

Why it's time to stop filming strangers in public for social media thrills

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. In pairs or groups, discuss the questions.

1. Do you watch videos online? What types of videos? Where do you watch them?
2. Do you think it is ok to film strangers in public and share it on social media? Why (not)?

2 Key words

a. Match the definitions to these key words from the text.

bullying

in public

social media

strangers

the law

1. people who you don't know _____
2. when you do something where people in general can see or hear you _____
3. platforms that allow people to interact on the Web _____
4. when your behaviour frightens or hurts someone smaller or weaker _____
5. a set of rules or principles that people follow _____

appropriate

permission

pranks

privacy

vaping

6. the freedom to do things without other people watching you or knowing what you are doing _____
7. silly tricks that you play on someone to surprise or embarrass them _____
8. when you are allowed to do something by a person or authority _____
9. smoking electronic cigarettes _____
10. suitable or right for a particular situation _____

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Jason Okundaye

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- 1 When I was younger, I caught a stranger filming me on his phone as I danced on my way to a nightclub. The video never went online but for months I felt worried when I was dancing.
- 2 Filming strangers so they can be in funny videos online has become very popular. But the difference between something funny and online bullying seems to be smaller now than in the past.
- 3 Recently, someone filmed a man dancing at a nightclub called Fabric in London. The video went online with the words: "I'll never go to Fabric again." The video was put online so people could laugh at the man's dancing, and it also received lots of unkind comments.
- 4 The law cannot protect your privacy in public. However, we should show respect to others. Unfortunately, people nowadays don't always show respect because they can make money by making videos of strangers and putting them online.
- 5 Sometimes these videos are pranks; sometimes it's just people filming strangers in the street. Both are unkind things to do, especially because people can make money by putting the videos online. Another problem is permission: as long as a video is taken in public and does not show your personal information, you do not need the permission of the person you are filming.
- 6 There was a recent video of a child shouting at passengers on a train after being asked to stop vaping. (It was viewed several million times on Twitter.) Not many of the people who saw the video thought about the fact that this was a video of a child. The child's behaviour was certainly not appropriate, but what does it mean when people respond to a young person vaping on a train by making fun of them?
- 7 Being able to film videos with your mobile phone has changed the world in many ways. Changing the law to stop the filming of

strangers in public would be too difficult to do. What can change is people's behaviour: we should be polite and kind when we see another person being embarrassed, and respect people's right to privacy.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Order the paragraph summaries 1 to 7 as they appeared in the article.

- ___ Filming strangers has stopped being funny and is now closer to online bullying.
- ___ We should try to change our behaviour and be kinder to each other instead of filming each other.
- ___ The writer describes a personal experience of being filmed without giving permission.
- ___ The writer describes a recent event where a child was filmed shouting at strangers and asks why people filmed the event.
- ___ The writer describes a recent event where a man was filmed dancing and how people were unkind about the video online.
- ___ People should show respect to each other, but the law cannot stop people from making videos of strangers.
- ___ The writer talks about giving permission to make a video and how sometimes people trick strangers in their videos.

4 Key language

a. Complete the table with the past form of the verbs below. The paragraph numbers have been given to help you.

Infinitive	Past form
to catch	1. (paragraph 1)
to feel	2. (paragraph 1)
to go	3. (paragraph 3)
to see	4. (paragraph 6)

b. Write two personalised sentences using two of the verbs above in past form.

1. _____
2. _____

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5 Discussion

a. Use the prompts to have discussions.

- “If you are in a public place, people can film you without permission.”
- “Being in a viral video is embarrassing.”

6 In your own words

- a. In pairs, use your phones or a computer connected to the internet to find a viral video similar to the ones in the article: a prank video or a video where someone has filmed a stranger.
- b. Share your video in small groups. Why do you think this video went viral? Discuss your answers.