies account for nearly 60% of all alcohol advertised during college sporting events. Why might people be particularly concerned about ads for beer during sports events? *(Beer is the number one beverage choice of teenagers, so beer brands promoted during sports events are going to attract the attention of teens.)*
- Regarding question 12, why did you agree or disagree with the statement: "Beer companies that advertise on sporting events know their ads appeal to persons under the legal drinking age"? *(The important word in this sentence is "appeal." It's well documented that an advertising campaign targeted to 21-year-olds will probably also appeal to teens.)*
- For question 13, the heart of the issue is "Do brewers intentionally target people under 21 with ads on sports programming?" Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? *(65 per cent of parents who completed the original survey believe that alcohol companies intentionally target young people in this way.)*
- Do you agree or disagree that beer advertising during sporting events encourages teens to drink? Why? What are the messages to teens when alcohol is paired with playing and watching sports?
- Do you think boys might be more influenced than girls? Why?
- Can you think of another form of entertainment promoting drinking that might have a bigger influence? *(Alcohol use is often glamorized in music videos, and excessive partying and drinking are promoted in most "teen flicks.")*

### **Sponsorship of Sports by Alcohol Companies**

The original version of this survey was produced because of concerns about the sponsorship of college and university sporting events by beer and alcohol companies. This is because drinking in colleges – especially binge drinking – is considered a serious problem.

- Why do you think drinking by college and university students is considered a major health concern? *(In addition to the very real health and safety risks*

*posed to individuals who binge drink, this activity has also been tied to poor school performance, physical and sexual assaults, vandalism and getting in trouble with the law and with others.)*

- Ironically, studies have found students who are involved in college athletics have significantly higher levels of alcohol use than non-athletes. Also, college sports fans are five times more likely to binge drink than non-sports fans. Why do you think this is so?
- Is there a culture around sports that encourages drinking? Explain.

Universities and colleges have been working hard to address this issue through prevention and education programs, but, at the same time, many permit alcohol companies to sponsor athletic and other campus events. Is this appropriate? (Permit students to debate this question.)

### **Homework Assignment**

In order to give them a better understanding of the prevalence of alcohol industry sponsorship in sports, have students conduct online research to list the teams and events sponsored by one of the following breweries: Anheuser-Busch, Adolph Coors Co., Molson Breweries, Miller Brewing Company or Labatt. (Randomly assign these companies to students.)

Because this assignment will involve visiting company Web sites, distribute the [Letter to Parents](#) explaining the nature of this assignment.

Remind students that they are to consider all sports connections – from the naming of arenas (for example, the Molson Centre), to TV shows (for example, ESPN "Original" Entertainment), to the sponsoring of local teams. Their goal is to get as much information as possible.

**Bonus question:** "What does your company say about its sponsorship of sports?"

### **Day Three**

In Canada, alcohol companies are allowed to sponsor athletic and cultural events, but tobacco companies are not. Why might this be? (*The logic here is that tobacco is an addictive substance, whereas alcohol can be consumed in moderation.*)

Take up homework assignments. (*Answers may include:*

*Anheuser-Busch: 2002 Winter Olympics, World Cup soccer, Ladies Professional Golf Association [LPGA], Major League Baseball [MLB], Major League Soccer [MLS], National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing [NASCAR], National Basketball Association [NBA], National Football League [NFL], National Hockey League [NHL], Professional Golfer's Association [PGA], Women's National Basketball Association [WNBA].*

*Adolph Coors Co.: ESPN programming, NFL, Colorado Rockies baseball team and stadium [Coors paid \$15 million for the name "Coors Field"], Denver Broncos, Colorado Avalanche, Denver Nuggets, NASCAR, Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, pro-golf tournaments, professional lacrosse teams.*

*Miller Brewing Company: 20 NFL teams; professional baseball, basketball, hockey teams; NASCAR and GrandPrix Racing. In the Chicago area, it sponsors the Chicago Bears, Chicago Bulls, Chicago White Sox and Chicago Blackhawks.*

*Labatt: NHL, Canadian Adult Recreational Hockey Association teams and leagues,*

*professional baseball [Toronto Blue Jays and, previously, the Expos], amateur sports such as softball, fastball, slo-pitch championships, provincial curling, major, junior and recreational hockey championships, Canadian Olympic Committee, Canadian Football League [CFL] teams [Toronto Argonauts, Hamilton Tiger-Cats, Winnipeg Blue Bombers], Canada Cup hockey, NHL hockey broadcasts on CBC.*

