Creating for Teens

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YouTube

Our mission is to give everyone a voice and show them the world

This mission guides our work on behalf of millions across the globe, who come to YouTube for entertainment, information, learning, music, gaming, and more.

To support teens, we've created standards that help deliver fun, age-appropriate, high-quality, and enriching content that they will value while exploring their unique passions and interests.

Teens listen to you,

Teen viewers see creators as role models, community leaders, and friends.

As a creator whose audience includes teens, you play a key role in shaping a safer, more meaningful experience for them. This guide was created to help you understand your responsibility and to educate you on the impacts of your content.

Recognizing that not all teens are exactly alike, this guide introduces general concepts for developing responsible, fun, and positive content for them.

Discover how to avoid harmful content, and conversely, how to create high-quality, inspiring, informative, and uplifting videos that foster growth and entertainment for teens.

These guidelines were created by a team of experts

The Center for Scholars & Storytellers (CSS) at UCLA

CSS led the effort in collaboration with 10+ organizations at the forefront of digital literacy and teen mental health.

Research Experts

We partnered with a wide array of experts to ground the guide in academic research and subject matter expertise.

Global Advocates

An international body of advocates provided content support – to ensure regional perspectives and cultural nuances.

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The Teenage Experience

Get a deeper understanding of teens, how they experience the world, and the impact you can have on them.

Quality Principles For Teen Content

See the difference between content that can be harmful to teens and content that is enjoyable, valuable, and supports their unique interests.

Credible Information That Supports Well-Being

Learn to discuss mental health in a way that supports teens and avoids common missteps.

Top Tips To Be A Positive Online Role Model

See how your content shapes teens' digital habits and discover ways to guide them toward healthier, more responsible choices.

Bringing It All Into Practice

Review our checklists to keep creating high-quality, fun, and enriching content that makes a difference.

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Teens are still growing, and you play a key role in their journey*

Timing of these milestones may vary, as each teen is unique and matures at their own pace

Younger Teens
~13 years old

Older Teens
~17 years old

Younger teens' lives are **evolving rapidly** – as they experience new, complex emotions and changes to their environments and bodies.

As they strive to gain more independence from parents and guardians, **friendships** become more important.

Complex emotions and fluctuations in self-esteem may lead teens to take **more risks** and seek instant rewards, especially when peers are involved.

As they try out different peer groups and social roles, they start growing abstract, **big-picture thinking** skills.

Older teens have greater independence and self-direction, but they're still **developing identities**, belief systems, and a sense of self.

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You can help teens avoid snap decision-making

Teens' interests, relationships, and identities are still developing, so your content can leave lasting impressions.

Since they are still maturing, teens' emotions may hold sway over their reasoning and self-control. This makes them more inclined toward fast, emotion-driven decisions, so they may be more vulnerable to emotionally charged content and misinformation.

FUN FACT 🔥

Teens' brains are primed to act quickly in response to emotions because their logical decision-making capabilities are still developing.

SOURCE: apa.org

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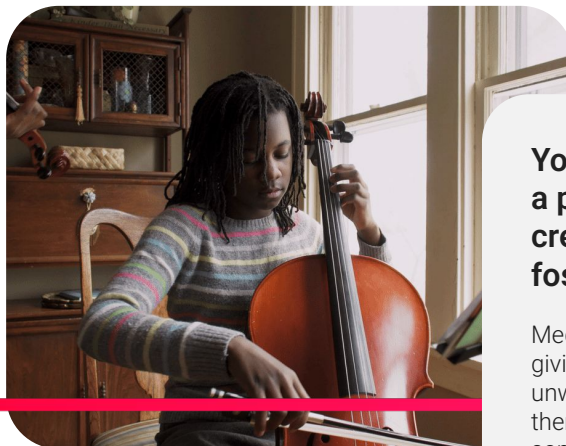
You can help steer teens toward fun and healthy exploration

Teens' risk-taking is a normal part of learning and identity-building, but modeling healthy choices can shape whether it's constructive or harmful.

At this stage, teens are trying new ideas, testing boundaries, and taking risks as they figure out who they are. Making choices like joining a team or exploring a new hobby can help build resilience. But when teens see people they look up to do something dangerous, they may want to try it themselves. The risks you show in your content matter, so focus on fun and healthy exploration.

