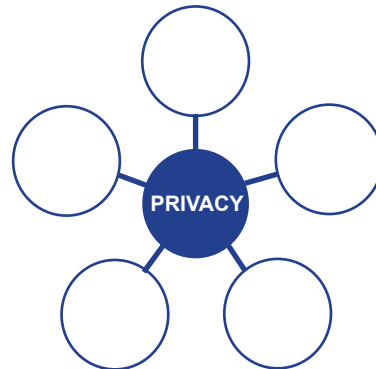
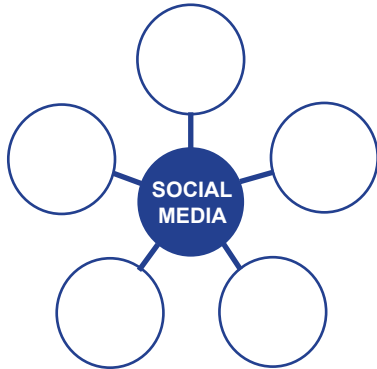


Why it's time to stop filming strangers in public for social media thrills

Level 3: Advanced

1 Warmer

a. Complete the two mind maps with as many ideas as you can.



b. Share your ideas in small groups.

c. Discuss as a whole class.

2 Key words

a. Write the correct words from the wordpool next to the definitions below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

ageist bigoted bystanders defensive dignity disrespectful empowered
escalated grace homophobic incentive meltdown monetizing provoked
spontaneous surfaces thrill undesirable unworkable vape

1. a sudden feeling of being very excited and pleased _____.
2. Treating people with respect can also mean treating them with _____.
3. If you act with _____ your behaviour is kind, polite, and fair.
4. something that happens without being planned or thought about _____
5. when you are given power to do something _____
6. not accepted, liked, or welcomed _____
7. not practical and unlikely to be succesful _____
8. to become known or obvious after being hidden _____
9. an attitude that reflects hate or fear of gay people _____
10. treating older people in an unfair or insulting way _____

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11. If you _____, you breathe the vapour produced by an electronic cigarette into your lungs.
12. Someone who is _____ has opinions that most people think are unreasonable, especially about politics, race, or religion.
13. When you earn money from a website or a piece of software you are _____ it.
14. When someone deliberately tries to make you angry, you feel _____.
15. to make a situation worse or more serious _____
16. If you are _____, you are showing that you are angry or offended when you think that someone is criticising you.
17. people who are in a place when an unusual event happens but are not directly connected to it _____
18. something that makes you do something because you know that you will benefit by doing it _____
19. A _____ is a loss of self control or an emotional breakdown.
20. Being _____ means you do not respect someone or something.

b. Choose five of the words above and write personalised sentences using them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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None of us has an absolute right to privacy in public, but whatever happened to respecting people's basic dignity?

