



# **Advertising and Sponsorship Guidelines**

for BBC Commercial Services



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# Introduction

## Introduction

- 1.1** Advertising and sponsorship are important to any commercial service. If executed well, they provide funding and can enhance a consumer's experience by adding to the editorial proposition. However, if executed badly, they can be a reputational risk and cause future commercial relationships to be put in jeopardy.
- 1.2** These guidelines have been written to protect the BBC's global reputation and ensure our editorial integrity and independence are maintained. They set out the types of advertising and sponsorship relationships that are acceptable around the BBC brand. The guidelines apply to all BBC commercial services and should be read in conjunction with any applicable regulatory codes.
- 1.3** The guidelines should be applied in the spirit as well as the letter. That means that common sense should be applied. A strict legal interpretation should not be used to justify accepting an advertiser or sponsor which the guidelines intended to stop. Similarly, an unreasonable interpretation should not be used to prohibit something which is clearly in line with the intention of the guidelines.
- 1.4** **Any proposal to step outside these guidelines must be editorially justified. It must be discussed and agreed in advance with a senior editorial figure. BBC Director Editorial Policy and Standards must also be consulted.**

## Compliance

- 1.5** The primary responsibility for ensuring advertising and sponsorship arrangements comply with these guidelines, and other applicable regulatory codes, rests with the commercial service itself. There must be a robust compliance process for each commercial service.
- 1.6** Each commercial service has a designated 'Advertising Standards Guardian' or 'ASG' who takes responsibility for ensuring compliance with these guidelines. Certain types of advertising and all sponsorship arrangements require prior approval from the Advertising Standards Guardian. In other instances, referral should always be made to the ASG in cases of doubt.
- 1.7** The Advertising Standards Guardian and senior editorial figure for each commercial service are designated by the Advertising Governance Committee.
- 1.8** The Advertising Governance Committee is made up of representatives from BBC Editorial Policy, together with representatives from relevant BBC commercial services. It approves the compliance process for each commercial service.



# Advertising

# Advertising

For programme and format sales, see section 8

## Principles

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- 2.1** All advertising on BBC commercial services must be legal. It must follow applicable advertising laws and regulations which may differ by territory. In determining what an acceptable standard in a particular territory is, consideration should be given to local market practice; the BBC should always seek to position itself at the top end of market best practice. *For example, in the UK, magazines and websites should follow the Advertising Standards Authority CAP Code.*
- 2.2** Advertising must not be misleading, harmful or offensive. Generally acceptable standards must be applied to the content of all advertising materials so as to provide adequate protection for members of the public from the inclusion of offensive or harmful material.
- See Editorial Guidelines section 5.1 Harm and Offence: Generally Accepted Standards
- 2.3** Advertising must not bring the BBC into disrepute or jeopardise the value of the BBC brand. It must:
- be suitable for the target audience
  - meet consumer expectations of the BBC brand
  - not compromise the BBC's impartiality, editorial integrity and independence
- 2.4** All advertising must be clearly presented as commercial content, distinct from editorial content. The nature of an advertising relationship must be transparent so that it is clear to the audience that they are seeing a commercial message. Surreptitious or subliminal advertising is prohibited.

- 2.5 The BBC must retain independent editorial control and responsibility for all editorial content. Advertisers must not influence content in a way that impairs the responsibility and editorial independence of the BBC.
- 2.6 Advertising arrangements must not include any endorsement by the BBC and should not create the impression of BBC endorsement.
- 2.7 The cumulative effect of the same advertising appearing many times on a BBC service must not compromise the BBC's impartiality, editorial integrity and independence.
- 2.8 Advertising arrangements on commercial services available in the UK must be presented in such a way that there is no confusion to consumers about what is a public service and what is a commercial service. Such services should be identifiable as Commercial Services. *For example, through the use of labels.*

## Categories of advertising

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- 2.9 To protect the BBC's reputation, the following categories of advertising are prohibited:
- advertising for faith, religion and equivalent systems of belief
  - advertising for adult products and services
  - advertising for tobacco and marijuana products
  - advertising for weapons and gun clubs
- See section 9 for meanings
- Additional prohibitions exist for Children's content (see section 5) and News and current affairs content (see section 6)

**2.10** Political advertising is prohibited on any Commercial Service when it is targeted at the UK. In other territories, political advertising is only permitted where approval has been given by the Advertising Governance Committee.

**2.11** **Advertisements in the following categories must be approved by the Advertising Standards Guardian before they can be accepted for broadcast or publication:**

- a. advertising by tourism boards and trade or investment boards
- b. advertising for public information campaigns
- c. advertising by charities, trusts, foundations and non-governmental organisations
- d. advertising for eCigarettes
- e. advertising for infant formula or baby milk
- f. advertising for virtual private networks or 'VPN' services

The Advertising Standards Guardian will consider whether:

- the proposal would meet the principles in these Guidelines
- in the case of advertising for VPN services, the proposal does not facilitate or encourage unauthorised access to digital media

**2.12** **Advertisements in the following categories must be approved by a senior editorial figure before they can be accepted for broadcast or publication:**

- a. political advertising (on services where this is permitted)
- b. advertising by governments and government agencies (except tourism boards and trade or investment boards)
- c. advertising by lobby groups and trade unions

- d. advertising for any product or service which shares a name or trademark with a prohibited product or service, sometimes referred to as ‘Surrogate advertising’
- e. advertisements that deal with a controversial subject that is a matter of public policy
- f. advertisements which could compromise the BBC’s editorial integrity

The senior editorial figure will consider whether:

- the proposal would meet the principles in these guidelines in particular in relation to the BBC’s impartiality

See section 9 for meanings

### 2.13

Certain other categories of advertising may need to be approved by the Advertising Standards Guardian before they can be accepted for broadcast or publication. These categories will be determined for individual services as agreed with the Advertising Governance Committee.