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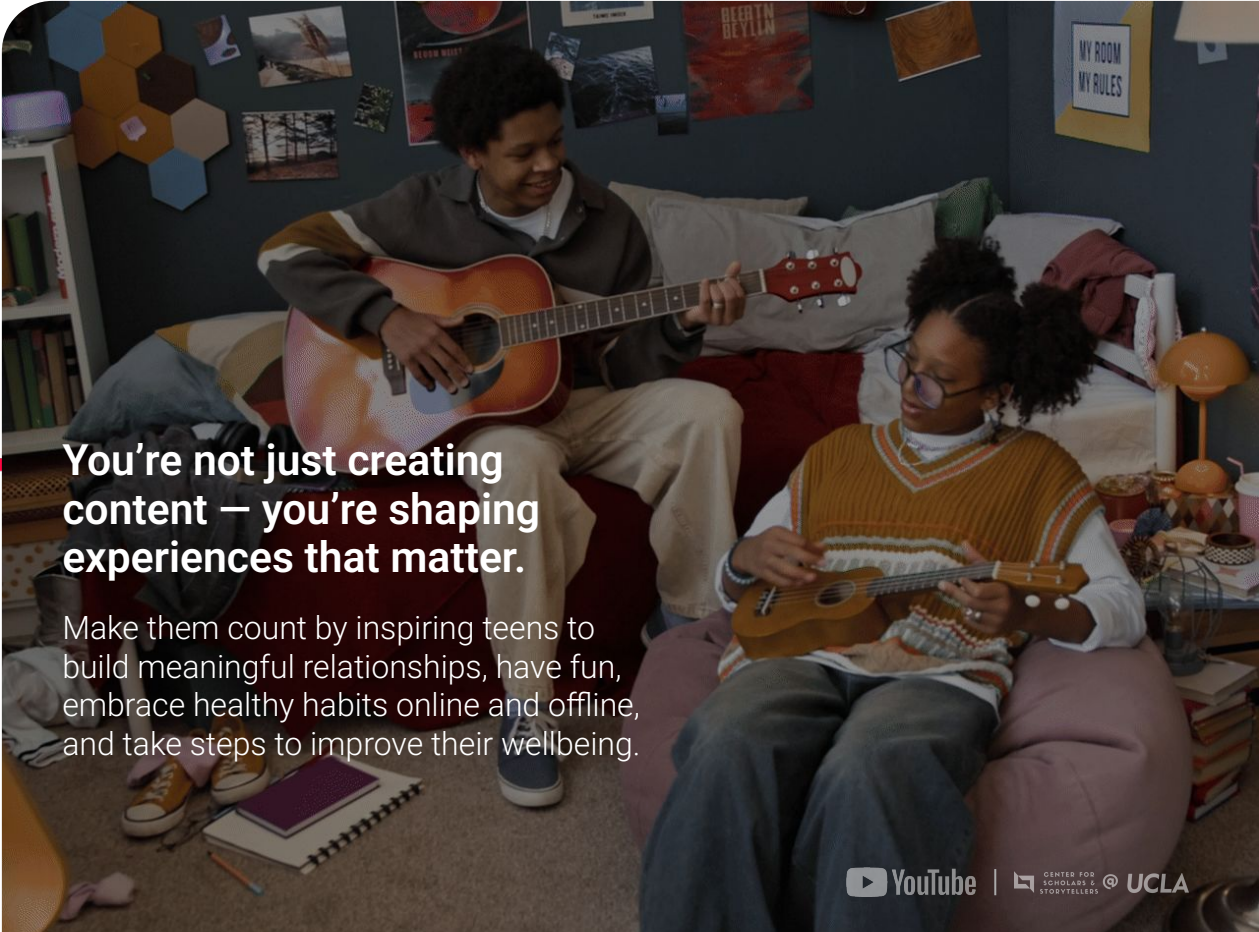
You can spark self-discovery

You can help teens feel they are a part of something bigger by creating a supportive space and fostering connection.

Media can be a powerful source of belonging, giving teens a place to connect with friends, unwind outside of school, and find themselves. But that same influence can sometimes make them feel pressured or uncertain as they shape their identities.

Your channel can be a welcoming space to reflect their own lives, offering fresh perspectives, and boosting their confidence while they refine their values, find their own voice, and navigate the world.

FUN FACT

Many teens consider creators to be more relatable and trustworthy than traditional celebrities

SOURCE: ypulse.com

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Your impact is real!

You're not just creating content — you're shaping experiences that matter.

Make them count by inspiring teens to build meaningful relationships, have fun, embrace healthy habits online and offline, and take steps to improve their wellbeing.

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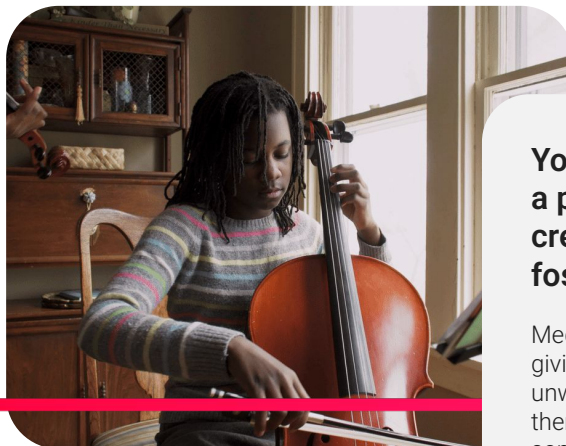
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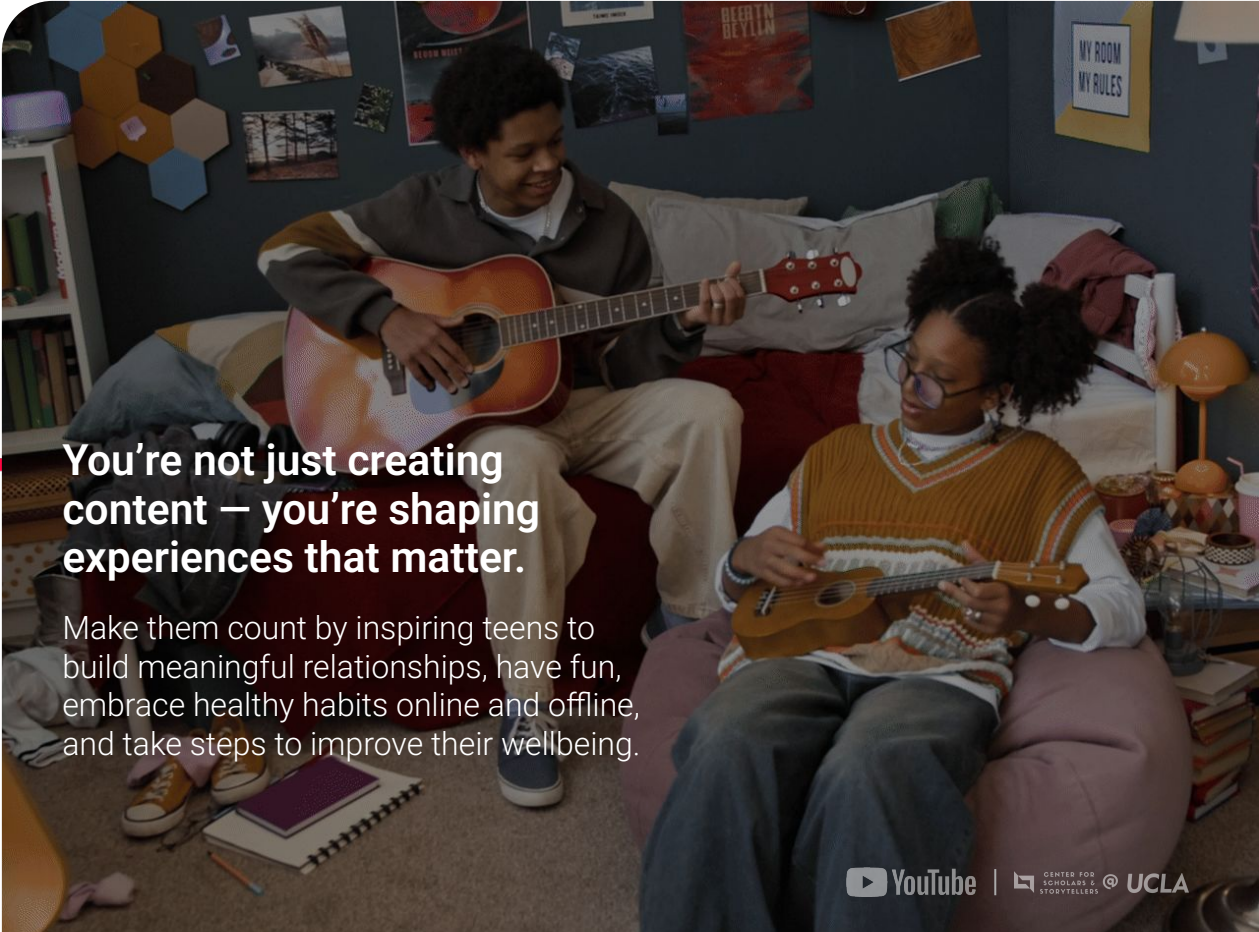
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Low Quality Principles

