



Adverts, Creators and You

Teacher notes

MediaSmart



Introduction

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▶ Why this lesson?

Today's young people are the first true digital natives.

Born into a world of constant-connectivity and ever-evolving technology, navigating the internet has been a necessity for them. As familiar as walking or talking, it is part and parcel of growing up. As a result, this is a generation that is highly capable and extremely confident online: they know how to manoeuvre the digital universe better than any that have gone before them.

Within this 'world', social media is their base and one of the most popular platforms is TikTok. Home to seemingly endless sources of creativity, connection and information, TikTok is an inspiring and entertaining place. But it is important to remember that it also has a

commercial purpose. Brands can advertise their products in all kinds of new and exciting ways on TikTok, so it is vital that young people have a strong understanding of the branded messaging they are consuming daily.

This exciting, film-based educational resource, featuring successful TikTok Creators, will empower 13-17 year olds with the tools they need to navigate TikTok's commercial side, ensuring they have the most positive online experience possible. It should also assist teachers, parents and carers who want to supplement their own knowledge to help young people confidently and securely use the platform.



Lesson overview

This 45 minute lesson will educate KS3+ young people – both those who already use the platform and those who do not. It can be used across PSHE Key Stage 3, 4 and 5, as well as throughout Media Studies Key Stage 3, 4 and 5.

The lesson is split into three sections, each of which addresses a key topic and learning outcome. By the end of the session, students will be able to understand how advertising works on TikTok, specifically:



Topic 1

Define the different advert formats and understand how they are delivered to young people.



Topic 2

Understand the principles by which brands and creators should behave.



Topic 3

Know the available actions to take when managing their own experience on TikTok as well as that of others.



Hello from Media Smart

Growing up in this multi-screen world of social media and digital entertainment means that advertising is a part of daily life.

It can be an inspiring world full of ideas, innovation, drama and humour. Often the adverts are just as interesting as the content we choose to engage with. In this exciting digital landscape, it is more important than ever that young people understand exactly what is being suggested, promised and sold to them on a daily basis. And that is where Media Smart comes in.

Funded by the UK advertising industry, Media Smart is an award-winning not-for-profit organisation that creates free educational materials for schools, youth organisations, teachers, parents and carers.

These resources aim to ensure that the next generation are equipped with the media, digital and advertising literacy skills they need to critically consume the branded messaging they see in the media, so they are protected in the present and prepared for the future.

In developing the key skills of media literacy – resilience, empathy, creativity, communication and critical-thinking – young people are also building life skills which will help them on their journey towards future employability, well-being and equip them to be successful global citizens.



TikTok 101

Aiming to inspire creativity and bring joy to people's lives, TikTok is a short-form video streaming and sharing platform.

Launched in 2018, it has since become one of the most downloaded apps in the world. Offering a vibrant atmosphere that celebrates trends and embraces diversity, TikTok is a global hub for inspiration, education and entertainment.



TikTok glossary

User

For the purpose of this resource, a TikTok user is anyone who has a TikTok account.

Creator

TikTok creators produce unique short videos showcasing special moments, experiences or impressions of the day and share them with the TikTok community.

For You Page (FYP)

The 'For You' feed can be found from the homepage and is the place where new videos are recommended based on the users, creators and videos previously liked.

Side(s)

TikTok is home to all kinds of people with all kinds of interests. Everyone's individual browsing experience is personalised and unique, but communities and subcultures have still formed on the platform. TikTokers call these groups 'sides'

User-Generated Content (UGC)

User-generated content (UGC) is the name given to any form of content posted by users of online platforms such as social media and wikis. It does not apply to content posted by brands.

Filter

A filter is a feature within the social platform that allows you to edit your photo or video with one click, by simply applying pre-set edits to the image. These include camera settings, stickers and animations, and face filters that change users' appearances.

Report

This function helps maintain a positive community and experience. TikTok's moderators help make sure that everyone complies with our Community Guidelines. Users are encouraged to report user profiles, videos, chats and content that contain harassment, offensive behaviour/comments or inappropriate content that causes discomfort. Together with the Community Guidelines, this is intended to ensure the security of users.



