What (and who) influences us?

You have all heard of social media influencers. But have you ever stopped to think about exactly what they do and how they do it? More importantly, how do they influence you? Let's have a look.

A Online influence

a) Discuss these questions with a partner.

1) Do you follow people on social media? Who? Why?
2) Which social media platforms do you use to follow people?
3) How would you define what an influencer is and does?
4) What do you think of influencers?

b) Look at these statistics. Which numbers belong in the gaps? Check your answers and see if you were right. Do the answers surprise you? Why (not)?

| 50% | 71% | 81% | 90% |

1) People are _____ more likely to buy a product based on a social media recommendation.

2) _____ of consumers trust peer recommendations.

3) _____ of US consumers trust advice and information from blogs.

4) _____ of user-generated content is trusted more than traditional media.

B Fast cards

How much do you know about these famous people? You and your partner choose a set of fact cards, either 1, 2 or 3. Practice asking each other questions to complete the missing information about the people on your cards. Your partner has the information you need. These notes might help you phrase the questions correctly.

Where was … ?

When did … ?

What year was … ?

Which … did he get?

How many … ?

What else does … do?
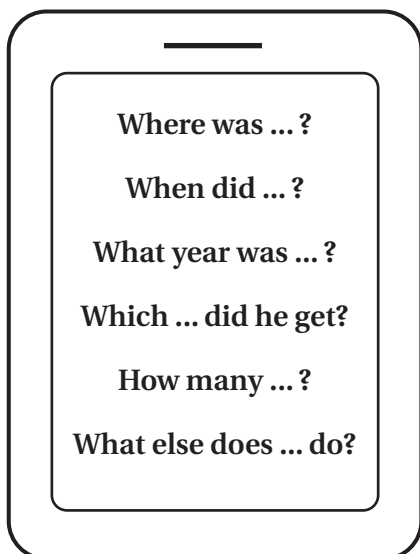
What (and who) influences us?

Name: Charli D'Amelio

Date of birth: _____

Place of birth: _____

Jobs: social media personality and dancer

Achievements: most-followed creator on TikTok, first person
to collect 50 million then 100 million followers on TikTok,
nominated for Streamy Award in 20___ (she won in 2020),
Kids Choice Awards in 20___ and 20___

Campaigning: UNICEF anti-bullying campaign in 2020, Procter
& Gamble #DistanceDance challenge to encourage _____ (**What?**) during the
COVID-19 pandemic pandemic

Other projects: a book, a podcast, a _____, a _____,
a _____

Also interesting: most of her projects involve her sister, _____ , and often her whole family

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Name: Addison Rae Easterling (known as Addison Rae)

Date of birth: 6 October 2000

Place of birth: Lafayette, Louisiana, USA

Jobs: _____

Achievements: highest-earning TikTok personality in 2021,
nominated for Streamy Award in 2020 and 2021 (she won in
20____), fourth most-followed individual on TikTok in 2022
with over _____ (**How many?**) followers

Campaigning: in 2021 she donated her prize money from
the Mario Tennis Aces Tournament to a charity called _____

Other projects: a weekly podcast with her mother ("Mama Knows Best", now called
_____), a _____
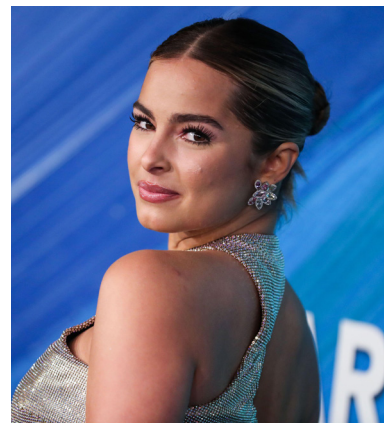
What (and who) influences us?