Feel confident in spotting and avoiding these characteristics in your content, through real examples and helpful tips.

Narrow Body Standards And Comparisons

Dangerous Acts And Negative Behaviors

Bullying, Hate, And Disrespect

Wealth Obsession And Misconceptions
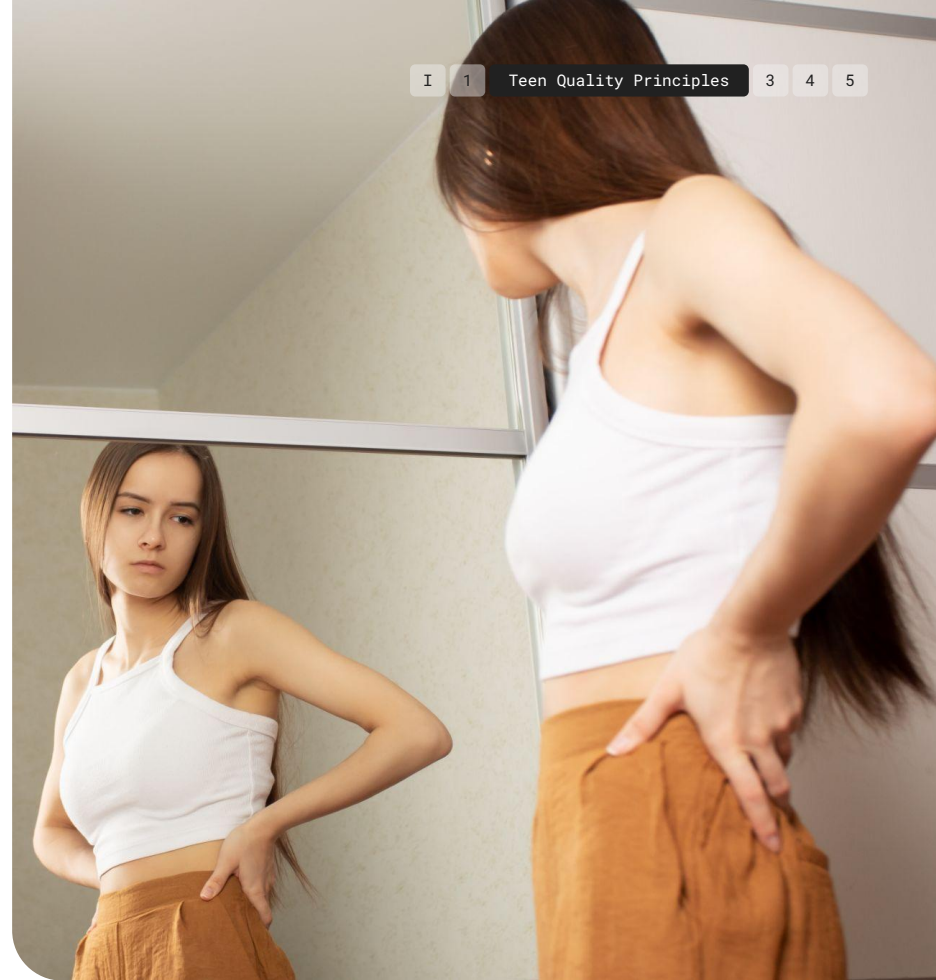
Aggressive And Intimidating Behavior

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Narrow Body Standards And Comparisons

Help protect teen self-esteem by avoiding idealistic physical comparisons and fostering a healthy self-image in your content.

Avoid content that compares and glorifies certain physical features and idealizes narrow beauty standards.

Why? Content that glorifies, idealizes, or labels physical traits as desirable or undesirable can lead teens to find faults in their bodies and hurt their confidence. People around the world look different and beauty standards are not universal.

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Narrow Body Standards And Comparisons

LEAN INTO

It's okay to share helpful tutorials, DIY projects, skills, creativity, humor, or positive challenges that build confidence, uplift, and inspire teens. 'Before and after' videos are okay to share when they don't promote narrow beauty ideals, push expensive products, or amplify existing insecurities.

AVOID

Avoid creating videos that promote changing one's body to meet narrow beauty standards – like sharing face-altering techniques or exercise routines that glorify certain appearances, fitness levels, or body weights.

Dangerous Acts And Negative Behaviors

Don't depict or normalize dangerous, unethical, or risky behavior – even if potential consequences are shown.

Avoid content that encourages cheating, lying, or public pranks and stunts that negatively impact others or themselves, even in a minor way.

