

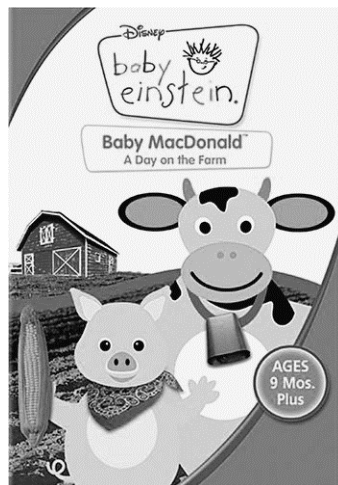
## No Einstein in Your Crib? Get a Refund

Parent alert: the Walt Disney Company is now offering refunds for all those "Baby Einstein" videos that did not make children into geniuses. They may have been a great electronic baby sitter, but the unusual refunds appear to be a tacit admission that they did not increase infant intellect. "We see it as 30 by the Walt Disney Company, and we hope other baby media companies will follow suit by offering refunds," said Susan Linn, director of Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, which has been pushing the issue for years.

Baby Einstein, founded in 1997, was one of the earliest players in what became a huge electronic media market for babies and toddlers. Acquired by Disney in 2001, the company expanded to a full line of books, toys, flashcards and apparel, along with DVDs including "Baby Mozart," "Baby Shakespeare" and "Baby Galileo".

The videos — simple productions featuring music, puppets, bright colors, and not many words — became a staple of baby life: According to a 2003 study, a third of all American babies from 6 months to 2 years old had at least one "Baby Einstein" video. Despite their 31, and the fact that many babies are transfixed by the videos, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time at all for children under 2.

In 2006, Ms. Linn's group went to the Federal Trade Commission to



complain about the educational claims made by Disney and another company, Brainy Baby. As a result, the companies dropped the word "educational" from their marketing. But the group didn't think that was enough. "Disney was never held accountable, and parents were never given any compensation. So we shared our information and research

with a team of public health lawyers," Ms. Linn said.

Last year, lawyers threatened a lawsuit for unfair and deceptive practices unless Disney agreed to refund the full purchase price to all who bought the videos since 2004. "The Walt Disney Company's entire Baby Einstein marketing regime is based on express and implied claims that their videos are educational and beneficial for early childhood development", a letter from the lawyers said, calling those claims "false because research shows that television viewing is potentially harmful for very young children." The letter cited estimates from *The Washington Post* and *Business Week* that Baby Einstein controlled 90 percent of the baby media market, and sold \$200 million worth of products annually. The letter also described studies showing that television exposure at ages 1 through 3 is associated with attention problems at age 7. 32, the Baby Einstein company will refund \$15.99 for up to four "Baby Einstein" DVDs per household, bought between June 5,

2004, and Sept. 5, 2009, and returned to the company.

The public health lawyers refused to comment on the settlement. Last month, Baby Einstein announced the new refunds — or "enhanced consumer satisfaction guarantee" — but made no mention of the lawyers' demands.

The founder and president of Brainy Baby, Dennis Fedoruk, said in an email message that he was unaware of Baby Einstein's refund announcement and could not offer further comment. An outside public relations representative for Baby Einstein said there was nothing new about the refund offer. "We've had a customer satisfaction guarantee for a long time," she said, referring a reporter to the company Web site. However, Baby Einstein's general "money-back" guarantee is only valid for 60 days from purchase and requires a receipt.

33, the current offer, allowing parents to exchange their video for a different title, receive a discount coupon, or get \$15.99 each for up to

four returned DVDs, requires no receipt, and extends until next March 10. "When attention got focused on this issue a few years ago, a lot of companies became more cautious about what they claimed," said Vicky Rideout, vice president of the Kaiser Family Foundation. "But even if the word 'education' isn't there, there's a clear implication of educational benefits in 34."

The Baby Einstein Web site, for example, still describes its videos with phrases like "reinforces number recognition using simple patterns" or "introduces circles, ovals, triangles, squares and rectangles". "My impression is that parents really believe these videos are good for their children, or at the very least, not really bad for them," Ms. Rideout said. "To me, the most important thing is reminding parents that getting down on the floor to play with children is the most educational thing they can do."

*New York Times, 2009*

## Tekst 7 No Einstein in your crib? Get a refund

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*Kies bij iedere open plek in de tekst het juiste antwoord uit de gegeven mogelijkheden.*

1p 30

- A a clever trick to keep us happy
- B an acknowledgement of our view
- C a small gesture
- D a stroke of genius

1p 31

- A lucrativeness
- B potential
- C ubiquity
- D uniqueness

1p 32

- A Either way
- B Even so
- C In fact
- D In response

1p 33

- A In contrast
- B Moreover
- C Therefore
- D To be fair

1p 34

- A a lot of the marketing
- B just playing with babies
- C popular baby toys

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