



The big debate

Is it OK to have ads on school buses?

Some people say there's no harm in it, but others think they're best as ad-free zones.

What you need to know

- Every day in the US, 26 million children ride on 480,000 buses to and from school.
- Some companies pay schools or districts to advertise on their buses.
- According to one estimate by a media company, a school district with 250 buses could make \$1 million in four years by selling ads on buses.
- Ads on school buses are typically age-appropriate, such as for a local business or a community college. Ads for alcohol or tobacco aren't allowed.

Millions of kids in the US start and end their day with a familiar routine: climbing aboard a yellow school bus and taking a seat. Students have been doing this for decades, but in recent years, the buses have started to look different. Now many of them have colorful advertisements on their exteriors, and some have ads inside as well. Critics say the ride to school should be an ad-free space that is safe from marketing to kids. But others think ads are unavoidable for young people and offer a money-making opportunity for schools to reduce budget shortfalls and improve education for students. What do you think? Is it OK to have ads on school buses?



FUN FACT

The color most US school buses are painted is called National School Bus Glossy Yellow.

Yes—they serve a purpose

Ads are everywhere! Kids see them on the street, during YouTube videos, and on the field at major sporting events. There's no avoiding them, so why not make them as kid-friendly as possible? Ads on school buses are a great conversation starter for parents. They can talk to their kids about the goal of paid advertising and how to form their own opinions about it. Plus, school budgets have been cut across the US. Selling ad space on buses provides a source of income that districts and schools can use to hire more teachers, buy musical instruments, or pay for field trips. That's good for students!

No—keep them away from kids

Ads are designed to be persuasive, and studies have shown that children are more susceptible to them, especially under age 8. Some research even shows that ads can negatively affect kids' self-esteem and well-being. A school's job is to help kids learn and look out for their best interests. Are they serving that mission when they put messages from advertisers who are trying to make money in a place where kids can't avoid them? Absolutely not. Besides, ads on bus exteriors are a safety hazard. They can be distracting to drivers who should be paying attention, especially when buses are stopped and kids are getting on and off.

YES Three reasons it's OK to have ads on school buses

- Ads are everywhere, so seeing them on buses doesn't make a difference.
- They provide a great opportunity for adults to talk to kids about what the advertisers are trying to accomplish.
- Schools need money for classroom supplies and other important things. Ads are a great way to get it.

NO Three reasons it's not OK to have ads on school buses

- Younger people are more easily influenced by ads, and ads can also make kids feel bad about themselves.
- Putting ads on school buses goes against the entire mission of a school.
- Ads on the outside of buses are distracting to other drivers, which can be dangerous for kids.

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if law enforcement should use robot dogs. When it comes to four-legged crime-fighters, 60% of you said no, while 40% said yes.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think it's OK to have ads on school buses or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.