### 2.14

Where there is an established industry-wide compliance process for pre-approval, some of the categories in 2.11 and 2.12 may not need to be referred to the Advertising Standards Guardian or senior editorial figure for approval, subject to agreement by the Advertising Governance Committee. *For example, the service provided by Clearcast to UK commercial television broadcasters.*

## Political advertising

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### 2.15

**Any service wishing to accept political advertising for the first time must seek approval from the Advertising Governance Committee.**

- 2.16** Where political advertising is permitted, it must clearly identify the candidate or party on whose behalf the advertising is placed.
- 2.17** Advertising must be available on the same basis to all parties or candidates standing for elections. 100% share of voice or category exclusivity is prohibited for political advertising.  
See sections 2.31 to 2.38
- All political advertisements must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure subject to 2.14. The senior editorial figure will consider whether:**
- **the proposal would compromise the BBC's impartiality**
  - **the proposal would bring the BBC into disrepute**

## Government, charity and lobby group advertising

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- 2.18** Advertising by governments and government agencies, charities, trusts, foundations and non-governmental organisations, lobby groups and trade unions must not compromise the BBC's impartiality or bring the BBC into disrepute.
- 2.19** In territories where political advertising is prohibited, and around content where political advertising is prohibited, such advertising should not be focused on a controversial subject that is a matter of public policy, a political or industrial controversy, or a lobbying call to action. Any political or lobbying call to action must be incidental to the main purpose of the advertising.

## Surrogate advertising

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- 2.20** Where a product or service shares a name or trademark with a prohibited product or service, advertising is only acceptable where it does not give the impression of promoting the prohibited product or service and cannot be seen as a backdoor route to advertising the prohibited product or service.

## Format of advertising

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- 2.21** Advertising should not appear in a similar style to the editorial content to which it is adjacent so that consumers can clearly distinguish between editorial content and advertising. Advertising should not emulate BBC editorial content. Overlay advertising is prohibited during programmes on television services or over long form audio-visual content.
- 2.22** Online, advertising may not be sold against a specific story on news and current affairs or consumer review pages. In publications, editorial content and advertisements on the same subject should be kept a reasonable distance apart to avoid the impression that the advertisement has influenced the choice of editorial.
- 2.23** The BBC name, logos, titles, channel names, programme titles, formats, characters, sets, music or catchphrases should not normally be used by commercial advertisers, except in joint promotions or advertising for licenced BBC products.
- See Editorial Guidelines section 16 External Relationships and Financing
- 2.24** The suitability of a particular advertisement format should have regard to:
- consumer expectations of the BBC brand
  - consumer experience
  - market norms in the relevant territory
- 2.25** Online advertising must not unduly interrupt the user's experience of the editorial content without the user's permission. Users should normally signal intent before receiving more intrusive forms of advertising. *For example, click or hover to initiate.*

**2.26** Any proposal to accept a new advertising format must be approved by the Advertising Standards Guardian who will consider whether:

- it is appropriate for the relevant BBC service or publication.

The ASG may then provide operational guidance for the execution and ongoing use of the format as it evolves. This operational guidance must be approved by the Advertising Governance Committee.

**2.27** Television advertisements of a duration of more than five minutes, sometimes referred to as ‘infomercials’, are not normally permitted. Where a service is off-air infomercials may be transmitted as long as it is clear to viewers that they are not watching a BBC service. For example, this may be acceptable overnight.

## Use of BBC talent in advertising

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**2.28** Staff, and regular magazine or website contributors, must not appear in advertising in their publication or on their service.

**2.29** Any advertising that features a programme presenter or occasional magazines or website contributor should be clearly separated from their editorial contribution. It should not appear adjacent to their contribution and must avoid giving the impression that the advertising has influenced the choice of contributor.

**2.30** Any proposal to accept advertising that features a programme presenter or occasional magazine or website contributor on their service or in their publication must be approved by the Advertising Standards Guardian who will consider whether:

- it would give rise to a conflict of interest
- the relevant approvals have been obtained

See Editorial Guidelines sections 15.3.34-15.3.40 Conflicts of Interest: On-air talent and promotional activity including commercial advertising and endorsements

## Share of voice and exclusive arrangements

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- 2.31** An advertiser may seek to buy all available advertising space, giving them 100% share of voice. This is often called a ‘takeover’, a ‘buyout’ or a ‘solus’ advertising arrangement. This is distinct from sponsorship because no form of credit can be given. For example, ‘In association with ...’.
- 2.32** In publications, takeover arrangements are prohibited for regular magazines. However, they may be acceptable for one-shot magazines, magazine supplements and inserts.
- Any such proposal must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure who will consider whether:**
- **it is appropriate for the relevant BBC service or publication.**
  - **it would compromise the BBC’s impartiality, editorial integrity and independence.**
- 2.33** In other media, takeover arrangements must be time limited to ensure there is no impression of BBC endorsement.
- Any proposal for a takeover lasting more than 48 hours must be approved by the Advertising Standards Guardian who will consider whether:**
- **it would give the perception of endorsement by the BBC**
  - **it would give the perception of sponsorship where such an arrangement would be inappropriate.**
- 2.34** Takeover arrangements across the whole of a substantive service are only permitted for a very short period of time (less than 48 hours).

**Any such proposal must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure who will consider whether:**

- **it is appropriate for the relevant BBC service or publication**
- **it would compromise the BBC's impartiality, editorial integrity and independence**
- **it would bring the BBC into disrepute**

### 2.35

For consumer advice and review content, any takeover by an advertiser whose products or services are likely to be reviewed must not exceed 7 days in length to avoid any perception of sponsorship where this would not be permitted.