TikTok Safety Center

Based on TikTok's website, the Safety Center is home to guides that will help users learn more about safety, privacy and security on the platform.

<https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en-us/>



Welcome to TikTok

To introduce the lesson to the class, ask your students a few questions. (2 mins)

- ❓ How many of you use TikTok?
- ❓ If you do, how often do you use TikTok?
- ❓ How many adverts do you think you see on TikTok every day?

Briefly explain that in today's lesson the class is going to learn all about TikTok advertising and how to navigate it confidently and safely.



Topic 1

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Topic 1: Know your adverts

Topic 1 objective

This topic covers how TikTok serves relevant content to their community, and how advertisers use this to reach target audiences. It also covers what TikTok advert formats look like.

Background for teachers

To ensure users have the best experience possible, the TikTok 'For You' feed recommends unique content to each individual user. TikTok's algorithm is interest-based. The algorithm learns what users like and do not like by tracking their actions and behaviour – whether they watch a video to the end or skip straight past. From there, the platform serves each user content that's relevant to them. This creates digital communities and subcultures of people with similar interests. Users colloquially refer to these segments as 'sides'.



National curriculum

PSHE

KS3	KS4	KS5
L20. that features of the internet can amplify risks and opportunities, e.g. speed and scale of information sharing, blurred public and private boundaries and a perception of anonymity	L25. how personal data is generated, collected and shared, including by individuals, and the consequences of this. L26. how data may be used with the aim of influencing decisions, including targeted advertising and other forms of personalisation online; strategies to manage this	L23. how social media can expand, limit or distort perspectives and recognise how content they create and share may contribute to, or challenge this L24. to be a critical consumer of online information in all its forms, including recognising bias, propaganda and manipulation

Media GCSE

Language	Representation	Industries	Audiences
the various forms of media language used to create and communicate meanings in media products	the various forms of media language used to create and communicate meanings in media products	how the media operate as commercial industries on a global scale and reach both large and specialised audiences	the ways in which media organisations target audiences through marketing, including an understanding of the assumptions organisations make about their target audience(s)

Media AS/A-Level

Language	Representation	Industries	Media audiences
How developing technologies affect media language	The way events, issues, individuals (including self-representation) and social groups (including social identity) are represented through processes of selection and combination	The relationship of recent technological change and media production, distribution and circulation	the various forms of media language used to create and communicate meanings in media products



TikTok diversifying recommendations

The class should be aware that diversity is essential to maintaining a thriving global community, and it brings the many corners of TikTok closer together. That is why your students may come across a video in their feed that does not appear to be relevant to their expressed interests or has a huge number of likes. This intentional diversity of videos in the 'For You' feed gives users additional opportunities to stumble upon new content categories, discover new creators, and experience new perspectives and ideas.

By offering different videos from time to time, the system is also able to get a better sense of what is popular among a wider range of audiences.



Warm up: Pick a side

Warm-up exercise (5 mins)

Ask the class to name some of the 'sides' of TikTok, then ask them to share what 'side' of TikTok they are on if they use the platform. If you have enough space, ask students to group themselves into their respective 'sides'. Acknowledge that users can be part of multiple groups, and that TikTok recognises users' multiple interests.

▶ Now play the class Video 1

Play students Akafi's creator video. Ensure that it makes sense to your students.

Explain to the class that it is important to be able to recognise TikTok adverts as they are not always immediately obvious to the untrained eye. (1 min)



Topic 1: Main activity

▶ Now play the class Video 2

Play Akafi Ali's Video 2 in which he introduces himself as the CEO of SquishTooth.com, a fictional company selling plush teeth. In character, Akafi says he wants to use TikTok to target people likely to buy SquishTooth – specifically people who like alternative music, animal videos, fashion, and anime. Akafi explains he has asked his friends to make adverts in three TikTok formats to help sell his product.



Now give out Worksheet 1

Now give students Worksheet 1, which they will fill out at the end of the activity. Ask them to think about the questions at the top of their worksheets while they watch the adverts.

Explain to the class that they will now see a selection of mock adverts in different formats by a line-up of real TikTok creators. The students' task will be to list how they can identify that they are adverts and to think about their effectiveness.