*Molson: Action sports such as skiing, boarding and biking [Molson Canadian Snow Jam]; Molson Indy Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal; National Basketball Association; Canadian National Basketball teams and Toronto Raptors; CFL teams [Montreal Alouettes, Ottawa Renegades, Saskatchewan Roughriders, Edmonton Eskimos, Calgary Stampeders]; National Lacrosse League and 3 teams [Toronto Rock, Calgary Roughnecks, Vancouver Ravens]; WWE wrestling; Team Canada hockey; NHL teams [Montreal Canadiens [the Molson Centre] Ottawa Senators, Toronto Maple Leafs, Edmonton Oilers, Calgary Flames, Vancouver Canucks, Detroit Red Wings, Buffalo Sabres], as well as national and provincial junior hockey leagues.)*

### **Class Discussion**

- Which brewery supports the most teams?
- Which sport is most popular with breweries?
- Which sport do you most often see on TV?
- How many of these are international teams or events?
- How many of these are national teams or events?
- How many are local or community teams or events?
- Do any of these teams or events have a particular appeal to kids and teens?
- Those of you who answered the bonus question, what do the breweries have to say about why they sponsor sports?
- Do you believe alcohol companies do this out of the kindness of their heart? *(These companies pay millions of dollars to sponsor teams – in 2003, Coors paid \$300 million dollars to be the National Football League's "Official Beer." It also paid \$15 million for the naming rights to the stadium where the Colorado Rockies baseball team plays. Companies wouldn't spend this kind of money unless they believed they were getting a return on their investment.)*

As a class, brainstorm the ways in which an alcohol company is promoted through sports sponsorship. *(In addition to commercials shown during sporting events, answers may include: having the company name on the stadium, lots of signage and branding on the field and even on uniforms, having pre- and post-game analysis shows "brought to you by" the alcohol company, serving its beverage at the stadium in branded cups, having the company brand associated with a winning team, getting kudos for being a good corporate citizen and for supporting athletes and sports in your country and community.)*

So far we've talked about the alcohol companies. Why do you think athletes, athletic associations, sports leagues and sports teams accept money from alcohol companies?

## Journal Entry

In their journals or notebooks, have students respond to the following questions:

1. Do you think alcohol companies should be able to sponsor sports and sporting events? List your reasons *why* or *why not*.
2. What do you think is the main cause behind the culture of drinking that exists around sports and sporting events? *Why?*
3. Do you believe teens are influenced by alcohol advertising during sporting events? Explain your answer.

## Alcohol Advertising and Sports

There's little doubt that when it comes to sports, kids and teens are major league fans, outdoing adults in loyalty to the teams they love. A U.S. study conducted in 2001 found that 93 per cent of young people between the ages of 8 and 17 view sports on TV, and close to one third use some kind of sports media daily (TV, videogames, magazines, newspapers, the Internet or radio). And it's not just boys who are fans. Although they consume the greatest amounts of sports media (97 per cent), at 89 per cent, the girls aren't far behind.<sup>1</sup>

Given the interest and passion young people bring to the sports they play and watch, it's easy to understand why there are ethical concerns when companies for adult-oriented products, such as alcohol, use sports to reach audiences.

Alcohol companies are also huge sports fans. In 2003 the alcohol industry spent more than \$540 million to place nearly 90,000 ads in sports programs on TV.<sup>2</sup> In fact, 60 per cent of all alcohol advertising on television occurs during sporting events.<sup>3</sup>

**Labatt shows its team spirit through the sponsorship and support of many different professional and amateur sports.**

Labatt Web Site

In both Canada and the U.S., beer companies focus much of their advertising expenditure on sports – just four brands of beer account for 58 per cent of all alcohol advertised during college sporting events.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Budweiser spent more than 80 per cent of its television advertising expenditures on sports programming in 2001, 2002 and 2003.<sup>5</sup>

Companies that produce malt beverages – also a popular choice with youth – are the leading non-beer sports advertisers – although other types of alcohol are increasingly joining in. For example, Captain Morgan Spiced Rum, which spent very little on sports TV advertising in 2001, spent over half a million dollars on advertising during televised sporting events in 2002 and close to \$900,000 in 2003.<sup>6</sup>



2003 Grey Cup Game

Then there's the relationship between alcohol advertising and "big ticket" sporting events. In its study of alcohol advertising on sports television in the U.S., the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) found "significant amounts of advertising dollars" spent on high-profile events. For example, in 2003, the Super Bowl took in \$29.6 million in alcohol advertising, and \$21 million was spent on NCAA basketball tournament games.<sup>7</sup> CAMY also found that, like fans, advertisers have favourite sports, with soccer games featuring the most ads for alcohol (one out of every 12 ads), followed by hockey games, professional basketball games and post-game programming, professional baseball and soccer.<sup>8</sup>

From an industry perspective, this is a sound investment. Alcohol promotion through commercials in sports programming or sponsorship of sports teams and events provides companies with tremendous exposure – before, during and after an event. It creates positive associations between drinking and the traits associated with athletes and teams: strength, loyalty, endurance, success, health, vitality, fun, fitness and speed. Promotion of youth-oriented events such as

snowboarding, extreme sports and biking create an aura of "coolness" around a product – and grab the attention of a new generation of future drinkers.