### 2.36

**For news and current affairs content, any takeover for more than 7 days must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure who will consider whether:**

- **the proposal would be perceived as sponsorship which is prohibited for news and current affairs content**
- **the proposal would compromise the BBC's impartiality**

### 2.37

In determining whether a takeover is acceptable, the following factors should be considered:

- a. the proximity between the editorial content and the product or service to be advertised
- b. the duration and/or recurrence of the takeover
- c. the appropriate percentage of advertising units across the service which would be subject to the takeover
- d. the audience (or level of traffic) attracted to the content being taken over
- e. whether the takeover involves all inventory, or whether some space will remain unsold or used for 'house ads'

- f. the frequency with which online editorial content is updated. For example, sections which are updated less frequently may be more acceptable for longer term takeovers
- g. the method of delivery of other advertising on the service. For example, takeovers online are less likely to lead to an impression of sponsorship where the use of automated targeted advertising may result in the audience seeing the same advertising repeatedly.
- h. in publications, the layout of the editorial content in relation to the advertising

### 2.38

An advertiser may seek an exclusivity arrangement, where they are the only advertiser from a particular category of advertiser. Such arrangements must be time limited. Category exclusivity is prohibited for political advertisers.

## Third party supplied advertising on BBC services

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### 2.39

In some cases the BBC may contract a third party to supply advertising for a BBC service. For example, an advertising agent may sell advertising on BBC television channels as part of a wider arrangement with a carriage provider. Similarly an online ad network, ad exchange or other automated buying platform might provide programmatic advertising for a BBC website.

### 2.40

Where a third party is responsible for the sale, broadcast or publishing of advertising on a BBC branded service, the contractual arrangements should include a requirement to comply with these guidelines.

**Any proposed exceptions must be agreed in advance by the Advertising Governance Committee.**

**2.41**

The Advertising Standards Guardian should ensure that regular sample reviews of advertising provided by third parties are conducted to ensure that the arrangements comply with these guidelines. The results of the reviews should be presented to the Advertising Governance Committee.

# Advertisement Features

## Advertisement Features

- 3.1** Advertisement Features, as the name implies, are advertisements that are presented in an editorial style. They are paid for by the advertiser and under their control. Online, Advertisement Features are sometimes referred to as an advertiser's 'microsite', as an advertorial, branded content, 'paid for' content, or as native advertising.
- 3.2** Advertisement Features must remain distinct from the editorial content, so that the consumer knows it is an Advertisement Feature and not editorial. They may be written and designed by editorial staff. However, BBC staff (and those of our licensees) and regular contributors should not be given a by-line for any Advertisement Feature they write, nor should they be featured by name or photograph.
- 3.3** Advertisement Features must:
- a. be on a subject matter that is appropriate for the relevant audience
  - b. be of an appropriate quality to be published alongside BBC content
  - c. not influence, or reasonably be perceived to have influenced, the editorial content of the service or publication
  - d. not imply endorsement of any product or service by the BBC
  - e. not feature any recognisable BBC content, such as BBC names, logos, titles, channel names, programme titles, formats or characters, sets, music or catch phrases
  - f. remain distinct from the editorial content of the service or publication, so that consumers know they are reading an Advertisement Feature

- 3.4** Advertisement Features must be clearly and prominently labelled as advertising. The label ‘Advertisement Feature’ should normally be used, unless other wording has been agreed in advance by the Advertising Governance Committee.
- 3.5** Instructions, practical advice or recipes within an Advertisement Feature must be approved by the website or publication’s experts.
- 3.6** Advertisement Features must only include BBC talent where written confirmation has been obtained from the talent (or their agent) that there is no conflict and that they have the necessary permission to undertake the work (if appropriate). The restrictions that apply to advertisements by on-air talent can be found in the BBC Editorial Guidelines and associated Editorial Guidance Notes. Normally, regular BBC presenters are contractually required to adhere to the BBC’s Conflicts of Interest policy and to seek permission from the BBC for any advertising commitments.
- See Editorial Guidelines sections 15.3.34-15.3.39 Conflicts of Interest: On-air talent and promotional activity including commercial advertising and endorsements
- 3.7** **All Advertisement Feature deals must be approved by the Advertising Standards Guardian.**
- 3.8** **The content of Advertisement Features must also be approved by the Advertising Standards Guardian who must ensure the relevant editor has approved the content.**
- The final responsibility for approving Advertisement Features, like editorial content, rests with the editor.
- The Advertising Standards Guardian and editor will consider whether:**
- **it is appropriate for the relevant BBC service or publication**
  - **it would meet the principles in these Guidelines**

## Prohibited and restricted categories of Advertisement Feature

### 3.9

The following categories of Advertisement Feature are prohibited:

- a. political advertising
- b. advertising for faith, religion and equivalent systems of belief
- c. advertising for adult products and services
- d. advertising for tobacco and marijuana products
- e. advertising for weapons and gun clubs
- f. advertising for infant formula or baby milk

### 3.10

**Advertisement Features in the following categories must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure:**

- a. advertising by governments and government agencies (except tourism boards and trade or investment boards)
- b. advertising for public information campaigns
- c. advertising by charities, trusts, foundations and non-governmental organisations
- d. advertising by lobby groups and trade unions
- e. advertising for any product or service which shares a name or trademark with a prohibited product or service, sometimes referred to as ‘Surrogate advertising’

See section 9 for meanings

**The senior editorial figure will consider whether:**

- the proposal would meet the principles in these guidelines in particular in relation to the BBC’s impartiality

## Promotion of Advertisement Features

- 3.11** An Advertisement Feature may be promoted. Where it is promoted on a BBC commercial service, the promotion must be clearly labelled as advertising.
- 3.12** Where an Advertisement Feature is hosted on a BBC website, the BBC URL may not be quoted in any promotion or advertising. Instead, a 'vanity' URL should be used which redirects to the Advertisement Feature. *For example, LifeStory.com could redirect to BBC.com/future/sponsored/story/...*



# Sponsorship

## Sponsorship

For programme and format sales, see section 8

- 4.1** Sponsorship is where another party (not engaged in the provision or production of content) makes any contribution to the funding of editorial content (or its publication or broadcast) with a view to promoting their name, products, services, trade marks and/or activities. Sponsorship includes Advertiser Funded Programmes (or 'AFP'). Sponsorship is distinct from advertising because a sponsor is credited for their direct investment, providing them with a closer association with the content.

