

TIPS TO AVOID STEREOTYPING IN ADVERTISING QUICK GUIDE



In recent years, there has been significant pushback from consumers about using stereotypes in advertising.

There can be real harm in perpetuating some stereotypes, and while stereotypes can be an easy shorthand for messaging, advertising that consumers trust is more effective.

Here are our **top tips** to make responsible and respectful ads:

1 KEEP CONTENT AND CONTEXT IN MIND

Think about the context of your ad and how it may be understood by the audience. While your intention may be light-hearted, humour will not necessarily prevent offence.

2 DON'T PLAY INTO OUTDATED GENDER NORMS AND ROLES

Make sure the default is not men at work, women at home. It could be considered offensive or harmful under our Codes if the ad is mocking people based on their gender or portraying men or women failing at a task that is stereotypically associated with the opposite sex.

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3 AVOID CONTRADICTING RELIGION

Using religious content to promote something that openly contradicts a religious belief or practice will be considered offensive by some and may reach the threshold to breach the Code. Take care with ad placement.

4 AGE IS NO BARRIER

Representing older people as lacking technological skills or being physically weak is a common stereotype that can offend a large portion of your audience. Seniors are more active than ever now and advertising that reflects this is more likely to engage.

5 TEST IT OUT

One test is whether the advertisement would be equally viable if other groups were used. If so, the advertisement is likely to be acceptable. Be careful about unintended negative messages and support correct pronunciation.

6 KNOW THE GROUNDS FOR OFFENCE

These include gender race; colour; ethnic or national origin; age; cultural, religious, political or ethical belief; sexual orientation; gender identification; marital status; family status; disability; occupational or employment status.

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What are the rules around stereotypes in advertising?

Stereotyping falls under social responsibility (Principle 1: Social Responsibility) in the Advertising Standards Code, and Rule 1 (c) Decency and Offensiveness. While stereotypes can be used to simplify advertising communication, they must not be harmful or offensive to people, particularly children, young people and vulnerable audiences. This includes ads that:

- mock people for not conforming to gender stereotypes
- portray an activity or product as being inappropriate for a girl or boy because it is stereotypically associated with the opposite sex
- portray men or women failing at a task that is stereotypically associated with the opposite sex
- include irresponsible or offensive depictions of differences including race, body shapes and sizes; for example, suggesting it is desirable to be an unhealthy weight (under or overweight).

The rules apply to ads in all media.

Remember the spirit and intention of the Code

When interpreting the Codes, the ASA Complaints and Appeal Boards consider compliance with both the spirit and intention as well as the rules and principles of the Codes. When checking Code compliance, we think about what the consumer takes away from the advertisement rather than the intent of the advertiser.

Further help

We offer industry training on this topic, or you can contact the AdHelp Information Service for written information about the advertising rules and guidelines. For a more detailed look at the rules, head to the Advertising Codes.