Topic 1: Main activity cont.

▶ Now play the class Video 3

Play Lily Rose's Video 3: a 'TopView' infomercial-style SquishTooth advert.

A 'TopView' advert is one that captures users' attention by appearing at the top of their 'For You Page'. Brands pay for this prime position on the platform – it guarantees a wide reach and high number of impressions (i.e. the number of times the content is viewed or displayed in a person's feed).



▶ Now play the class Video 4

Play Mr MBA's Video 4 an 'In-feed Ad' 'unboxing' style advert to promote SquishTooth. In-feed adverts are TikTok's standard advert format. It allows brands to embed video adverts to auto-play on their target audiences' 'For You Page'. Each features a clickable button which can take users to an external landing page, application downloads, or to the brand's TikTok account.



Topic 1: Main activity cont.

▶ **Now play the class Video 5**

Play Lily Rose's Video 5: a 'Branded Hashtag Challenge' in which Lily Rose does a dance called #GetSquishy to promote SquishTooth. TikTok places great importance on creative user-generated content, and this format taps into that by encouraging users to participate in a challenge associated with a brand – though it should be noted there are non-branded hashtag challenges, too. This advert format is successful in raising awareness as viral challenges spread out into wider culture.



Topic 1: Main activity cont.

Discuss students' observations and opinions among the class, first focussing on how they identified the adverts and their formats before moving onto reviews as to how effective they found each advert to be. (5 mins)

Discussion questions (as on Worksheet 1)

- ❓ Which advert were they most likely to act on (if any)? Why?
- ❓ Which advert were they least likely to act on (if any)? Why?
- ❓ What made one advert more convincing than another (if any)?
What factors might change this?
- ❓ Would they be more likely to act on an advert made by a creator they like or aspire to be like?

*(Encourage students to consider that, due to the algorithm, some of the adverts they see will be from creators they like.)

To read the TikTok privacy policy:

<https://www.tiktok.com/legal/privacy-policy-eea?lang=en>



Topic 1: Learning outcomes

At the end of this topic students should:

- 💬 Understand how their personal data is collected and shared – and the consequences of this process.
- 💬 Understand the concept of targeted advertising, and should be aware that their personal data is used in advertising to influence decisions.
- 💬 Be able to identify TikTok advert formats and critically engage with them.

Topic 2

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Topic 2: Best behaviour

Topic 2 objective

The second section of the lesson covers the guidelines and rules that regulate how users and brands are required to behave on TikTok. It focuses closely on how students can identify content that breaks these guidelines, and will help them identify content that is misleading. It will also explore what TikTok is doing to keep the platform and its users safe.

Background for teachers

TikTok has a series of guidelines in place to ensure the platform is a safe space for all users. Users and brands are required to follow these rules – if they do not, their actions could result in content removal, account suspension or more serious consequences.



National curriculum

PSHE

KS3

L21. to establish personal values and clear boundaries around aspects of life that they want to remain private; strategies to safely manage personal information and images online, including on social media

KS4

L27. strategies to critically assess bias, reliability and accuracy in digital content

KS5

L24. to be a critical consumer of online information in all its forms, including recognising bias, propaganda and manipulation

Media GCSE

Language

The ways in which the media re-present (rather than simply present) the world, and construct versions of reality

Representation

The challenges for media regulation presented by 'new' digital technologies

Audiences

How and why media products are aimed at a range of audiences, from small, specialised audiences to large, mass audiences

Media AS/A-Level

Language

The way media language incorporates viewpoints and ideologies

Representation

The way the media through re-presentation construct versions of reality

Industries

The impact of 'new' digital technologies on media regulation, including the role of individual producers

Media audiences

The interrelationship between media technologies and patterns of consumption and response



Topic 2: Main activity

TikTok works tirelessly to regulate its advertising content, sometimes users, creators and brands break them (either intentionally or not intentionally). Show students two short videos that infringe TikTok's advertising guidelines.