## Principles

- 4.2** All sponsorship arrangements must meet the principles for advertising.  
See sections 2.1 to 2.8
- 4.3** All sponsorship arrangements must be clearly identified by means of a sponsorship credit.
- 4.4** Sponsorship arrangements must not lead to the creation or distortion of editorial content so that it becomes a vehicle for the purpose of promoting the sponsor. In all cases, the BBC should have a full understanding of the relationship between the contributor and the editorial content, as well as a full appreciation of the motivation and reasons a contributor is financing content.
- 4.5** The BBC must maintain independent editorial control and responsibility for all editorial content. Sponsorship arrangements must not influence content or scheduling in such a way as to impair the responsibility and editorial independence of the BBC.

It must not create a conflict of interest which could compromise the BBC's impartiality, editorial integrity and independence. Political, commercial, financial or other interests must not influence, or be reasonably perceived as having influenced BBC editorial judgements.

**4.6** An organisation may not sponsor content which, had it not been sponsored, could have been expected to contain material which might conflict with the sponsor's interests.

**4.7** References within sponsored editorial content to the sponsor's name, products, services or trade marks, may fall within the definition of product placement, which must follow the product placement guidelines in the Editorial Guidelines.

See Editorial Guidelines section 14.3.27-14.3.36 Independence from External Interests: Product Placement

## Content with restrictions around sponsorship

**4.8** The following categories of content must not be sponsored:

- a. Substantive magazines and publications
- b. BBC.com as a whole
- c. News and current affairs content and services

See section 6.3 to 6.12

- a. General consumer advice programmes and services which could deal with any topic. *For example, the Watchdog television programme*
- b. Religious content
- c. Events and exhibitions based on content that cannot be sponsored

**4.9** Other sponsorship arrangements must not give the impression that any of these categories of content have been sponsored.

**4.10** For television services and websites, it may be acceptable to have a channel sponsor or site sponsor.

**Any proposal to have a channel sponsor of a BBC branded television service, or site sponsor for a BBC branded website, must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure. Any proposal for channel sponsorship of non-BBC branded services for a duration of more than six months, or any proposal for multiple concurrent channel sponsorships by the same sponsor must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure. In all cases, the senior editorial figure will consider whether:**

- the proposal is appropriate for the relevant BBC service or publication
- the proposal would compromise the BBC's impartiality, editorial integrity and independence
- the proposal would bring the BBC into disrepute

**4.11** Advertiser Funded Programmes (or 'AFP') should be treated as content sponsored by that advertiser.

**All Advertiser Funded Programmes must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure who will consider whether:**

- the proposal is appropriate for the relevant BBC service
- the proposal would meet the sponsorship principles in these guidelines

**4.12** Content that includes review of, or advice on, products or services cannot be sponsored by an organisation whose products or services are likely to be reviewed. This is to avoid the perception that the sponsor may have influenced the editorial selection or conclusions.

## Choice of sponsor

**4.13** All sponsors must be approved in advance by the Advertising Standards Guardian who will consider whether:

- it is appropriate for the relevant BBC service or publication

See Editorial Guidelines sections 16.3.2-16.3.3 External Relationships and Financing: Appropriateness: Third Parties

**4.14** Organisations may not sponsor content if they are prohibited from advertising in that medium or territory.

**4.15** The following categories of advertiser are prohibited from sponsoring any content:

- a. political advertising
- b. advertising for faith, religion and equivalent systems of belief
- c. advertising for adult products and services
- d. advertising for tobacco and marijuana products
- e. advertising for weapons and gun clubs
- f. advertising for infant formula or baby milk

**4.16** Sponsorship by advertisers in the following categories must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure:

- a. governments and government agencies (except tourism boards and trade or investment boards)
- b. public information campaigns
- c. charities, trusts, foundations and non-governmental organisations
- d. lobby groups and trade unions
- e. betting, gaming, gambling, casinos and lotteries
- f. any product or service which shares a name or trademark with a prohibited product or service, sometimes referred to as 'Surrogate advertising'

**The senior editorial figure will consider whether:**

- **the proposal is appropriate for the relevant BBC service or publication**
- **the proposal would compromise the BBC's impartiality, editorial integrity and independence**
- **the proposal would bring the BBC into disrepute**

## Sponsorship credits

**4.17** The sponsorship credit should clearly identify the sponsor by reference to its name or trade mark and establish the association between the sponsor and the sponsored content. On television services in the UK and across the European Union advertising messages are prohibited within sponsorship credits.

**4.18** The sponsorship credit should normally use the term 'sponsored by' or 'in association with', unless this is not established practice in the particular market.

**The use of any other term should be approved by a senior editorial figure who will consider whether:**

- **the proposed term clearly and transparently describes the relationship as sponsorship**

**4.19** The sponsor's name or logo should be displayed or clearly identified, provided it does not imply that they have ownership or editorial control of the content.

**4.20** The sponsorship credit must not suggest that the content has been made by the sponsor.

**4.21** The sponsor's name should not normally be incorporated into the name of the content. For example, '[Sponsor's] Film Guide' would not be permitted, but 'Film Guide in association with [Sponsor]' would be acceptable. It may be acceptable to incorporate the sponsor's name into the title of an

Advertiser Funded Programme where it is not a news or current affairs programme.

**4.22** The use of any BBC brand within a sponsorship credit or billboard must be consistent with the principles set out in the relevant BBC branding guidelines.

**4.23** BBC news presenters or those normally associated with news programming may not appear in sponsorship credits for any content.

**4.24** **The format and content of all sponsorship credits must be approved in advance by the Advertising Standards Guardian who will consider whether:**

- they meet the requirements of these guidelines

**4.25** On television, all sponsor credits broadcast during programmes must not be unduly prominent. Credits broadcast during programmes must only consist of a brief, neutral visual and/or verbal statement identifying the sponsorship arrangement.