Name: Charli D'Amelio

Date of birth: 1 May 2004

Place of birth: Norwalk, Connecticut, USA

Jobs: _____

Achievements: most-followed creator on TikTok, first person to collect 50 million then _____ million followers on TikTok, nominated for _____ in 2020 and 2021 (she won in 20____), Kids Choice Awards in 2021 and 2022

Campaigning: UNICEF _____ (**What topic?**)
campaign in 2020, Procter & Gamble #DistanceDance
challenge to encourage social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic

Other projects: a book, a podcast, a nail polish collection, a mattress, a make-up line

Also interesting: most of her projects involve her sister, Dixie, and _____

Name: Addison Rae Easterling (known as Addison Rae)
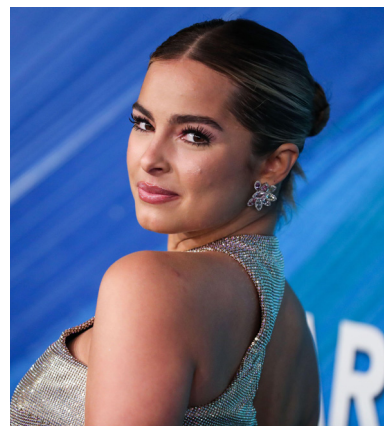
Date of birth: _____

Place of birth: _____

Jobs: social media personality, actress, dancer and singer

Achievements: highest-earning _____
in 2021, nominated for Streamy Award in 20____ and 2021 (she won in 2021), fourth most-followed individual on TikTok in 20____ with over 87 million followers

Campaigning: in 2021 she donated her prize money from the
_____ Tournament to a charity called No Kid Hungry

Other projects: a weekly _____ with her mother ("Mama Knows Best", now called "That Was Fun? With Addison and Sheri"), a cosmetics line

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What (and who) influences us?

Name: Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg (also known as _____)

Date of birth: 24 October 1989

Place of birth: _____, Sweden

Jobs: YouTuber, _____, philanthropist

Achievements: most subscribed individual on _____ (**What platform?**) in 2013, named as one of the world's most influential people (*Time* Magazine) in 2016, YouTube Creator Awards: Silver, Gold, Diamond, and Red Diamond Creator

Campaigning: raises money for the _____ (WWF), St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Red Nose Day, began a donation campaign for Charity Water

Other projects: own video game, a book, fashion line

Also interesting: started with Let's Play videos, moved onto vlogs, comedy shorts, and music videos. He addressed the social media use of _____ and with follower support collected likes and dislikes for his videos to try and 'fool' the system

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Name: Olajide Williams JJ Olatunji (also known as _____)

Date of birth: 19 June 1993

Place of birth: _____, Great Britain

Jobs: YouTuber (YouTube channel: KSOlajidebt), rapper, songwriter, _____, actor

Achievements: over 34 million subscribers and over 8 billion _____ on his two YouTube channels, 40 singles in the UK Singles Charts, ranked second by the *Sunday Times* on its list of the top 100 UK influencers

Campaigning: raised money for charities including _____. Has helped out at food banks, prepared meals to support the Food for London Now campaign

Other projects: co-founder and member of British YouTube group Sidemen, co-owner of _____, boxing events and a restaurant chain called _____, and sells Sidemen merchandise

Also interesting: built a following of his gaming commentary videos of _____ on YouTube, diversified to include vlogs and comedy style videos

Fact cards for Partner B

Name: _____ (also known as PewDiePie)

Date of birth: _____

Place of birth: Gothenburg, Sweden

Jobs: YouTuber, comedian, philanthropist

Achievements: most subscribed individual on YouTube in 20___, named as one of the world's most _____ (*Time* Magazine) in 2016, YouTube Creator Awards: Silver, _____, Diamond, and Red Diamond Creator

Campaigning: raises money for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Red Nose Day, began a donation campaign for _____

Other projects: own video game, a book, _____ (**What else?**)

Also interesting: started with _____, moved onto vlogs, comedy shorts, and music videos. He addressed the social media use of algorithms and with follower support collected _____ for his videos to try and 'fool' the system.