Jason Okundaye

25 January, 2023

- 1 Once, when I was younger and would dress fairly outrageously, I caught a stranger recording me on his phone as I danced on the tube, on my way to a gay club. The video never surfaced online to my knowledge – perhaps he simply sent it to a group chat – but for months I looked over my shoulder when dancing.
- 2 Turning strangers into online content for the purposes of comedy and entertainment has become a global pastime. And we lap it up. A drunk person in the street, a loved-up couple in a supermarket, a man loudly singing on crowded public transport – the content is endless. But the line between lighthearted teasing and digital harassment seems to be getting thinner by the day.
- 3 Recently, a 64-year-old man was filmed dancing enthusiastically at Fabric nightclub in London. The video was uploaded online with the caption: “Yo I’ll never be going Fabric again.” The intention was clearly to laugh at the man’s dancing, and the clip also invited a range of homophobic and ageist responses, with the man in question saying that his “heart sank” when he saw tweets about himself.
- 4 None of us can expect a legally protected right to absolute privacy when we step out in public. There are, however, basic ideas that we’re all supposed to hold around respect and dignity. It’s an unspoken code that is disappearing at a time where there are rewards to be gained by selling out another person’s privacy, making them go viral.
- 5 Sometimes recording is not as spontaneous as seeing a stranger you think is ridiculous and clicking “Record”: in our age of YouTube and TikTok, it’s commonplace for strangers to be pranked or misled for the purposes of content. These pranks usually have less sinister or malicious intent than spontaneous recording, but the feeling of being degraded is often the same, with uploaders potentially monetizing the content.
- 6 For instance, an Australian woman who was made to participate in a “random act of kindness” TikTok without her knowledge, described being filmed without her consent as “dehumanizing”. A friend of mine, Kyle Skies, recently fell victim to a YouTube prankster, in which he was provoked by a series of annoying questions. The video is incredibly funny (there’s no argument about that) but Skies didn’t see it that way.
- 7 “I had just run for and missed the train so I was already annoyed, and then that happened to me,” he tells me. Though he felt he was being set up, he was still not prepared to see the video online. “My cousin sent it to me because he’s of that age group. He was laughing, saying, ‘You’re so funny.’ But it didn’t feel nice.” Skies is powerless here – so long as footage is taken in public and does not reveal personal data, such as your bank details or medical history, you generally do not need the subject’s consent.
- 8 There are, of course, instances where recording strangers can be in the public interest, such as when witnessing police brutality. But we do need to start thinking more carefully about this dog-eat-dog culture of public spectacle. Take the example of someone, who appeared to be a school-age child, filmed shouting at passengers on a train this month after apparently being asked not to vape. (It was viewed several million times on Twitter.)
- 9 Few people who negatively commented online seemed to consider that they might have been watching footage of a minor. Or that being filmed by multiple recording devices could have overwhelmed the subject, whose response was likely escalated by a defensive need to stand their ground and not look weak in front of the cameras. Their behaviour was certainly not appropriate, but what does it mean when bystanders can witness a young person vaping on the train and their first thought is to ridicule and humiliate? Would the incident have played out differently without cameras and the incentive to create content from other people’s meltdowns? And even if their behaviour was bad, was it really in the public interest for it to be shared, when the behaviour was simply disrespectful rather than violent or bigoted?

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

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- 10 Until such practices become socially unacceptable, there is the chance that you could step outside and become someone else's ticket to social-media stardom. The use of mobile recording devices has empowered us in many ways. Beefing up privacy laws to prevent the filming of strangers in public would be undesirable, not to mention unworkable. What can change is social and cultural – reacting with grace to each other's embarrassments, and minding your own business more.

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

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3 Comprehension check

a. Change the sentences so they are correct. Three of them are true and don't need to be corrected.

1. The writer was filmed on public transport and the video appeared online.

2. There is more and more content that involves filming strangers.

3. An old man was bullied online for going to a nightclub.

4. You have a legally protected right to privacy in public.

5. Pranksters film strangers for videos on Twitter.

6. Kyle Skies found the video he was in funny.

7. You need a person's consent to take videos of them in public.

8. The writer believes there are some examples where filming strangers is acceptable.

9. There was no reason for the child filmed vaping to react the way they did.

10. Making stricter privacy laws to protect people is likely to be difficult.

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

Level 3: Advanced

4 Key language

a. Sort the verbs from the box into the table to form phrasal verbs from the article.

beef lap play sell set step

Verb + out	Verb + up

b. Discuss the questions with a partner.

1. What is the meaning of each of the phrasal verbs?
2. Can you form other phrasal verbs that aren't in the article using the same verbs and prepositions?
3. Can you find a compound adjective that uses the preposition *up* in paragraph 2? What do you think it means?

c. Complete the compound nouns from the article.

1. g_____ p_____ (paragraph 2)
2. u_____ c_____ (paragraph 4)
3. m_____ i_____ (paragraph 5)
4. p_____ b_____ (paragraph 8)
5. p_____ s_____ (paragraph 8)
6. p_____ i_____ (paragraphs 8 & 9)

d. Check the meanings of any unfamiliar words using a dictionary.

e. Find the idioms and phrases below in the article. Discuss in small groups what you think they mean. Share your ideas as a whole class.

1. a thin line
2. a ticket to stardom
3. dog-eat-dog
4. mind your own business
5. stand your ground



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5 Discussion

a. Use the prompts to have discussions.

- Think about the article. What point is the writer trying to make? How does he do this?
- Do people treat each other with respect and dignity nowadays? Or has that been lost through the years?
- Do you think it's time to stop filming strangers in public for social media thrills? How do you propose protecting people's privacy more?

6 In your own words

- a. In pairs, use your phones or a computer connected to the internet to find a video similar to those described in the article. It can be a prank, a random act of kindness, or a video that went viral.**
- b. Share your video with your classmates and say why you think it went viral. Can this video be described as "innocent fun" or can it be described as "harrasment"?**