**Any such credit must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure who will consider whether:**

- they are unduly prominent

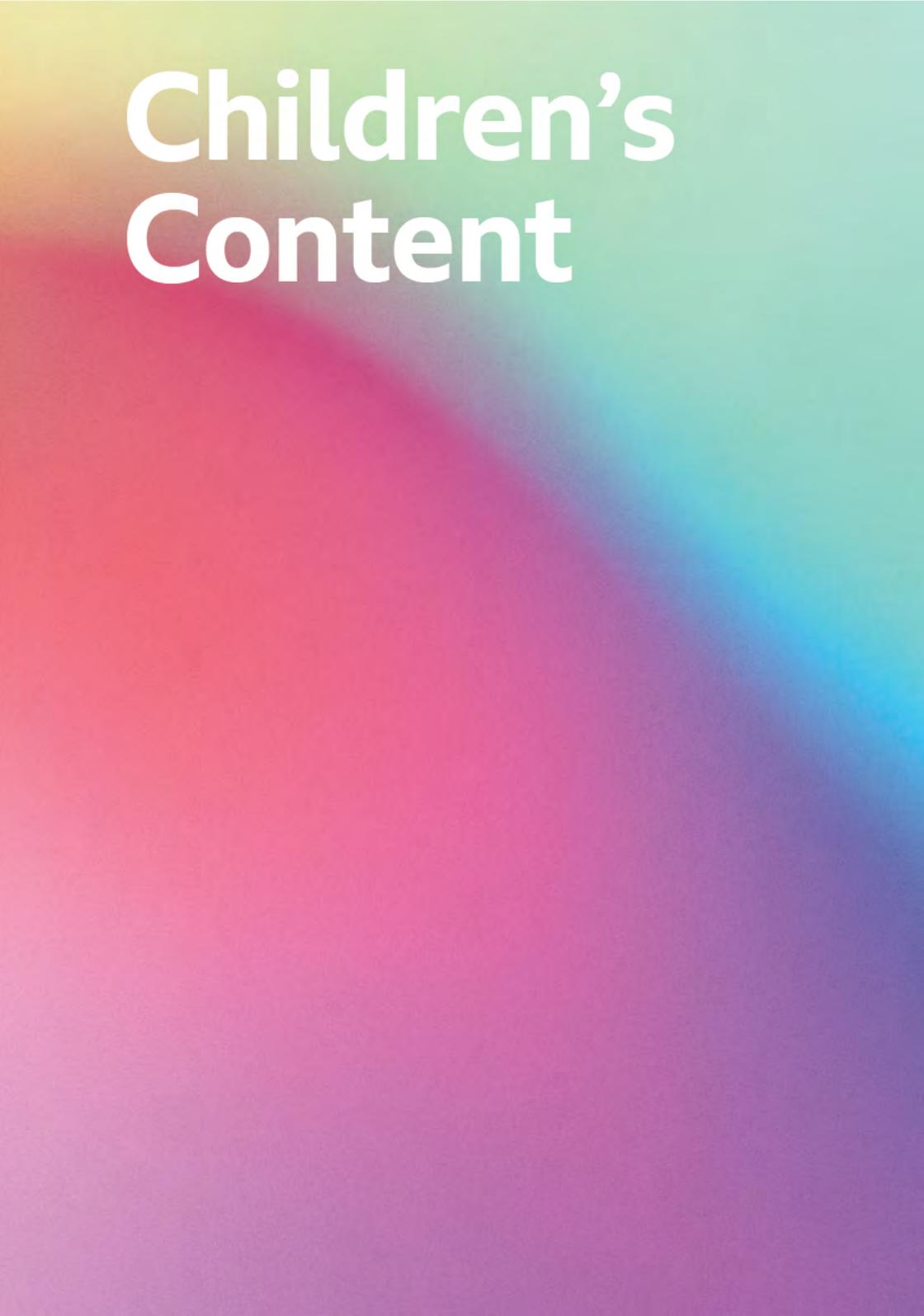
## Promotion of sponsored content

**4.26** Where there is promotion of sponsored content (such as a programme trail, house ad or social media post), any reference to the sponsor must remain brief and secondary. The primary purpose must be to promote the editorial content.

**4.27** Sponsored content may be promoted elsewhere on the same service (or on other services), including around content which itself cannot be sponsored. However, such promotion must not create the impression that

there is any relationship between the sponsor and the content which cannot be sponsored. For example, a sponsored section of BBC.com can be promoted on a news page (including reference to the sponsor) so long as there is no perception that news content has been sponsored.

# Children's Content



## Children's Content

*The guidelines on advertising, Advertisement Features and sponsorship in sections 1 to 4 also apply to all Children's content.*

- 5.1** The BBC is a trusted provider of content for children. As such, we have a responsibility to ensure that advertising around this content is appropriate and does not encourage children to undertake harmful activities. In determining what advertising is appropriate around Children's content, the age of the target audience should be taken into account.
- 5.2** For the purpose of these guidelines, children should be taken to mean all children and young people under the age of 18.
- 5.3** Advertising should be suitable for the target audience. That is, it must not contain any material which would not be suitable for an unsupervised child to use. Advertisements must not:
- a. contain anything that is likely to result in the physical, mental or moral harm of children
  - b. encourage children to copy any practice that might be unsafe for a child. It should not contain behaviour that is likely to be easily imitable by children in a manner that is dangerous. *For example, advertisements should not depict children in hazardous situations or behaving dangerously such as crossing a main road without appropriate adult supervision*
  - c. encourage children to enter strange places or talk/communicate with strangers. For example, advertisements should not encourage children to use websites which are not suitably moderated
  - d. contain offensive or profane language
  - e. suggest that a child is inferior or unpopular for not buying a particular product

- f. seek to exploit children's credulity, loyalty, vulnerability or lack of experience
- g. actively encourage children to replace main meals with unhealthy snack foods. Due consideration should be given to local custom and market best practice

