

Ask the Agent

Q: I am looking for bedding for my son's dorm room next fall. Any tips?

A: Your question prompted the cover story this month, but there are some tips I would recommend specifically for dorm life.

- 1) Don't buy white! The bed is the largest piece of furniture in a dorm room and is a multi-purpose item. It is used for seating space as well as a dining room area and homework center. Shoes are the least of worries when it comes to getting dirt and marks on bedding. Choose a darker, patterned bedding will camouflage any damage done from this heavy use.
- 2) Look for extra-long twin sheets. Most dorm rooms are furnished with longer beds. These types of sheets are easy to find in a college town discount stores, but can also be found online fairly easily. Again, you will want to lean toward patterned or dark colored sheets. It's important to buy sheets that fit well, but you can get by with a full size blanket or comforter for the top layer. It will simply drape of the edge of the bed (and hide whatever lurks beneath!)
- 3) Choose sheets that are made of cotton. They will breath better, allowing the body to help regulate the sleeping environment. They might cost a little more, but the price is worth it for the comfort.
- 4) Last but not least: Purchase two sets of sheets. One to keep on the bed and one to change out sheets for laundering.

Cozy Slumber Sheets

April 2015

I recently found myself in need of new sheets for one of the beds in our home. This is the first time I have searched online for "a good deal" and found that I needed to brush up on my purchasing knowledge for bedding. I was overwhelmed by terminology, selection options, and price variations. After some research and comparison shopping, I finally selected the product that I thought we would like the best. Here are some tips for buying bedding that might help you when it comes time to replace some of your own:

Be smart, but not chintzy. The quality of the product can make you either sleep like royalty or become a royal pain. You will need to balance quality with cost. Cotton sheets are sold by type of fiber, size of the yarn, weave style, type of finish and thread count. The latter has the greatest impact on comfort. Thread count is the amount of threads there are in one square inch of the cloth. The thread count will impact softness and durability. Average quality sheets are in the 200 range, while more expensive (more comfortable and durable) sheets go from 250 or more. Lower quality and lower thread count sheets have a tendency to *pill* and fuzz.



Pilling is a textile term that means that small balls of fiber and fluff have formed on the surface of the fabric. There are a couple ways you can visually inspect sheets for quality. Hold them up to light. If the light can be seen through the fabric, then you have a low thread count sheet in your hand. You can take your fingernail and scratch the sheet to see if any pill or small fuzz comes off. If this happens, it is a lower-quality sheet.

Be aware of the weave and finish. How the individual threads are put together determines the type of weave a fabric has. It has a significant impact on the feel of the sheet. A percale weave will give you a crisp and lightweight feeling while a sateen weave is more luxurious and silky to the touch. Finishes are put on fabrics to make them perform in specific ways. One type of finish may help reduce wrinkling during the laundering process while another finish may make the fabric look shiny.

Consider pocket depth. The pocket depth of a sheet is the depth of your mattress. Pillow top mattresses need sheets with a deeper pocket depth than standard mattresses. You can't make up for deep pockets by buying the next size up in sheets. Larger sheets will be longer and wider, but not deeper. Sheets with a deep pocket depth allow for mattresses that are anywhere from 13" to 22" deep. Measure the height of your mattress before you begin shopping to make sure you are purchasing sheets that fit properly.

I was recently reading a dad's list of 100 ways to say "I Love You" to your child written by Joe White, a Texas dad of four children. His son was home for the weekend from college and he was remembering all the different ways they had shared "I Love You" moments together as the son was growing up. Here are a few of the ones he shared:

1. When your child is participating in an athletic event or musical performance – be there watching (quietly!)
2. Help your son or daughter learn a new skill – riding a bike, making a cake, fixing a flat tire.
3. Walk together with your child some morning all the way to the school bus stop, (or drive him/her every day for a month).
4. Leave "I Love You" notes in your child's school lunch box.
5. Tonight, read a chapter together in your child's favorite book.
6. Talk together about your favorite memories growing up.
7. Memorize a verse in the Bible together.
8. Have a family picnic next Sunday afternoon.
9. Sit in church together.