Why? Because teens are still learning about consequences and how their behavior affects other people, so they are especially prone to risky or dangerous behavior.
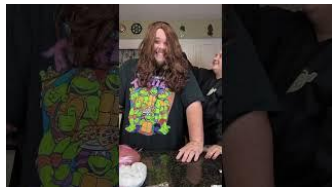
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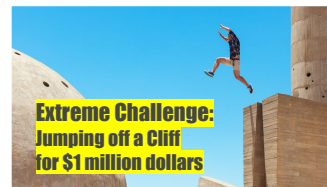# Dangerous Acts And Negative Behaviors

LEAN INTO

AVOID

It's okay to share clearly scripted skits or light hearted pranks, as long as everyone's in on the joke, no one gets hurt or embarrassed, and they don't encourage teens to put anyone in danger of physical or emotional harm. Creators can model responsibility by showing consequences, choosing safer forms of humor, or highlighting creativity over recklessness.

Avoid encouraging teens to join dangerous challenges or mimic unsafe behavior. Don't feature pranks or inconsiderate behavior that puts you or others at risk. This can range from rude public gags to dangerous stunts to tips for cheating on tests.

Avoid content that mocks, disrespects, or promotes hostility toward others based on individual attributes, group dynamics, or communities.

Even jokes can cause harm if they're at others' expense. Focus on content that uplifts or includes other people rather than puts them down.

Why? Because showing people being mean, hurtful, or hostile – even in a humorous way – can normalize this behavior and encourage teens to act similarly.

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Bullying, Hate, And Disrespect

LEAN INTO

AVOID

It's okay to show certain types of criticism, or make playful jokes about quirks, habits, or fictional scenarios – as long as they don't promote, target, or harm an individual's or a group's appearance or identity.

Avoid depicting people mocking, excluding, or mistreating others – even as a joke – especially if it involves stereotypes or reinforces harmful clichés about identity, culture, or appearance.
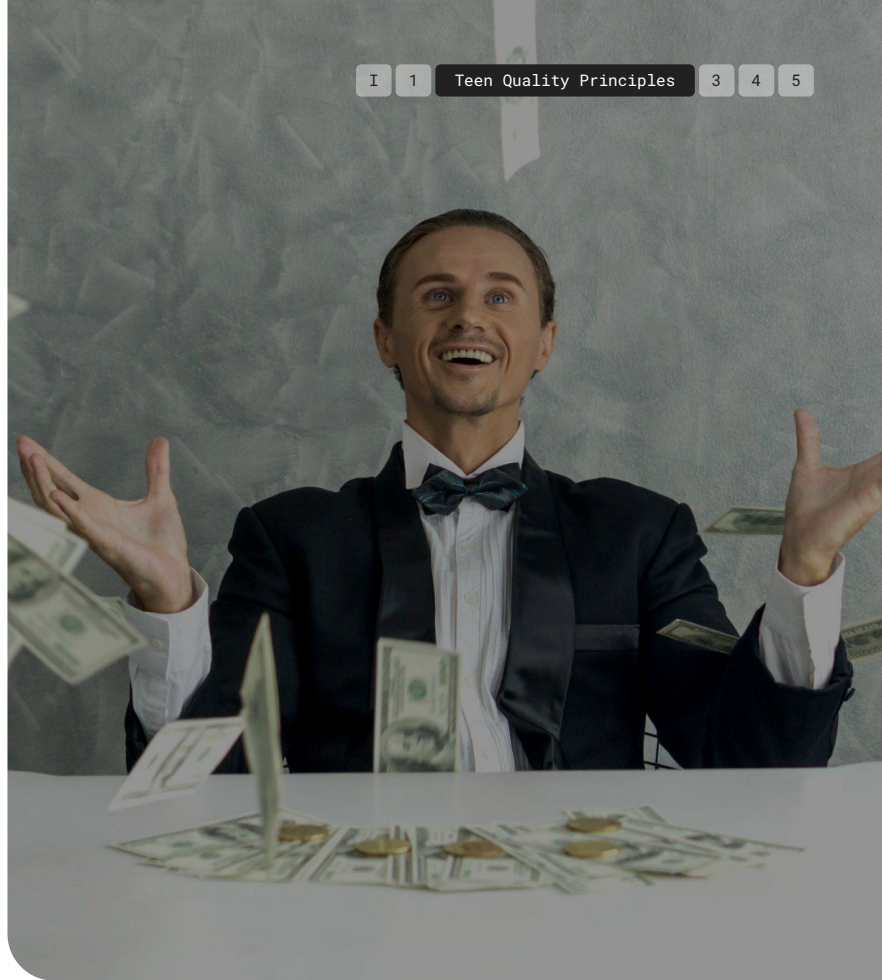
Wealth Obsession And Misconceptions

Stay away from glorifying or sensationalizing wealth, or promoting get-rich-quick content.

Avoid sharing misleading or exploitative financial advice that takes advantage of teens' limited experience.

Why? Because teens lack real-world financial experience and they are particularly vulnerable to misleading or sensational financial content. Creators can play a valuable role in modeling responsible financial choices, realistic perspectives, or even basic financial literacy.

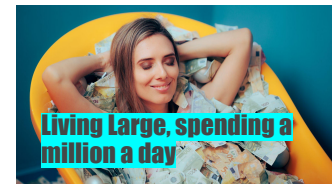YouTube | CENTER FOR SCHOLARS & STORYTELLERS @ UCLA

Wealth Obsession And Misconceptions

It's okay to talk about personal experiences with saving, spending, investing, or managing money responsibly, as long as you set realistic expectations. Shopping and unboxing content is okay if it doesn't sensationalize wealth or heavily promote products.