#### 5.4

Advertisements that involve promotions must not:

- a. encourage excessive purchases in order to participate in the promotion
- b. exaggerate the value of any prizes on offer, or the chances of winning them

## Prohibited categories of advertising around Children's content

#### 5.5

The following categories of advertising may not be carried in or around any BBC products and services aimed at children:

- a. political advertising
- b. advertising for faith, religion and equivalent systems of belief
- c. advertising for adult products and services
- d. advertising for tobacco and marijuana products
- e. advertising for weapons and gun clubs (including replica guns)
- f. advertising for infant formula or baby milk
- g. advertising for alcohol
- h. advertising for betting, gaming, gambling, casinos and lotteries
- i. advertising for cosmetic surgery
- j. advertising for dating services
- k. advertising for dietary supplements
- l. advertising for eCigarettes
- m. advertising for fireworks

- n. advertising for over the counter or prescription medicines
- o. advertising aimed at children, for products and services which they cannot purchase. For example, lottery tickets
- p. advertising for any products or services which it would be unsafe for an unsupervised child to use. For example, products labelled 'keep out of the reach of children'

**5.6**

The following categories of advertising may not be carried in or around any BBC product or service aimed at children under the age of 10:

- a. advertising for sanitary protection products
- b. advertising for contraceptives and family planning products and services

**5.7**

Advertising for food and drink products high in fat, salt, or sugar ("HFSS") is not acceptable where it suggests they are an alternative to a healthy, balanced, diet.

**5.8**

In some cases advertising around content aimed at very young children may be directed towards the carer rather than the children. Care should be taken to ensure the advertising is still appropriate for a children's audience. None of the prohibited categories of advertising above may appear. However, it may be possible to advertise other products or services which a child cannot legally purchase or consume.

*For example, advertising for a college savings fund, or for a credit card, aimed at the carer rather than the child could be acceptable. However, advertising for a lottery would be inappropriate (in the UK, children under 16 cannot purchase lottery tickets). As would advertising for cinema tickets for a film classified as unsuitable for under 15s.*

## Categories of advertiser requiring referral around Children's content

### 5.9

Advertisements in the following categories must be approved by the Advertising Standards Guardian before they can be accepted for broadcast or publication on a BBC service aimed at children:

- a. advertising by tourism boards and trade or investment boards
- b. advertising for, or featuring, adhesives and aerosols
- c. advertising for contraceptives and family planning products and services
- d. advertising for food and drinks
- e. advertising for health and beauty products
- f. advertising for, or featuring, matches and fire lighters
- g. advertising for medicines and pharmaceutical products
- h. advertising for medical and personal advice
- i. advertising for sanitary protection products
- j. advertising for telephone and text services
- k. advertising for toiletries and cosmetics
- l. advertising for toy weapons
- m. advertising for virtual private networks or 'VPN' services
- n. advertising for vitamins

The Advertising Standards Guardian will consider whether:

- the proposal would meet the principles in these Guidelines
- the proposal is appropriate for a children's service
- in the case of advertising for VPN services, the proposal does not facilitate or encourage unauthorised access to digital media

**5.10**

The following categories of advertising must be approved by a senior editorial figure before they can be accepted for broadcast or publication on a BBC service aimed at children:

- a. advertising by governments and government agencies (except tourism boards and trade or investment boards)
- b. advertising for public information campaigns
- c. advertising by charities, trusts, foundations and non-governmental organisations
- d. advertising by lobby groups and trade unions
- e. advertising for any products or services which share a name or trademark with a prohibited product or service, sometimes referred to as 'Surrogate advertising'
- f. advertisements that deal with a controversial subject that is a matter of public policy
- g. advertisements which could compromise the BBC's editorial integrity

The senior editorial figure will consider whether:

- the proposal would meet the principles in these guidelines in particular in relation to the BBC's impartiality
- the proposal is appropriate for a children's service

## **Food and drinks**

**5.11**

The BBC Studios Food Licensing Policy outlines the types of food and drink products to which a BBC Children's brand could be licensed. BBC commercial services would not normally accept advertising around content aimed at children for food and drink products which fall outside these parameters.

## Sponsored Children's content

- 5.12** All sponsorship arrangements around children's content must meet the principles for advertising (see sections 2.1 to 2.8) and the principles for sponsorship (see 4.2 to 4.7)
- 5.13** In addition, sponsorship arrangements around children's content must not encourage 'pester power'. For example, the arrangements should not encourage children to persuade their parents, guardians or other persons to buy or hire a product or service for them.
- 5.14** Children's television services may not have channel sponsors. However, individual programmes and blocks of programmes may be sponsored.
- 5.15** **Any service wishing to accept sponsorship of Children's content for the first time must seek approval from the Advertising Governance Committee.**
- 5.16** Children's content may only be sponsored by organisations who can advertise around content aimed at children. Sponsorship is not allowed by products or services that directly appeal to children.
- 5.17** **All sponsorship arrangements relating to Children's content must be approved in advance by a senior editorial figure.**
- The senior editorial figure will consider whether:**
- the proposal would meet the principles in these guidelines
  - the proposal is appropriate for a children's service



# News and Current Affairs Content

## News and Current Affairs Content

*The guidelines on advertising, Advertisement Features and sponsorship in sections 1 to 4 also apply to all news and current affairs content.*

- 6.1 The following categories of advertising may not be carried in or around any BBC news and current affairs content:
- a. political advertising
  - b. advertising for faith, religion and equivalent systems of belief
  - c. advertising for adult products and services
  - d. advertising for tobacco and marijuana products
  - e. advertising for weapons and gun clubs

## Contextual advertising

- 6.2 Advertising may not be sold against a specific story in news or current affairs content. *For example, an advertiser could not buy advertising specifically around a particular business report on a company going into liquidation. However, it is acceptable to buy advertising around a theme, such as the coverage of the Davos World Economic Forum, or a tag, such as 'liquidation'.*

## Sponsorship

- 6.3 BBC News is a trusted source for news from around the world. News in whatever form must be treated with due impartiality.