10. After your teenage son or daughter comes in from a date, have popcorn together by the fireplace.

11. Bake and frost chocolate muffins before bed.

12. Listen to your child – with all your attention.

13. Sit down together and watch your child's favorite TV show.

14. Save 10% of your best energy and take it home with you after work.

15. Forgive mistakes!

16. When your child is afraid – try to remember your own childhood fears and talk together about it.



Now it's YOUR turn. What special things do you do with your kids to let them know they are important to you and that you love them?

Make a list and be intentional about checking something off daily (if not more often.) those moments are what help your children survive the "tough stuff" in life.

THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING

The average person is exposed to over 3,000 advertisements a day. At first, you might think this is impossible but they add up faster than you realize. Advertising doesn't just come in the form of TV commercials; there are billboards, internet ads, text messages, popups on your email, USPS junk mail, and many other forms of media advertising.

The influence advertising can have on your pocketbook is significant. Consider these statistics:

99% of American households have a TV.

98% of American households have a radio.

83.8% of American households have a computer. 74.4% of all households report internet use with 73.4% reporting a high-speed connection.

How do these media sources pay for the services they offer? You guessed it – through advertising.

With such a high exposure to advertising, you would think you would know how to avoid being influenced by their promotions. The truth is we are more often drawn in to the message or product. A recent article in the small business section of the Houston Chronicle identified five common techniques used by advertisers:

Repetition – Hearing or seeing the advertisement over and over is a simple yet effective way to imprint a product in our minds. Think about some of the common commercial jingles used to promote: "Give me a break, Give me a break"... most of us know that one even if we don't like the candy bar!

Claims – Advertisements that focus on a specific feature of a product or a desirable outcome from using a product. These claims can be factual or simply hype. Regardless, we are drawn to the claimed success of the product.

Association – When we see a favorite athlete endorsing exercise equipment, we associate their success to the product. We then connect our own perception of potential success with that product, as well. We might associate a product through strong emotions. For example, the advertisement might show how happy people who use this product appear to be.

Bandwagon – You'll be part of the "in" group if you purchase this product. These ads make "glittering generalities" that lure the consumer into wanting to be a part of the action because of shared ideals or beliefs.

Promotions – "But wait, that's not all!" The promotions often center on getting more or getting something free if you buy the product. They can create a sense of urgency because you'll save more money if you purchase now.

Being aware of these approaches can help you look at advertising in a more critical way. An advertising-savvy consumer is less likely to make impulse or non-essential purchases. Ask yourself these questions to evaluate advertising with a critical view: What sound effects or music does the commercial use to draw my attention. Do the sounds make it more interesting? How do the actors look before the product versus after the product? Do you think this product will make you have the same transformation? Are there celebrities in the ad? Do you think they really use the product?

Healthy Habits

Fresh, Light and Healthy Options

As a general rule, the best way to manage your weight successfully is to make sure you burn just as many calories as you take in. However, a key piece of being healthy is to make sure you are consuming foods that will provide your body with the necessary nutrients it needs to function correctly. Using the MyPlate food plan is the best way to use these concepts together. Your daily food consumption should be made up of half fruits and vegetables and moderate amounts of whole grains. Although you need to include protein and dairy products in your daily food choices, they are not needed in as large a quantity as the other three food groups. The MyPlate icon provides an excellent visual representation of the recommended balance between the food groups. Many of us are involved in Walk Kansas and are on the lookout for ways to maintain and increase our fruit and vegetable intake.