The alcohol industry's use of sports to reach consumers has not gone unnoticed. According to a survey conducted in 2003 by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), 77 per cent of parents believe the beer companies that advertise during sporting events know their ads will appeal to kids and teens.<sup>9</sup> An additional 65 per cent agree that beer companies *intentionally* use sports to reach and advertise to underage drinkers.<sup>10</sup>

Researchers have concluded that the more often a child sees an alcohol ad, the greater the likelihood he or she will develop positive expectations about drinking.<sup>11</sup> This effect is magnified when these ads are paired with programs that kids and teens enjoy. Typically, children who watch sporting events on television are exposed to 1.5 alcohol ads per hour.<sup>12</sup> (This figure doesn't include alcohol promotion through signage at sporting events or sponsorship of professional and college teams, sporting events, or sports TV and radio programs.) Boys in particular respond more positively to ads for alcohol that are embedded within sporting events than for alcohol ads in other kinds of programming.



A second influence on children's interpretations of media messages about alcohol is how they watch television with parents. When parents view ads and programs with kids without commenting on content, this can actually reinforce the media messages presented. Parents who actively watch and discuss alcohol advertising in sports programming with kids help them develop more balanced perspectives on the relationship between alcohol and sports. However, research shows that the average parent co-views with little or no discussion about media messages.<sup>13</sup>

Like commercials, sponsorship gives alcohol companies the opportunity to develop positive associations with their products.

The CSPI study concludes that "sponsorships ... attempt to link the company with perceived winners or heroes; the biggest stars in a sport, the most winning team."<sup>14</sup>



Sports sponsorships are multi-million dollar investments, and they ensure that company brand names and logos are prominently featured during sporting events – an influential form of advertising that may be less obvious to parents and kids. Unlike those for tobacco sponsorship, there are no laws in Canada or the U.S. that prohibit alcohol

companies from sponsoring athletic teams and events. However, there has been considerable concern expressed in the U.S. regarding sports sponsorship by alcohol companies – especially in athletic venues that have youth audiences and involvement.

According to the CSPI survey, 72 per cent of parents stated they would support a ban on alcohol ads on televised college games.<sup>15</sup> And before the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, the Utah Alcohol Policy Coalition and other concerned organizations collected thousands of signatures in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the beer company Anheuser-Busch from sponsoring the Olympic Games. As one representative from Utah's PTA put it, "The Olympics are the ultimate athletic experience. Alcohol ads send a mixed

**I'm not really even a beer drinker, but something about turning on a football game really makes me want a cold one. It's been naturalized into me by ads that imply beer makes sports more fun or heals when my team blows it.**

University student Thea Domber  
The Rocky Mountain Collegian  
November 17, 2003

message to youth that the ultimate fun is what they see in the ads."<sup>16</sup> One physician puts it more bluntly: "Mixing sports with alcohol is always a bad combination, but mixing alcohol with the worldwide, youth-oriented Olympics no doubt is the worst mix of all."<sup>17</sup>

Advocacy groups have had mixed success in limiting national alcohol sponsorships, but public opinion has influenced alcohol company sponsorship of local and municipal sporting events. However, in the United States, 80 national, state and local groups have joined the CSPI in launching a "Campaign for Alcohol-Free Sports TV" that seeks to prohibit alcohol advertising in televised college sports.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Kids Are 'Major League' Consumers of Sports Media; 93% Report Use," press release, July 19, 2001. Statistical Research Inc. <<http://www.statisticalresearch.com/press/pr071901.htm>>.

<sup>2</sup>"Alcohol Advertising on Sports Television 2001 to 2003," 2003. Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth <<http://camy.org/factsheets/index.php?FactsheetID=20>>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup>"Summary of Study Findings: Sports, Youth & Alcohol Advertising Study," November 12, 2003, p. 2. Center for Science in the Public Interest <<http://camy.org/factsheets/index.php?FactsheetID=20>>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Eric Moreau and Erica Austin, "Effects of Advertising and Sponsorships in Sports and Children's Expectations about Alcohol," 2000, p. 4. Washington State University.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> "Activists Resist Beer-Soaked Winter Games in Salt Lake City," Center on Alcohol Advertising.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> "Coaching Legends Help Launch 'Alcohol-Free Sports TV' Effort." press release, November 12, 2003. Center for Science in the Public Interest.