See Editorial Guidelines sections 4.3.10-4.3.11 Impartiality: News, Current Affairs and Factual Output)

In order that the perception of due impartiality is not compromised news and current affairs content cannot be sponsored.

**6.4**

‘Current affairs’ means content that contains explanation and/or analysis of current events and issues, including material dealing with political or industrial controversy or with current public policy.

Matters of political or industrial controversy are political or industrial issues on which politicians, industry and/or the media are in debate. Matters relating to current public policy need not be the subject of debate but relate to a policy under discussion or already decided by a local, regional or national government or by bodies mandated by those public bodies to make policy on their behalf. *For example, non-governmental organisations, relevant European institutions, etc.*

**6.5**

Specialist reports which contain no current affairs commentary or analysis (such as sport, travel and weather reports), and unmediated business data (such as financial market information), may be sponsored if they are clearly separated from news content. To avoid the impression that news has been sponsored, such reports should not be described as ‘news’.

See also Editorial Guidelines sections 16.3.49-16.3.56 External Relationships and Financing: External Funding for BBC World Service Group which is not co-production or sponsorship

## News programmes on television

**6.6**

Legislation prohibits the sponsorship of news and current affairs programming broadcast in the UK and across the European Union.

**6.7**

In other territories, where there is not a legal prohibition of the sponsorship of news and current affairs programming, it may be possible for other broadcasters who retransmit BBC news and current affairs programmes to accept sponsorship, not of the news programme itself, but, of the presentation of the rebroadcasting where local regulations and market practice allow. *For example, ‘Funding of this*

*presentation on PBS is made possible by X'. This must not create the impression that the due impartiality or due accuracy of BBC News has been affected.*

**6.8**

**The decision about whether the presentation of a BBC News programme can be sponsored in a specific territory must be referred to a senior editorial figure in BBC Global News (regardless of the channel on which the content is to be broadcast) who will consider whether:**

- **the proposal would compromise the impartiality of BBC News**

**6.9**

News and current affairs services cannot be sponsored. Individual programmes may be sponsored unless their sponsorship is specifically prohibited.

**The decision about whether individual programmes, broadcast within a news and current affairs service, can be sponsored must be referred to a senior editorial figure in BBC Global News who will consider whether:**

- **the proposal would compromise the impartiality of BBC News**

## **Business programmes on television**

**6.10**

Sponsorship of business and financial television programmes that contain business news, including explanation or analysis of current financial and economic issues is prohibited in the UK and across the European Union.

**6.11**

In other regions, where local regulations allow, content which is predominantly for the purpose of providing business reports may be sponsored.

**6.12**

**The decision about whether business content can be sponsored must be referred to a senior editorial figure in BBC Global News (regardless of the channel on which the content is to be broadcast) who will consider whether:**

- **the proposal would compromise the impartiality of BBC News**



# Syndication

## Syndication

**7.1** Syndication is where BBC content is distributed to a third party, for inclusion in their managed platform, such as a broadcast service or website, or publication. *For example, BBC World Service radio bulletins might be syndicated to international radio stations.*

**7.2** Where content is syndicated and presented as a BBC branded block or section, or as being managed and curated by the BBC, the provisions of these guidelines apply to the advertising placed around that block or section. *For example, a CBeebies branded block broadcast on a Nordic television channel should comply with the requirement of sections 1 to 5. The contractual arrangements for such syndication arrangements should normally include a requirement to comply with these guidelines.*

**Any proposed exception must be approved in advance by the Advertising Governance Committee.**

**7.3** Where content is syndicated for inclusion in a third party's service alongside content from other sources, and it is clear to consumers from the look and feel of the service that the content is not being presented, managed or curated by the BBC, the advertising provisions of these guidelines do not apply.

See also Editorial Guidelines section 16 External Relationships and Financing

**7.4** In all cases, the sponsorship provisions of these guidelines apply to syndicated content. There should be a contractual requirement to seek BBC approval for any direct sponsorship of BBC content.

**Any proposed exception must be approved in advance by the Advertising Governance Committee.**

## 7.5

In some territories (including the United States) market norms may make it acceptable to credit in a different way making clear that it is the presentation of the content by the third party that is sponsored, and not the content itself. *For example, 'Top Gear on [channel] is sponsored by Honda' or 'The funding of this presentation on PBS is made possible by Honda'.*



# Programme and Format Sales

## Programme and Format Sales

- 8.1** A programme sale is where individual BBC programmes, or collection of BBC programmes, are sold to another broadcaster for inclusion in their branded service. A format sale is where a BBC programme format is sold to another broadcaster for them to produce their own version of that programme for inclusion in their branded service.
- 8.2** Compliance with the relevant points in this section should be a contractual requirement in all programme or format sales agreements.
- 8.3** Where programme or format sales are to be included in a BBC branded block of programming, all sections of these guidelines apply.
- 8.4** There should always be a contractual requirement allowing the relevant BBC Commercial Service to request that the broadcaster cease an advertising or sponsorship activity around BBC programmes where this is deemed to jeopardise the reputation of the BBC.

## Advertising

- 8.5** For programme and format sales, the advertising sections of these guidelines do not apply, so long as advertising is contractually restricted to clearly distinct commercial breaks, which fall at natural breaks within the programme.
- 8.6** Other forms of advertising, which do not appear in clearly distinct commercial breaks, such as overlay advertising or 'squeeze-backs', are only permitted if approval has been granted in advance by the BBC Advertising Governance Committee. There should be a contractual requirement restricting such forms of advertising unless prior approval has been granted.