Avoid glamorizing wealth and luxury in ways that make teens feel they need it. Don't target them with unrealistic get-rich-quick videos, exploitative side hustle content, or encouraging risky financial choices like gambling or unsafe investments.
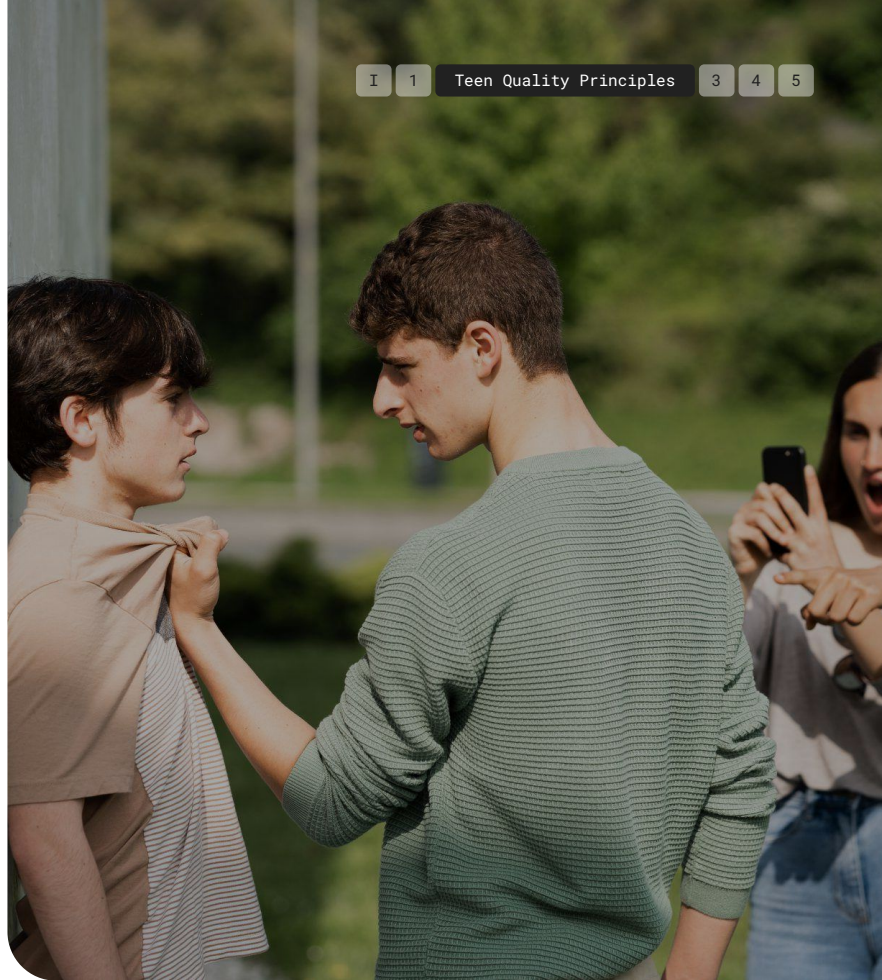
Aggressive And Intimidating Behavior

Teens see you as a role model, so be mindful of the aggressive behavior you show in your videos.

Avoid content that encourages hostile, intimidating, and threatening behavior, or humiliates or excludes others in real-life or online interactions.

Why? Because teens are still learning what behavior is/isn't acceptable. When they see creators normalize or tolerate violent behavior, teens may be more likely to see it as acceptable or copy it in their own peer groups.

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Aggressive And Intimidating Behavior

LEAN INTO

AVOID

It's okay to show fictional violence in video games or scripted content with actors or participants who understand it's staged, and it clearly doesn't promote real-world harm. Protests, debates, or strong opinions are also fine to show, as long as they don't encourage aggression or hate.

Avoid showing aggressive or intimidating behavior — whether emotional, social, or physical — in any setting, including schools, social gatherings, and online spaces like gaming communities or comment sections.

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High Quality Principles

Ready to share engaging, teen-friendly content? These principles help you create videos teens will love, relate to, and find value in watching.

- Joy, Fun, And Entertainment
- Curiosity And Inspiration
- Deepening Interests And Perspectives
- Building Life Skills And Experiences
- Credible Information That Supports Well-Being

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Joy, Fun, And Entertainment

Bring joy and inspire connection through humor, positivity, and moments of care.

Create authentic content that captures humorous moments, celebrations, shared experiences, and positive relationships that teens can relate to.

Why? Because uplifting, fun videos can have a big impact on the mood and outlook of teens.
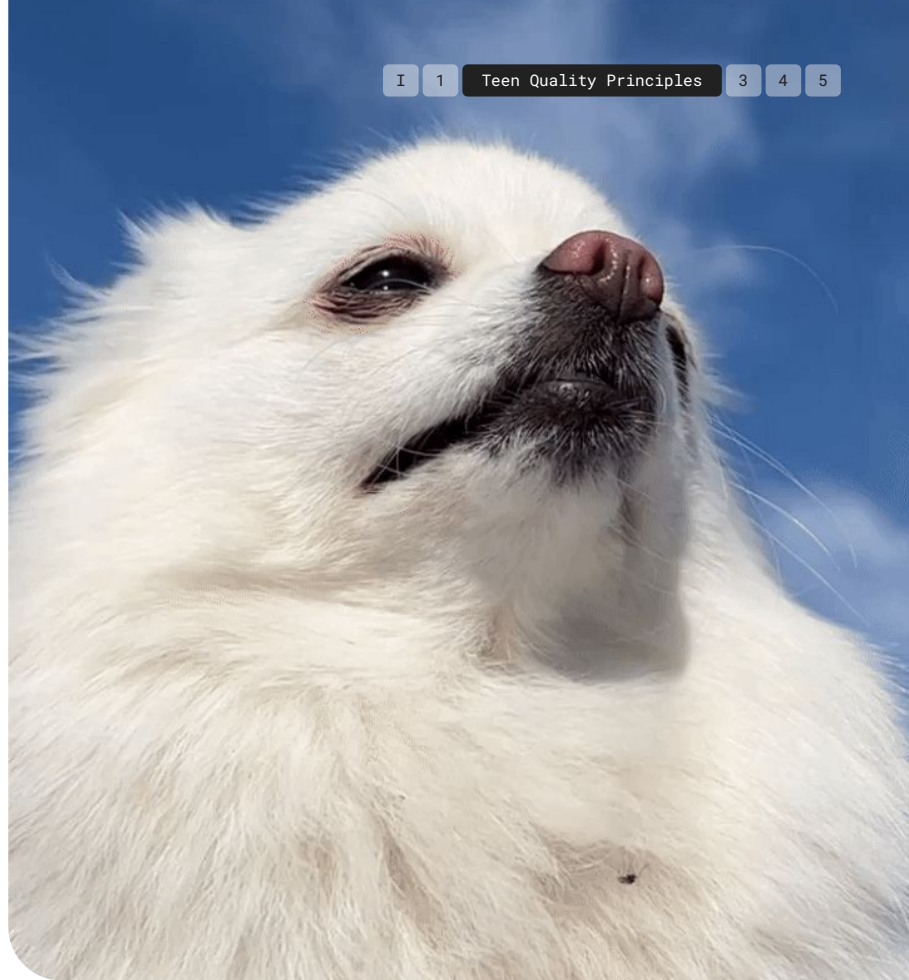
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Joy, Fun, And Entertainment