Try this salsa as an alternative way to mix up the food groups with a healthy flair and sneak in a few more veggies for snack or a meal:

Cucumber, Corn, and Bean Salsa



Ingredients:

2-3 large cucumbers
½ c. fresh whole kernel corn, cooked
2 tomatoes
1 oz. pkg. dry ranch dressing mix
1 yellow bell pepper
1 small red onion
¼ c. chopped fresh cilantro
1/8 c. cider vinegar
2 T. sugar, optional
½ c. black beans

Directions: Wash all vegetables. Finely chop cucumbers, tomatoes, pepper, and onion. Combine in a large mixing bowl with chopped cilantro. Drain and rinse beans and add to chopped vegetables. Add corn, if using canned corn instead of fresh, drain off liquid prior to adding to vegetables. In a small bowl, mix together ranch dressing packet, vinegar, and sugar. Pour dressing over vegetables, and mix well. Serve immediately or refrigerate until chilled. Yield: Makes 20, ½ c. servings.

Nutrition Information: 50 calories, 0 g fat, 130 mg sodium, 7 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 70% DV of vitamin C and 6% DV of vitamin A.

Recipe Courtesy of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service

Connecting with Kids

"Dad, I think we need to buy that dust mop. Look how clean *their* house is!" This is a true story. These words came out of the mouths of my very own children after watching an infomercial on television. It had two effects: a) my children think that it is the MOP that keeps the house clean (sigh), and b) my children think our house isn't clean enough.

Kids are drawn in to advertisements as much as adults (if not more!) As parents, we can help them develop their consumerism skills by thinking about the intent, delivery, and outcome of the advertisements they are exposed to.

Discuss with your children how advertising works. Explain what persuasion is and how it tries to convince us that the product will make us happy, healthy, or more satisfied. Discuss whether or not such "stuff" can really do these things for us.

Next, point out what is happening through advertising. How can advertising influence the viewer? Explain how you decide what you will buy or not buy.

This is a great time to talk about budgeting, available money for purchases, and how to use resources effective-

ly. Be honest with them by sharing that advertising really can influence you, even in subtle ways. Ask your child what catches their eye when they see an advertisement.

Watch a few commercials with them and share what you see as truth, hype, or even offensive. Some advertising represents stereotypes that you don't agree with and some make outrageous claims. By walking them through your own evaluation, you are modeling how they can look at advertising with a consumer's critical eye.

Talk to your child about how they handle the pop-up ads that come up while they are using the internet. Some of these ads are sexually suggestive, some are offensive, and some are a ploy to get personal information from the user.

Thinking critically about advertising is an important skill for all ages. Helping your child find the "hidden messages" behind advertising will save them time and money as the move into adulthood.

www.ParentFurther.com

Analyzing Advertising: A Discussion Guide for Parents and Kids

Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

**Requires pre-registration.

April

- 20— **CDI Head Start Family Night**—This evening of activities is for Head Start students and their parents to learn more about the importance of reading, healthy food habits, and spending time together. The program begins at 5:00 at the CDI Head Start facility. For more information, contact Ashley Pulsoni at the Head Start office or Deb Andres at Geary County Extension office.
- 21— **MPI Parenting Class****—Devin Educational Resource Center, 123 Eisenhower is a 6-session class open to any parents with children ages toddler to teens to help support and equip parents with the challenging task of raising children. Please call the Geary County Extension office to register for the program. The class consists of 6 sessions held from 6-8 p.m. on Tuesday nights. A \$10/session registration fee is required before the class begins. The total cost for the class is \$60.00 per individual or \$90.00 for the parent and a support person. The class continues each Tuesday through June 2.

May

- 1— **Geary County Ag Day**—Designed for area 3rd graders, this all day program hosted at the 4-H/Sr. Citizens building teaches kids about the food they eat, how it's produced, and how conservation and other practices are put in to place to protect and preserve our food supply.
- 4— **May Day, May Day!**—Emergency Preparedness for all ages! This informational program is sponsored by Geary County EEU Council and is open to the public. Garry Berges will be the highlighted presenter. Program begins at 1:30. Light refreshments will be served.
- 7— **Knowledge at Noon****— "Finding Balance", Valley View Estates, 1440 Pearl Drive, Junction City, KS. Discover ways to improve your balance and maintain your mobility with this program on exercise and wellness across the age span. Program is free to the public. Please call the Extension Office by May 6 to reserve your seat.

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