Name: Olajide Williams JJ Olatunji (also known as KSI)

Date of birth: Watford, Great Britain

Place of birth: _____, Great Britain

Jobs: YouTuber (YouTube channel: KSOlajidebt), rapper, songwriter, boxer, actor

Achievements: over 34 million subscribers and over 8 billion video views on his _____ , 40 singles in the UK Singles Charts, ranked _____ by the *Sunday Times* on its list of the top 100 UK influencers

Campaigning: raised money for charities including SpecialEffect, Saint's Foundation, Childline, and Comic Relief. Has helped out at food banks, prepared meals to support the _____ campaign

Other projects: co-founder and member of British YouTube group _____, co-owner of Prime Hydration, boxing events and a restaurant chain called Sides, and sells _____ merchandise

Also interesting: built a following of his gaming commentary videos of the FIFA video game series on YouTube, diversified to include _____ and _____

What (and who) influences us?

Name: Christina Mittermeier

Date of birth: _____

Place of birth: Mexico City, Mexico

Jobs: _____, conservationist, biologist, author

Achievements: one of *National Geographic's* Adventurers of the Year in 2018, _____awards for her work combining nature projects and conservation with photography

Campaigning: founded the _____ (ILCP) in 2005 to give a platform to photographers who are working on environmental issues; co-founded SeaLegacy in 20___, a non-profit organisation working to protect _____

Other projects: brings people together to use their art and skills in _____ to build a community which focuses on restoring the ocean's health and abundance

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Name: Paul Nicklen

Date of birth: 21 July 1968

Place of birth: _____, Canada

Jobs: photographer, _____, marine biologist, author

Achievements: only photographer for _____ Magazine from Canada, received _____ (**How many?**) of the most important awards for photographers including the BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year and the World Press Prize for Photojournalism

Campaigning: _____of the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP); has a mission to generate global awareness of climate and wildlife issues; co-founded SeaLegacy in 20___, a non-profit organisation working to protect the ocean

Other projects: opened a gallery in New York in 2017 as a space for _____(**Who?**) to show their work

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What (and who) influences us?

Name: Christina Mittermeier

Date of birth: 26 November 1966

Place of birth: _____, Mexico

Jobs: photographer, conservationist, biologist, author

Achievements: one of *National Geographic's* Adventurers of the Year in 2018, numerous awards for her work combining nature projects and conservation with _____

Campaigning: founded the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP) in 20___ to give a platform to photographers who are working on _____; co-founded SeaLegacy in 2014, a non-profit organisation working to protect the ocean

Other projects: brings _____ together to use their art and skills in media and communications to build a community which focuses on restoring the

_____

Name: Paul Nicklen

Date of birth: _____

Place of birth: Tisdale, Canada

Jobs: photographer, filmmaker, _____, author

Achievements: only photographer for *National Geographic* magazine from _____, received over 30 of the most important awards for photographers including the _____ and the World Press Prize for Photojournalism

Campaigning: member of the _____ (ILCP); has a mission to generate global awareness of _____; co-founded _____ in 2014, a non-profit organisation working to protect the _____

Other projects: opened a gallery in _____(**Where?**) in 20___ as a space for conservationist photographers and other artists to show their work

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What (and who) influences us?

C   Social media platforms

a) How much do you know about these social media platforms? Test your knowledge by completing the three texts with the words in the boxes. In each section there is one word you will not use.

> according to • vlog • advertise • created • genres • platform •
> uploaded • video hosting • worldwide

TikTok is a short-form _____ service from China. The videos can be from 15 seconds to ten minutes long. They are _____ by TikTok users and include different _____, like pranks, stunts, tricks, jokes, dance and entertainment clips.
It is available _____. Trends such as memes, lip-synced songs and comedy videos have become popular with TikTok. It has also _____ a number of viral trends, internet celebrities and music trends around the world. TikTok has also provided a _____ for people to make money. Companies can _____ on TikTok and reach their markets through influencer marketing. TikTok's algorithm, which chooses content _____ what the users prefer on their #foryoupage, also helps influencer marketing.

