

# Real Cool Stuff? Or Toxic Stuff?

*Sherri Collins*

To protect my children from toxins in the environment, I will teach them to read the labels on the personal products that they use on a daily basis. For example, my boys like to put model cars and airplanes together, but the glue used to assemble the cars and airplanes has a strong odor. My daughter likes to use hair spray and non-permanent hair dye. I want her to understand that aerosol cans and their ingredients could hurt her and the environment if they are not used and discarded properly.

The problem with trying to teach my children to be cautious is that the ads on television and in magazines make it seem as if no harm could come from using these toxic products. These ads make all of the products seem like “real cool stuff.” So my kids sometimes say, “Aw, Mom,” when I limit the use of them.



*Sherri Collins was laid off from her job in April 2010. She decided to use this time to earn her GED at the Adult Education Center in Fort Smith, Arkansas. She has three wonderful children and a husband of thirteen years who supports her in everything that she is trying to do.*

## Making Sense of the Measurements

**Read the article** and study the chart on the p. 4. Use the information below to get a better sense of the units it mentions—liters and micrograms.

**Liters measure volume of liquid.** A deciliter is one-tenth of a liter or 3.4 ounces. That’s about half of a small coffee cup. Find other ways to describe a deciliter.

**Grams measure weight.** A dime weighs about one gram. What else weighs one gram?

**Amounts smaller than a milligram** can be measured in micrograms ( $\mu\text{g}$ ). A microgram is one-millionth of a gram. Is it visible?

**Do too many numbers make your brain freeze?** You’re not alone! See “Smart Moves” on p. 35 for tips to help you *keep thinking* even when approaching difficult math problems!