Helpful Tips:

→ Joyful moments help teens feel good about their own lives and experiences

→ Creators who can laugh at themselves without putting themselves down help build a compassionate and empathetic view of oneself

→ Celebrate positive relationships that teens can relate to, like friends going to a movie together

→ Keep the tone positive and heartwarming, like showing a cute animal being cared for

→ Harmless pranks or self-deprecating humor can keep things playful without hurting anyone

→ Make sure your jokes are appropriate for teens and don't put people down or single out a person or group

daily minimal makeup

Example video ideas: *dance routines, get-ready-with-me videos, entertaining moments, celebrations, creativity, light hearted pranks*

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Curiosity And Inspiration

Inspire teens to explore new topics and try new things – building curiosity and inspiring budding interests.

Create engaging, fun content with reliable information that anyone can follow – introducing new hobbies to spark curiosity and inspiring teens to explore.

Why? Teens are naturally curious. Tapping into that curiosity can help them build motivation to learn. Providing an entry point to trying something new can lower learning barriers and help teens discover a new side of themselves.

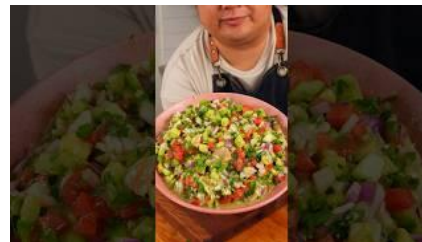YouTube | CENTER FOR SCHOLARS & STORYTELLERS @ UCLA

Curiosity And Inspiration

Helpful Tips:

→ Help beginners engage with tutorials or interest based content by starting with an authentic, personal story

→ Make sure tutorials/hobbies are easy for teens to follow and re-create/explore more in-depth

→ Make sure hobby videos are accessible to everyone, explaining key concepts as needed and detailing parts of the hobby that would even interest non-fans

→ Hands-on demos that show how a product is built can be a fun entry point into big ideas

→ Try using exciting visuals, music, or analogies to illustrate the process and make learning fun

Example video ideas: introducing hobbies, providing easy tutorials, creating demos
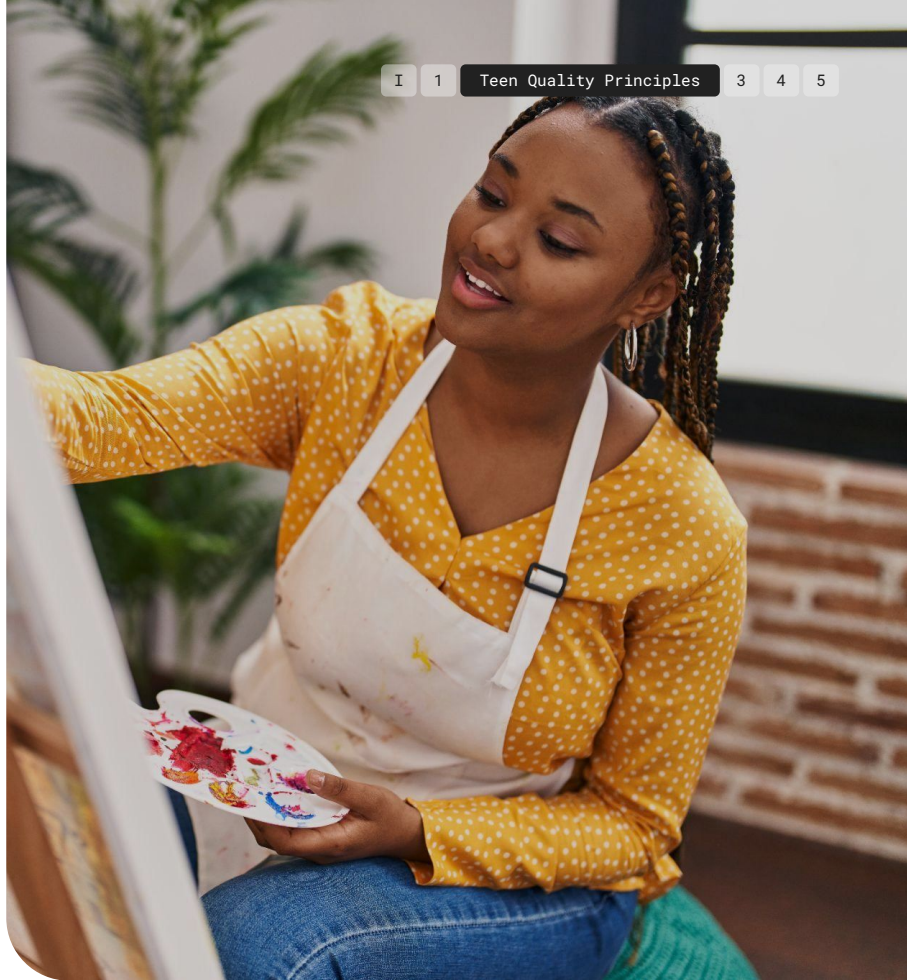
Deepening Interests & Perspectives

Fuel existing interests with deep dive content – driving passion, rounding out knowledge, and building hobbies.

Create content that shares reliable information and achievable ideas to deepen teen interests and invite active participation, moving beyond mere entertainment.

Why? Showing teens how to engage more deeply with their interests helps teens learn about themselves, find community, and develop fulfilling hobbies.This, in turn, boosts self-esteem and resilience.