- 8.7** Where approval has been granted for advertising which does not appear in clearly distinct commercial breaks, such advertising must not be for an organisation who could not sponsor that content. *For example, political overlay advertising would not be acceptable during any BBC programmes. There should be a contractual requirement restricting the categories of advertising in such cases.*

## Sponsorship

- 8.8** There should be a contractual requirement prohibiting the sponsorship of the following categories of programming, or of their inclusion as part of a block of sponsored content:
- a. News and current affairs programmes
- See section 6.3 to 6.12

- 8.9** There should be a contractual requirement requiring prior written approval from the relevant BBC Commercial Service for the sponsorship of the following categories of programming, or of their inclusion as part of a block of sponsored content:
- a. General consumer advice programmes which could deal with any topic. *For example, the Watchdog television programme*
  - b. Religious programmes

- 8.10** There should be a contractual requirement prohibiting the following categories of advertiser from sponsoring any BBC content, either directly or as part of a block of sponsored content:
- a. political advertising
  - b. advertising for faith, religion and equivalent systems of belief
  - c. advertising for adult products and services
  - d. advertising for tobacco and marijuana products
  - e. advertising for weapons and gun clubs
  - f. advertising for infant formula or baby milk

**8.11** Where reference to the programme name is to be made in a sponsorship credit without also making reference to the service, there should be a contractual requirement requiring prior written approval from the relevant BBC Commercial Service. *For example, "Doctor Who is sponsored by ..."*

**8.12** Where reference to the programme name is to be made in a sponsorship credit alongside reference to the service, there should be a contractual requirement requiring prior written approval from the relevant BBC Commercial Service for sponsorship by the following categories or advertiser. *For example, "Doctor Who on [channel] is sponsored by...":*

- a. governments and government agencies (except tourism boards and trade or investment boards)
- b. public information campaigns
- c. charities, trusts, foundations and non-governmental organisations
- d. lobby groups and trade unions
- e. betting, gaming, gambling, casinos and lotteries
- f. any product or service which shares a name or trademark with a prohibited product or service, sometimes referred to as 'Surrogate advertising'

**8.13** There should be a contractual requirement to prohibit the sponsorship of programmes that include review of, or advice on, products or services by an organisation whose products or services may be reviewed without the prior written approval from the relevant BBC Commercial Service. Such approval may only be granted where it is clear that it is the retransmission of the programme that is being sponsored rather than the original commission.

**8.14** There should be a contractual requirement requiring prior written approval from the relevant BBC Commercial Service for any sponsorship of children's content, or for the inclusion of children's content in a block of sponsored content.

# Meanings

## Meanings

### Adult products and services

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This category includes pornography (such as British Board of Film Classification rated R18 films), sex chat lines, sexually explicit publications and websites, sex toys, sexual products and services, and escort agencies. It also includes advertising that promotes casual sex or international match-making services. It does not include dating services of a non-sexual nature.

### Advertiser Funded Programmes

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An Advertiser Funded Programme (or 'AFP') is a sponsored programme with which the sponsor has had involvement in the commissioning and/or creation, usually by directly funding production. Note that the BBC must maintain independent editorial control over all programmes it transmits, including Advertiser Funded Programmes.

### Controversial subjects

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In determining whether subjects are controversial, we should take account of:

- the level of public and political contention and debate
- how topical the subject is
- sensitivity in terms of relevant audiences' beliefs and culture
- whether the subject is a matter of intense debate or importance in a particular nation, region, community or discrete area likely to comprise at least a significant part of the audience
- a reasonable view on whether the subject is serious
- the distinction between matters grounded in fact and those which are a matter of opinion

Source: Editorial Guidelines section 4.3.5

## Faith, religion and equivalent systems of belief

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This category includes advertising, about any matter, by or on behalf of bodies that are wholly or mainly concerned with religion, faith or other systems of belief that can reasonably be regarded as equivalent to those that involve recognition of a deity, including belief in the non-existence of deities. It also includes advertising that promotes psychic practices or practices related to the occult.

For advertising around Children's content, this category also includes advertising by any body, for products or services related to such matters (including services of a clearly entertainment nature).

## Infant formula or baby milk

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This category includes all products designed for infants under six months old. It does not include 'follow on' formulas for infants older than six months.

## Political advertising

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Political advertising (as defined in section 321 of the Communications Act 2003) is:

- an advertisement which is inserted by, or on behalf of, a body whose objects are wholly or mainly of a political nature
- an advertisement which is directed towards a political end
- an advertisement which has a connection with an industrial dispute

Objects of a political nature and political ends include each of the following:

- influencing the outcome of elections or referendums, whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere

- bringing about changes of the law in the whole or a part of the United Kingdom or elsewhere, or otherwise influencing the legislative process in any country or territory
- influencing the policies or decisions of local, regional or national governments, whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere
- influencing the policies or decisions of persons on whom public functions are conferred by or under the law of the United Kingdom or of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom
- influencing the policies or decisions of persons on whom functions are conferred by or under international agreements
- influencing public opinion on a matter which, in the United Kingdom, is a matter of public controversy
- promoting the interests of a party or other group of persons organised, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, for political ends

## Senior editorial figure

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A senior editorial figure is a television channel Controller, or equivalent senior manager. The senior editorial figure for each commercial service is designated by the Advertising Governance Committee.

Any referral to a senior editorial figure should be made via the relevant Advertising Standards Guardian.

## Surrogate advertising

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This category includes advertising for any product or service which shares a name or trademark with a prohibited product or service. *For example, a product which shares its name with a tobacco brand, or a product which shares its name with an alcohol brand in a territory where alcohol cannot be advertised.*

## Tobacco and marijuana products

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This category includes all tobacco and marijuana products, including rolling papers and filters and other smoking accessories.

It does not include electronic cigarettes providing the advertising does not contain anything which promotes any design, imagery or logo style that might reasonably be associated in the mind of consumers with a tobacco brand. Advertising for electronic cigarettes must always be socially responsible.

It also does not include prescription-only medicines in territories where such advertising is allowed.

## Weapons and gun clubs

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This category includes all guns (including replica guns), gun clubs, arms fairs and offensive weapons made or adapted to cause injury. It does not include antique weapons that are clearly presented as collectable items and which are not working models.