> billion • blocked • categories • individuals • multimillionaire •
> removed • million • video sharing • worth a visit

YouTube is an online _____ and social media platform. It has more than one _____ monthly users who watch a total of more than one billion hours of videos each day. The video _____ on YouTube cover more or less everything from music videos to feature films, though most videos are made by _____. If someone has a problem or needs information about a subject or wants to know if a place is _____, they check out YouTube to watch a film about it. This makes YouTube a major social influencing platform. It impacts culture and trends and has also created _____ celebrities.
A number of countries like China and Russia have _____ YouTube over the years due to some video content on its platform. The blocks were usually lifted once the videos were _____.

> app • chronologically • filters • followers • content • setting •
> social networking • photograph • timelines

Instagram is a photo and video sharing _____ service. The _____ lets users upload media which can be edited with _____ and organised in different ways. Posts can be shared with _____. Users can look at other users' posts and even add their own content to someone else's post. In 2016 Instagram changed the order of user's photos on their _____. Instead of them being arranged _____, the order was decided by an algorithm based on activity. This upset a lot of users who wanted their _____ to be seen in the order in which they were posted. Initially Instagram would not change this _____, but it has reported that 'soon' both methods will be available to users.

What (and who) influences us?

b) Look at the information about the three social media platforms again. Compare and contrast them with a partner. To what extent are they similar? What is different about them?

Similarities: _____

_____

_____

Differences: _____

_____

_____

D   How are we influenced?

What influences you? Think about these questions.

Do you buy the shampoo, shower gel or energy drink that pops up on the screen next to a video you are watching? Do you want the T-shirt that the social media personality is wearing? Do you listen to the music they are dancing to? What about supporting their charities? How do you become aware of fundraising events in your area? Do you know a lot about the things 'famous' faces on social media talk about? Do they influence your decisions and activities?

Now read the two texts below.

The influence social media has on our lives

As consumers we have what influencers want: money, a "like" button and time to give them attention. Influencers have what we want: money, flashy lifestyles, fun, friends and our attention. Without consumers, there would be no (need for) influencers. This is a typical example of what is known as supply and demand. The things you like are often influenced by the people you admire and the things they do. Nowadays what you like is also influenced by what you see on social media platforms, what you buy online, and what you like or dislike on an app. Algorithms running in the background of an app count how often you look at certain things. Then they show you advertising from other websites related to these things. Initially users thought how clever and helpful this 'service' was. In the meantime, though, users have become suspicious and don't like how much these websites know about them. They have begun to question the influence that such websites have on their lives.

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Algorithms

Computer algorithms use input to provide output. A search engine is one example. The input is what you search for, and the output is the information the search engine finds about the items you are looking for. Social media algorithms are similar, but the input is only what you have spent time looking at and reacted to (with a "like" or comment). The output is the selection of posts you are offered that are based on this activity. It estimates the likelihood that you will want to see something again. This is how you are influenced by social media platforms and pointed in the direction the algorithm has chosen for you.

E   Discussion

Based on the information you have been given, what are the advantages and disadvantages of influencers and social media platforms? Make a list and compare it with your partner's list. Discuss your answers in class.

Teacher's page

A   Online influence

a) Individual answers

b) 1. 81% 2. 50% 3. 90% 4. 71%

B   Fact cards

The fact cards complement one another, so each pair will have the complete information after they have asked their partner for the missing information. Students should be encouraged to ask questions such as "Where/When was s/he born?", "What's his/her job?", "What is s/he famous for?", or "When did s/he win the Kids Choice Award?" They can also ask questions about the influencer's appearance based on the photos. Teachers can encourage conversations between the partners about their opinions regarding the prominent people and about social media usage in general.

C   Social media platforms

a) **TikTok**: video hosting, uploaded, genres, worldwide, created, platform, advertise, according to, vlog;
YouTube: video sharing, billion, categories, individuals, worth a visit, multimillionaire, blocked, removed, million;
Instagram: social networking, app, filters, followers, timelines, chronologically, content, setting, photograph

b) Individual answers

D   How are we influenced?

Individual answers

E   Discussion

Individual answers

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