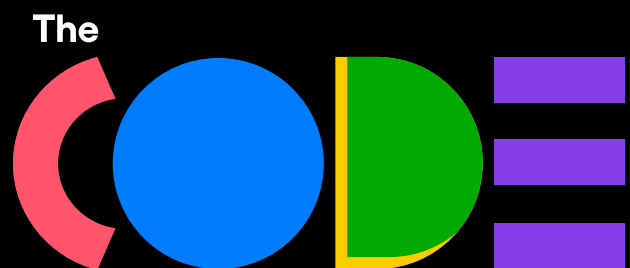




# The Basics of Responsible Marketing Communications

Your go-to guide to the key issues to consider when creating responsible marketing communications, based on the 11th edition of the ICC Code.



## About the ICC Code

The world's standard for responsible marketing communications since 1937.

The ICC Advertising and Marketing Communications Code has been the global backbone of self-regulation in marketing communications since 1937. Published by the International Chamber of Commerce, it aims to ensure all marketing communications are legal, decent, honest and truthful in order to build consumer trust.

The ICC Code is the basis of most self-regulatory systems around the world and provides comprehensive guidance on creating marketing communications that are ethical and responsible. In addition, it is used by many of the world's leading brands, agencies and media platforms to inform their in-house standards, and can also be used by SMEs, startups, influencers or anyone creating commercial communications and content.

## How this go-to guide can help

This guide is a summary of the basic principles you need to know within the Code. It's a brief overview designed to outline the key issues to consider when creating or delivering responsible marketing communications. Of course, more complete guidance is available in the 11th Edition of the ICC Code which can be downloaded [here](#).

LEGAL  
DECENT  
HONEST &  
TRUTHFUL  
SINCE  
1937



## The basics

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### **EVERY CHANNEL COUNTS: WHERE THE CODE APPLIES**

The Code is technology neutral; it covers all forms of advertising and marketing communications across all technologies and media, including digital and social. It applies to everyone across the advertising ecosystem from brand marketers and agencies to publishers, media owners, contractors, influencers, content creators, affiliate networks, data analytics and ad tech companies. And it also applies to marketing communications created or delivered by AI.

See Chapter 2, Scope and Application of the Code.

### **GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT: THE CORE PRINCIPLES**

The most important principle in the Code has been the same since 1937: All marketing communications should be legal, decent, honest and truthful.

See Articles 1-5.

- **Legal:** Ensure all marketing communications observe applicable laws and regulations in the market.
- **Decent:** Don't offend the standards of decency that currently prevail in the country and culture where communications are running.
- **Honest:** Don't abuse consumers' trust or exploit their lack of experience or knowledge.
- **Truthful:** Don't mislead the consumer either directly or by implication, omission, ambiguity or exaggeration.

### **DOING THE RIGHT THING: TAKING SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY SERIOUSLY**

All marketing communications should respect human dignity and not incite or condone any form of discrimination, anti-social behaviour or promote objectification stereotypes. They should also not appear to condone or encourage actions which contravene the law, self-regulatory codes or generally accepted standards concerning climate change or environmentally-responsible behaviour.

See Article 2.

### **SUBSTANTIATING CLAIMS: USING THE RIGHT EVIDENCE**

Any claims that are used to promote a product, a brand, or the business activity, objectives and aspirations of a person, company or organisation, must be able to be rigorously substantiated at the time the communication is published.

See Articles 5 and 6.

### **TRANSPARENCY: BEING CLEAR ABOUT IDENTITY**

Marketing communications should be clearly distinguishable and the marketers' identity should also be made clear. In media that contains news or editorial, marketing communications should be clearly labelled and shouldn't misrepresent their commercial goal.

See Articles 7 and 8.

## **TESTIMONIALS, ENDORSEMENTS AND INFLUENCERS: MAKING THEM GENUINE**

Marketing communications should not contain or refer to any testimonial, endorsement or supportive documentation unless it is genuine, verifiable and relevant. If a testimonial or endorsement is sponsored, that should be made clear through an appropriate disclosure if it's not otherwise obvious from the form and format of the communication. All influencer marketing communications (including promotion of an influencer's own products) should be designed and presented in such a way that it is immediately identifiable as such.

See articles 7 and 18.

## **PLAYING FAIR: HOW COMPETITION WORKS**

Marketing communications shouldn't denigrate or ridicule competitors or other products, organisations or people. They also shouldn't make unjustifiable use of the name, logo or trademark of another organisation or take advantage of goodwill belonging to others.

See Articles 11 and 12.

## **SPECIAL CARE: MARKETING TO CHILDREN AND TEENS**

Communications directed to or featuring children (aged 12 and under) or teens (aged 13-17) shouldn't undermine positive social behaviour, lifestyle and attitudes. They must also take care not to exploit their natural credulity or lack of experience.

See Article 20 and Chapter E.

## **DATA PROTECTION: RESPECTING PRIVACY**

When collecting personal data from individuals, care should be taken to respect and protect their privacy by complying with all relevant rules and regulations. Processing of personal data should be clear, adequate and transparent. It should also respect a direct expression of an individual's preference regarding the use of their personal data for marketing communications made through channels that the marketers should provide for such purposes.

See article 22.

## **TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: A WIDE REMIT**

Marketers have overall responsibility for their marketing communications. However, responsibility also applies to all other participants in the marketing ecosystem in line with their respective activities, and level of expected professional knowledge and control.

To download the full ICC Advertising and Marketing Communications Code, access more go-to guides or find your local self-regulatory body, [visit the ICC website](#).