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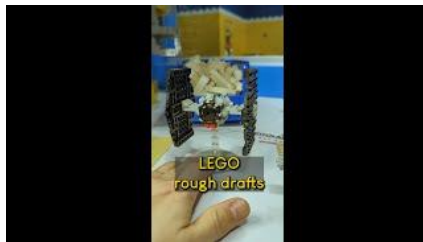
Deepening Interests & Perspectives

Helpful Tips:

→ Videos can cover any (safe) ongoing interest, not just school subjects (e.g., creative arts, anime, science, sports, cooking, gaming, collecting, dancing, movies, music, history, trivia)

→ Offer actionable, imitable inspiration for an interest, like guiding viewers through a step-by-step tutorial, skill, or technique

→ Give teens the confidence to explore their own ideas by talking through your process and normalizing trial-and-error

→ Create a deep dive or explainer video that teaches real knowledge

→ Be thoughtful with a cohesive & focused theme

Example video ideas: study guides, model construction walkthroughs, coding demos, strategy game tactics
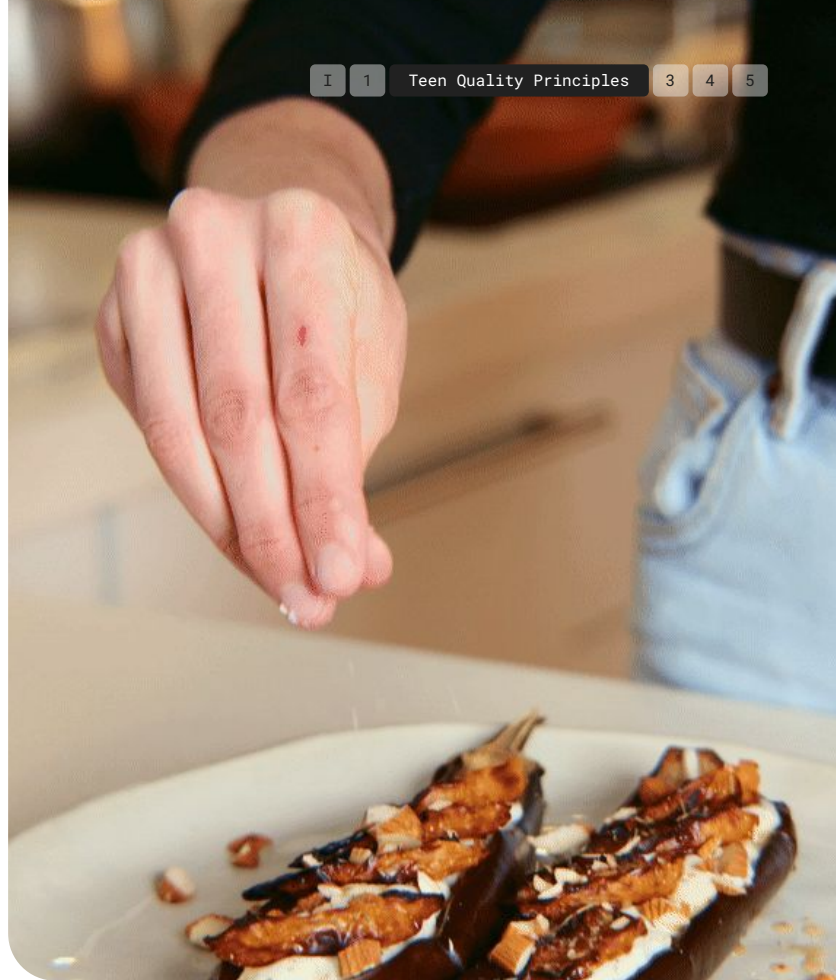
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Building Life Skills And Experiences

Show teens how to build skills and navigate common experiences through real-life, relatable content that gives them the confidence to try.

Create content that equips teens for life, from teaching practical skills to nurturing confidence. This also includes fostering healthy perspectives and inspiring teens to make good decisions that will prepare them for the future.

Why? Helping teens build real-life skills can support their well-being and get them ready to face life's challenges.

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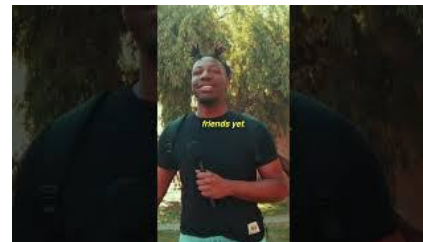
Building Life Skills And Experiences

Helpful Tips:

→ Lead by example and share clear tips, so teens feel more capable of putting them into practice

→ Use realistic, authentic and helpful strategies

→ Highlight teens' strengths and acknowledge how they might feel - this gives them confidence to take the next steps in whatever they're working towards

→ Keep the focus on helpful advice and real experiences rather than products or quick-money schemes

→ Honest accounts and authentic stories can inspire teens to try new things and build friendships

→ Details of some intensely emotional experiences – though real – may overwhelm teens, so be careful how you talk about them

Example video ideas: *offering practical tips, guiding teens through milestones, preparation for future experiences both online and offline*

Raise the bar to make a difference

Your content doesn't have to be perfect, but if you strive for high quality and avoid making content that reflects low quality principles, you're moving in the right direction.

Now, let's review best practices on how to promote credible information that supports teen well-being.

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Credible Information That Supports Well-Being

Learn to discuss mental health in a way that supports teens and avoids common missteps.

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Creating purposeful content can be powerful for teens

Openly discussing mental health topics can reduce stigma and lead to viewers getting help, but it needs to be approached with care. Even if your intentions are good, mentioning or showing mental health struggles like anxiety, stress, self-harm, or eating disorders can activate viewers' own struggles.

That's why it's important to lean on credible information and keep best practices in mind when approaching mental health in your content.

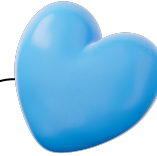Lean on expert sources

Create with teens in mind

Reflect the world around you

Make it engaging in a responsible way

Support teens' well-being

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Lean on expert sources

30%

of teens have experienced
cyberbullying, which is linked
to negative mental health

SOURCE: cyberbullying.org

Before creating mental health content, consult
with experts and use credible sources to guide
your audience to helplines, trusted resources,
and/or licensed medical professionals.

You can normalize seeking help by showing that
mental health challenges are serious but
manageable with support. Treatment advice,
however, should be left to licensed professionals.

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Create with teens in mind

6 in 10

teens want to see more platonic relationships and friendships in content they watch

SOURCE: scholarsandstorytellers.com

Tell stories that are relatable to teens and supportive of their well-being via school life, family relationships, friendships, and early dating experiences. Showing the value of supportive friendships and non-romantic connections can really also resonate with teens.