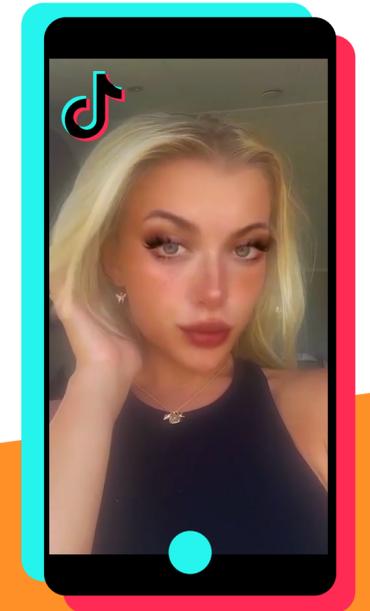
▶ Now play the class Video 6

Video 6 is Akafi still in character as SquishTooth's CEO, he explains that he is worried people click past his adverts. He goes on to describe his solution: he has paid a famous friend to promote SquishTooth... but asked them to conceal their business relationship.



▶ Now play the class Video 7

Now play Molly Marsh's Video 7, in which Molly creates a 'Day in the life' style video that subtly promotes SquishTooth without using an advert tag. The video is heavily edited.



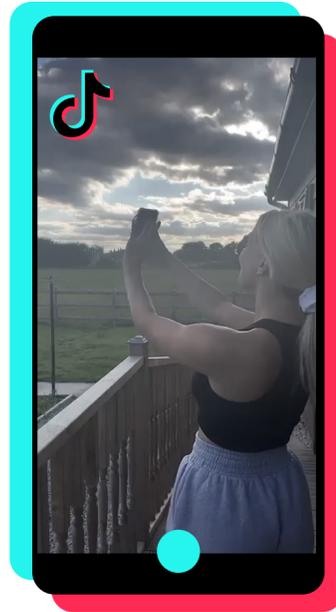
Take 2 mins to have a class discussion about the creator video

- ❓ Did the students notice anything was wrong with it?
- ❓ Would they have thought it was an advert?
- ❓ Did they think it was obvious or subtle?
- ❓ Would this format be more effective if it was a creator they like or aspire to be like?

Topic 2: Main activity cont.

▶ **Now play the class Video 8**

Now play Video 8, a thirty-second behind-the-scenes video that shows how the 'Day in the life' video was staged, and how the creator used filters to change their appearance.



▶ **Now play the class Video 9**

Now play Video 9 – a video where Mr MBA talks to themselves about the right and wrong way to reach users on TikTok through advertising. The creators talks to themselves about the rules of TikTok's.



Take 5 mins to have a second class discussion about Video 7. Encourage students to revisit their impression of the video now that they have seen the behind-the-scenes and rules videos.

Topic 2: Learning outcomes

At the end of this topic students should:

- Know TikTok's key guidelines and understand the purpose they serve.
- Be able to critically analyse the information presented to them online.
- Have the knowledge to differentiate positive content from problematic content.
- Be better equipped identify bias and unregulated commercial advertising.

Topic 3

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Topic 3: TikTok tactics

Topic 3 objective

This final section of the lesson equips students with practical steps to take to manage their online experience and data usage using the tools TikTok makes available to them.

Background for teachers

TikTok actively monitors its content to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience, but users are also provided with tools to help the platform make sure everything is up to standard. TikTok's Safety Center is equipped with guides and resources that assist the effective use of these tools, but not many young people know about it – and nor do their parents and guardians. It is therefore important that this lesson raises awareness about its existence and its benefits.



National curriculum

PSHE

KS3	KS4	KS5
L25. to make informed decisions about whether different media and digital content are appropriate to view and develop the skills to act on them L27. to respond appropriately when things go wrong online, including confidently accessing support, reporting to authorities and platforms	L22. that there are positive and safe ways to create and share content online and the opportunities this offers L29. to recognise the shared responsibility to challenge extreme viewpoints that incite violence or hate and ways to respond to anything that causes anxiety or stress	L20. to set and maintain clear boundaries around personal privacy and to manage online safety in all its forms, including seeking help when appropriate L27. to respond appropriately when things go wrong online, including confidently accessing support, reporting to authorities and platforms

