

7.7: YouTube Content Creators

YouTube, like Instagram, TikTok, and other online social media platforms, is much more than a source of entertainment, ideas, and information. It is a huge money-making enterprise that generates enormous profits -- for its owner Google and for some of the individuals and groups who produce content for the site.

YouTube -- where users watch one billion videos every day -- took in about \$30 billion in revenue in 2021, most of it from targeted advertising built into the videos people watch ([read how YouTube itself explains its business model](#)).

The lure of making money online has produced a whole new area of jobs for individuals and groups as **YouTube Content Creators or YouTubers** - those seeking to make money by creating and uploading content to YouTube. Once a content creator has gained 1,000 followers and 4,000 watch hours in the past year, that person can start earning money from YouTube. In 2021, for example, one YouTuber offering personal finance advice had 1.1 million subscribers and earned \$444,000 for the year ([Perelli, 2022](#)). Google ads generate most of the money earned, but content creators can also sell merchandise on their sites.



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A small number of content creators who become online stars make big money. The 23-year-old extreme stunt performer MrBeast earned \$54 million in 2021. Nastya, a seven-year-old girl, has 87.5 million subscribers for her channel about her daily life (see the [highest-paid YouTube stars in 2021](#) & [15 YouTube Stars Break Down How Much They Get Paid Per Month for Their Videos](#)).

While a small number of YouTubers make lots of money, the economics of online content creation favors corporate organizations that do not depend on YouTube as their sole income, as Shira Ovide reported in the *New York Times* (January 27, 2022). Ovide cited the example of a cycling channel on YouTube that cost \$5 a month to join via an iPad app. Of the \$5 the customer spends, Apple gets \$1.50, YouTube gets \$1.05, and the cycling channel creators just \$2.45. Many content creators are upset, saying social media companies are taking too much of the revenue in fees. For some, these fees make it nearly impossible for them to pay bills and make ends meet.

In the following activities, you will critically examine YouTubers'

channels before designing your own YouTube channel and considering how revenue you might make from your channel should be shared and regulated.

Activity 1: Design Your Own YouTube Video Channel

Imagine you have decided to become an online YouTube star with your own YouTube channel.

- First, conduct a [critical media literacy analysis](#) of at least **10 popular YouTubers' channels** to identify common video production and design techniques YouTubers use to attract a large subscriber base.
- Then, consider how you might make money as a Youtuber.
 - What skill, hobby, interest, expertise, or ideas might you share?
 - What would be the theme of your YouTube channel?
 - Who will be the primary audience for your channel?
 - What information and entertainment are you going to provide to your followers and subscribers?
 - Why will your videos attract viewers, younger or older? Will they be is funny? Relatable? Helpful? Captivating? Why?
- Record a short video pilot for your channel, showcasing its theme and purpose.

Activity 2: Propose How the Revenue You Make Should Be Shared

- What do you propose is the best way that YouTubers should make money?
 - Should Google take a cut out of what YouTubers earning

from advertisements? What about from selling merchandise in their videos? What percentage cut should Google get? Why?

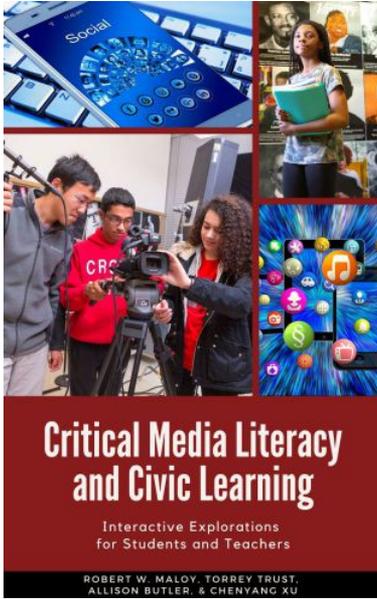
- Or, should YouTubers pay Google to host their videos and in turn earn 100% of the profits from their channels?
- What role should the government play a role in regulating the monetization of social media?
- Write an [Op-Ed commentary letter](#) to a local or national newspaper to share your opinion.

Additional Resources

- [How Much Money YouTubers Make, According to Dozens of Creators](#), *Business Insider*, March 1, 2022
- [Estimated YouTube Money Calculator](#)

Connecting to the eBook

[Building Democracy for All: Digital News and Social Media](#)



Maloy, R. W., Trust, T., , & Xu, C. (2021). *Critical Media Literacy and Civic Learning*. Equity Press.
<https://equitypress.org/mediaandciviclearning>