



INFLUENCER CULTURE

▶ **Social media creators** with many followers on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube can use their popularity to persuade their audience that this is the right way to think, the right thing to buy, and the right way to live.

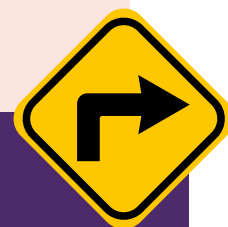


SIGNS TO WATCH FOR

EVERYTHING LOOKS TOO PERFECT. The video will be perfectly set up. A skincare influencer will always be in a super bright, clean room. An art influencer might have colored pencils spread out to look messy, but on purpose.

THE CREATOR OVERSHARES PERSONAL STORIES. They talk about times they were bullied or made mistakes. You can't prove these stories are true, but you feel special because they trusted you enough to share.

THE CREATOR USES CERTAIN PHRASES. Phrases like "A lot of you have been asking about my routine..." or "This isn't sponsored, I just love it!" are usually part of the act.



WHAT YOU CAN DO...

Turn off autoplay and stay off the "For You" page: Apps push videos that get people mad or excited because it keeps you scrolling, which makes the creators more money.

Remember they aren't real friends: Creators only show you the parts of their lives that match their online persona. You only see this character, and they don't see you at all.

Ask yourself questions: Why are they telling me to buy this? Are they getting paid? Do they have real expertise about what they're recommending, or is it just an opinion?





IF IT'S ALREADY HAPPENING

Do a reality check. Look at your purchases and your opinions. Do you really like and believe these things, or are they the beliefs and interests of your favorite creator?

Hit unfollow or take a break. If a creator is living in your brain, unfollow or mute them for a month, and take time to figure out what you actually care about.

Wait before you buy. If you really want a product you see being promoted, don't buy it right away. Wait two days. If you still want it and believe it's worth your own money, then consider making the purchase but always confirm the return policy before you do.



REMEMBER

Influencers design a character that creates a sense of trust with their followers, making it easier to convince their audience to believe something, buy something, or do something.



CaNAMLE (National Association for Media Literacy Education)
News Literacy Project

1. The Rise of Influencer Culture and and Its Psychological, Social, and Behavioral Impact on Youth. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/391168118_The_Rise_of_Influencer_Culture_and_Its_Psychological_Social_and_Behavioral_Impact_on_Youth

2. Effective influencer marketing: A social identity perspective. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0969698922001199?via%3Dihub>

3. Social media influencers and followers' conspicuous consumption: The mediation of fear <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11385768/>

4. Cross-Cultural Analysis of Influencer Marketing: Meta-Analysis and Meta-Regression of Factors and Effects. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10641734.2025.2529006>



Online Harms
Prevention Work Group
fairplayforkids.org