Media GCSE

Language	Representation	Audiences
L20. to set and maintain clear boundaries around personal privacy and to manage online safety in all its forms, including seeking help when appropriate L27. to respond appropriately when things go wrong online, including confidently accessing support, reporting to authorities and platforms	The ways in which the media re-present (rather than simply present) the world, and construct versions of reality	The ways in which people's media practices are connected to their identity, including their sense of actual and desired self

Media AS/A-Level

Language	Representation	Media audiences
The way media language incorporates viewpoints and ideologies	The way events, issues, individuals (including self-representation) and social groups (including social identity) are represented through processes of selection and combination	How specialised audiences can be reached, both on a national and global scale, through different media technologies and platforms



Topic 3: Activity

Explain to the class the importance of taking action when faced with content that breaks guidelines.

▶ Now play the class Video 10

Play the class Video 10, in which Akafi (now out of character and playing himself) parodies a self-defence tutorial to show viewers what safety tools are available to them on the platform.

Now give out Worksheet 2

Give students five minutes to fill out Worksheet 2. Follow up with a brief discussion on the available tools to ensure students are confident identifying them and comfortable with when to use them.



Take 2 mins to have a class discussion about the creator video

- ❓ Did the students notice anything was wrong with it?
- ❓ Would they have thought it was an advert?
- ❓ Did they think it was obvious or subtle?
- ❓ Would this format be more effective if it was a creator they like or aspire to be like?

Topic 3: Learning outcomes

At the end of this topic students should:

- 💬 Be able to identify when things are not right online, and crucially, know what to do if things go wrong – i.e. how to access support, when to report to TikTok, when to report to parents and/or teachers, and when to report to the authorities in more serious situations.
- 💬 Be able to apply their knowledge when creating and consuming TikTok content – always in-line with the platform's rules and regulations.

Homework prep: Teach your parents

At the end of the class, ask students to break into small groups to make their own 'lesson plan' on how they will educate their parents about TikTok.

Guiding questions include:

- ❓ What misconceptions do your parents have about TikTok (if at all)?
- ❓ What have you learned that you think your parents will be interested in (if anything)?
- ❓ What do you think your parents should know (if anything)?



Evaluation

Students

Do you feel more confident navigating and understanding TikTok adverts than you did at the beginning of the class?

Answer = Yes/No



via [slido.com](https://www.slido.com)

code #413795

app.sli.do/event/ipcjq4ph

Teachers only

Pre lesson question

Where would you assess students' knowledge and understanding of TikTok advertising at the beginning of the class?

Post lesson question

Where would you assess students' knowledge and understanding of TikTok advertising at the end of the class?

Answer = Scale of 10

(0 being low, 10 being high)



via [slido.com](https://www.slido.com)

code #666032

app.sli.do/event/f76uv873



Want to find out more - additional resources

Media Smart has many other free teaching resources available from their website.

Introduction to Advertising (ages 7–11)

Digital Advertising (ages 9–11)

Body Image and Advertising (ages 9–11)

Social Media and Advertising (ages 11–16)

Body Image and Advertising (ages 11–14)

Influencer Marketing (ages 11–14)

Creating an Advert (ages 11–16)

How to Manage Your Online Advert Experience (ages 11–16)

Piracy: What's the big deal? (11–14)

mediasmart.uk.com/teaching-resources

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is the UK's independent regulator of advertising across all media. Ensure students are aware that advertising is governed by rules and regulations and that they can complain if they think that a particular advert has broken these.

rules.asa.org.uk

The Discover! Creative Careers website contains a wealth of information and opportunities from the creative industry.

[Discovercreative.careers](https://discovercreative.careers)

The Ideas Foundation works with schools, brands and agencies to promote the message that the creative industry is open to everyone. Their website contains further resources and opportunities for schools.

ideasfoundation.org.uk

The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) organises Advertising Unlocked, an annual industry wide 'Open Day'. The initiative invites top UK media and advertising agencies to open their doors to students. It gives students further insight into how campaigns are made and the relevant job roles.

available.ipa.co.uk/initiatives/advertising-unlocked



Thanks from Media Smart

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