Be clear if a video is not for teens: say up front that those under 18 should seek other resources.

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Reflect the world around you

58%

Hispanic/Latina teen girls are more than 58% more likely to experience disordered eating than White teen girls

SOURCE: pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Be inclusive and show a range of experiences. Mental health struggles affect teens of all backgrounds, but teens with less-visible or underrepresented experiences – such as identity, socioeconomic status, (dis)abilities, or religion – often get overlooked and benefit from extra support.

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Make it engaging in a responsible way

41%

of 13-14 year olds in Brazil search the internet to deal with health issues

SOURCE: cetic.br

Authentic, compassionate content that resonates emotionally can have a powerful positive impact.

Sharing real stories can be powerful, but take care to avoid sensational, hopeless, or intensely emotional tones that can overwhelm teen viewers.

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💗 Support teens' well-being

Teens' safety is a top priority – keep details broad to avoid sharing graphic details that could lead to self-comparison or imitation. Make sure to focus on resilience and recovery rather than glorifying mental health struggles.

DID YOU KNOW?

Teens list being safe as their number one goal over things like being popular or being famous.

SOURCE: scholarsandstorytellers.com

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Tap into YouTube's trusted mental health resources to help inform your content.

You don't have to become an expert when approaching sensitive topics. On YouTube, when searching for common mental health and wellbeing topics like depression, anxiety, ADHD, and eating disorders, teens will now see a shelf of age-appropriate videos from trusted sources. Our goal is to make it easier for them to find credible information that is tailored to their developmental stage of life.

Need trusted sources?

Check out this short list of trusted mental health organizations and resources to inform your content and support your audience.

The Jed Foundation
(**Website** | **YouTube Channel**)

National Alliance on Mental Illness
(**Website** | **YouTube Channel**)

Mental Health America
(**Website** | **YouTube Channel**)

The Trevor Project
(**Website** | **YouTube Channel**)

Remember, our live crisis panel is an excellent resource for teens. We provide a 24/7 live support panel below searches related to suicide, self-harm, or other crises.

We're here for you

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Set the tone for your community

As a creator, you have an opportunity to build a community where everyone feels confident to be themselves, connect, and grow.

It only takes a few mindful members to shift the culture of an online community to be more inclusive. You can model positive online behavior (digital citizenship) by creating a foundation of respect and honesty.

Speak up against hate, avoid unproductive conflict, and challenge misinformation, while distinguishing between fact and opinion. These are powerful ways to foster a community where teens feel respected, supported, and free to be themselves.
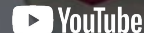
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Create a safer space for everyone

YouTube works to protect creators and viewers, but you can take extra steps to make your community even safer.

Following the YouTube Community Guidelines is a great starting point, but check out the YouTube Creator Safety Center for ways to manage your audience, set boundaries, and keep your information secure as you grow your channel.

By modeling these habits, you can also inspire teens to take charge of their own online world. Encourage them to revisit their privacy settings, curate their feeds, and unfollow accounts that harm their well-being.

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Support teen resilience and well-being

Help teens feel less overwhelmed by embracing imperfection, encouraging self-compassion, and reframing mistakes as learning moments.

Stress and sadness are part of life. Whether it's from pressures to succeed, to look a certain way, or to fit in with their peers, teens can face an overwhelming amount of stress, leading to burnout and other negative outcomes.

Your content can give teens the right tools to build resilience and combat stress.

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Help teens thrive on and offline

Set teens up for a well-adjusted future by promoting sleep, exercising, and healthy relationships.

Your impact as a creator doesn't stop when teens log off. By showing creative ways to connect with friends and family and prioritizing healthy habits, you remind them that balance matters.

Simple suggestions like taking walks, not using devices before bed, or talking things out, can help teens build important skills that stay with them for life.

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Bringing It All Into Practice

Review our checklists to keep creating high-quality, fun, and enriching content that makes a difference.

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Create quality content

YouTube prioritizes high-quality content for teens, and now you're ready to create it! Keep these principles top of mind when creating for teens:

- Joy, Fun, And Entertainment
- Curiosity And Inspiration
- Deepening Interests And Perspectives
- Building Life Skills And Experiences
- Credible Information That Supports Well-Being

- Narrow Body Standards And Comparisons
- Dangerous Acts And Negative Behaviors
- Bullying, Hate, And Disrespect
- Wealth Obsession And Misconceptions
- Aggressive And Intimidating Behavior

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Use your voice to be a responsible leader

Teens are in a unique stage of their lives, looking for role models and the approval of their peers. You can be a positive influence.

DO

→ Be yourself — support their well-being by showing that nobody's perfect

→ Set the tone for your community by calling out hate, harassment, and misinformation

→ Inspire shared in-person experiences and show why building positive relationships matters

→ Create a safer environment and inspire teens to take charge of their online world

DON'T

→ Don't cover mental health topics without consulting with licensed experts or credible resources

→ Don't show or encourage harmful behavior

→ Don't fight fire with fire by responding to harassment with more hostility — speak up calmly and report them instead of engaging

→ Set clear boundaries and don't share your personal information online

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You have the power

Trust your instincts and let this resource help guide you.

Your voice matters. Inspire teens and help them feel seen and understood. Offer diverse perspectives that encourage them to ask questions, think critically about their own choices, and empathize. As you create, try to step into a teens' shoes to gut check if your content is appropriate. And remember, in order to show up for others, you need to take care of yourself first.

And if you're ever unsure, just ask. The organizations on the next page are here to help.

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Organizations that shaped this guide

RESEARCH AND EDITORIAL LEAD

CENTER FOR SCHOLARS & STORYTELLERS @ UCLA

EXPERTS

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION · ConnectSafely · Boston Children's Hospital | Digital Wellness Lab · Media Smarts, Canada's Centre for Digital Media Literacy · UCL University College London

ADVOCATES

chicos.net · INSTITUTO PALAVRA ABERTA · AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child. · red PaPaz · Safer net · Save the Children · TQH · unicef KOREA | for every child

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