



Online Influences



This fact sheet will help you understand more about online influences and what they can look like.

! Warning ! When researching this topic you may encounter material that is upsetting. Please speak to a teacher or a trusted adult if you are worried about anything you have seen.



What are Online Influences?

Online influences are the ways that people and content on the internet shape how we think, act, and view things. This can come from 'influencers' on social media, the content we see and how people share opinions, or promote products. But it's not just about big creators— the algorithms decide what shows up on your feed, which can affect what you see, like, and believe. Friends and online communities can influence you too, whether it's through group chats, posts, or shared content.

These impact everything from what we buy to how we feel about ourselves and others. Being aware of them helps you stay in control and make choices that actually reflect what you think and want.

Examples of Online Influences:

- Ads that pop up based on what you've searched or liked.
- A beauty influencer recommends a skincare product, and followers rush to buy it.
- TikTok trends including dances, clothes, books, and activities.
- Music artists may tease new albums or music on Instagram and build publicity before the official drop.
- A viral video about a new gadget (like a phone, headphones, or productivity tool) can cause it to sell out instantly.
- You may not even like a song at first, but after hearing it in 15 TikToks, it's now on your playlist (and in your head 24/7).

- Everyone online seems to have perfect bodies and lives and even though you know there are filters or editing, it can affect your confidence.
- Viral challenges encouraging risky or silly behavior.
- An influence may share their opinions in 1 TikTok and now your whole feed is about those views on politics, health, or relationships.

Key Terms	Definition
Influencer	A person with a large following online who can affect people's decisions.
Algorithm	A system used on social media like TikTok, Instagram, or X to decide what content appears on your feed, based on the previous videos you have seen.
Sponsored Content	Posts or videos where influencers are paid (or given free products) to promote a brand or product. This may be labeled with #ad or #sponsored.
Viral	When a post, video, or trend spreads quickly across the internet, getting a huge amount of views, likes, or shares in a short time.
Digital Footprint	The trail of data you leave behind online—from posts and comments to likes and searches.
Clickbait	A misleading or sensational headline/image meant to get people to click, even if the actual content is unrelated or exaggerated.
Content Creator	Anyone who produces digital content—videos, photos, blogs, etc.—for an audience online, often professionally.
Cancel Culture	A social phenomenon where someone is “called out” or avoided online for offensive or problematic behavior. This may be unfollowing them or posting them on your story explaining what they did wrong.
Trend	A popular topic, thing, or activity that spreads quickly across social media platforms.
Livestreaming	Showing videos in real-time, often to interact directly with followers.
Vlogging	Creating video blogs, where creators share parts of their daily life or thoughts on camera. This may include ‘what I do in a day’ or ‘what I eat in a day’.

Things to think about



Why does it happen?

- People are **on their phones a lot**—maybe more than we want to admit—so we keep seeing the same things over and over until they stick.
 - Sometimes online influence happens because people **don't want to feel left out**. Seeing everyone else trying a trend or buying the “must-have” product can make you feel like you have to join in.
- **Influencers often show edited, perfect lives** that can make you unfairly compare yourself.
- If tons of people like or talk about something—whether it's a product, trend, or idea—you're more likely to pay attention too. It's human nature to **follow the crowd** or what seems popular.



Did You Know?

- Some influencers are paid **thousands of pounds** to promote a single product.
- The average teenager spends more than **3 hours a day** on social media.
- **TikTok's algorithm is so quick, it can learn your likes/views in just seconds** and start showing you videos you didn't even know you'd like.
- **Over 70% of teens say they follow influencers** to discover new trends, products, or even life advice.
- **“Unboxing” videos** (opening product packages on camera) became a huge trend, making product reveals super popular.

What can you do to
reduce negative online
influecnes?

Think before you follow or like. Ask: "Is this real or useful to me?"

Set limits on how much time you spend on social media each day. Use app timers or take breaks to avoid endless scrolling.

Remember that influencers often show only the best parts of their lives. Don't compare your real life to their highlight reel.

Chat with friends or family about how social media makes you feel. Getting another perspective can help you feel better.

Be a positive role model by treating everyone with respect online.

Learn to spot ads and promotions so you know when you may be being pressured or influenced into doing or buying something.



Here are some videos and links that you may find useful:

[Reverse Selfie: Social Media's Impact on Girls' Self-Esteem | Dove](#)

[Being Safe Online](#)

[Safer Internet Day: Top Tips on how you can stay safe online | Newsround](#)



Where to go for help

Parents/guardians/carers

Wider trusted family

Teachers/ Youth Workers

Childline 0800 1111

Yellow Door 02380 636312

No Limits

Police 999



Online support

www.childline.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.themix.org.uk

www.kooth.com

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.barnardos.org.uk

☀️ Final Thought



Online influencers hold a lot of power because they can shape opinions, trends, and behaviors for millions of people, so it is important to be authentic, respectful, and mindful of the impact people have on their audience and society as a whole.