# Sports Survey

Adapted from the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) Campaign for Alcohol-free Sports TV..  
<http://cspinet.org/booze/CAFST/CSPIsurvey.htm>  
 Used with Permission.

Answer the following questions:

- |   |                |                |                   |                   |            |
|---|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 1. Do you consider yourself a sports fan?   | Yes            | No             | Don't know        |                   |            |
| 2. Do you ever watch sports on television?  | Yes            | No             |                   |                   |            |
| 3. Do you think participating in sports is an important part of youth development?  | Yes            | No             | Don't know        |                   |            |
| 4. Do you think participating in sports helps build good character in kids?   | Yes            | No             | Don't know        |                   |            |
| 5. Kids who don't participate in sports can still learn important values by watching or attending sports events.                  | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
| 6. Do your parents ever watch sports on TV with you?  | Yes            | No             |                   |                   |            |
| 7. If so, how often?  | All the time   | Often          | Sometimes         | Not often         | Never      |
| 8. Can you name three types of products featured in commercials aired during televised sports events?                             |                |                |                   |                   |            |
| 9. Have you ever seen an ad for beer during televised sports events?  | Yes            | No             | Don't know        |                   |            |
| 10. Which beer brand do you most see advertised on sports TV?   |                |                |                   |                   |            |
| 11. Beer ads aired on sports TV reach a significant number of teenagers.  | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
| 12. Beer companies that advertise during televised sporting events know their ads appeal to persons under the legal drinking age. | Agree          | Disagree       |                   |                   |            |

13. Do you think brewers intentionally target people under 21 with their ads during sports programming?	Yes	No	Don't know
14. In your opinion, does beer advertising during televised sporting events encourage underage persons to drink?	Yes	No	Don't know
15. In your opinion, does beer advertising during televised sporting events encourage viewers to drink more than they normally would?	Yes	No	Don't know
16. Do you think beer advertising or sponsorship should be allowed for college and university sporting events?	Yes	No	Don't know

# Sports Survey Tally Sheet

Adapted from the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) Campaign for Alcohol-free Sports TV.  
Used with permission,

**Use this sheet to tally students' answers to the Sports Survey:**

1. Do you consider yourself a sports fan?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Total number of responses			
Percentage of students			

2. Do you ever watch sports on television?

	Yes	No
Total number of responses		
Percentage of students		

3. Do you think participating in sports is an important part of youth development?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Total number of responses			
Percentage of students			

4. Do you think participating in sports helps build good character in kids?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Total number of responses			
Percentage of students			



9. Have you ever seen an ad for beer during sports events on television?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Total number of responses			
Percentage of students			

10. Which beer brand do you most see advertised on sports TV?


11. Beer ads aired on sports TV reach a significant number of teenagers

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Total number of responses					
Percentage of students					

12. Beer companies that advertise during televised sporting events know their ads appeal to persons under the legal drinking age.

	Agree	Disagree
Total number of responses		
Percentage of students		

13. Do you think brewers intentionally target people under 21 with their ads during sports programming?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Total number of responses			
Percentage of students			

14. In your opinion, does beer advertising during televised sporting events encourage underage persons to drink?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Total number of responses			
Percentage of students			

15. In your opinion, does beer advertising during televised sporting events encourage viewers to drink more than they normally would?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Total number of responses			
Percentage of students			

16. Do you think beer advertising or sponsorship should be allowed for college and university sporting events?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Total number of responses			
Percentage of students			

Dear Parents or Guardians,

As part of our unit on alcohol advertising, we are looking at how alcohol companies use sports and sporting events to promote their products and how attitudes and beliefs about drinking may be influenced by this form of advertising.

For homework, students have been asked to research the sports teams and activities sponsored by one of the following breweries: Anheuser-Busch, Adolph Coors Co., Molson Breweries, Miller Brewing Company or Labatt. In order to do this, they will be conducting online searches and may have to visit company Web sites for more information.

It is recommended that an adult member of the family sit with your child while he or she conducts this research. For those of you who have filtering software, you may wish to temporarily disable your filter in order to access these brewers' Web sites.

Please sign below to confirm that you have received this message and have your child return it to me.

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Parent's Signature