

The right way to use YouTube for schoolwork

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There are a lot of weird and unreliable videos on YouTube. And sometimes it seems like YouTube is recommending all of them to you. But YouTube can also be really useful for finding information.

Here is some advice on how to find the good videos and avoid the weird videos.

I've found a video but I don't know if it's reliable or not

→ You can evaluate a video by asking these questions:

Who?

- Who made the video? (This may not be the same as who posted the video)
- Are they an expert on the topic?
 - Look at the channel
 - What does their channel say about them?
 - What other videos are on their channel?
 - Look them up on Google- are they an expert?
 - Are they biased? (eg. A company talking about the benefits of a product they make)

What?

- Is it too easy or too hard for you?
- Is there too much or too little information?
- Is the information what you need?
- Have you looked at a range of sources before choosing which ones you will use?

Where?

- Does the maker of the video say where they got their information?
- Do they include links in the video notes so you can check what sources they used?
- Do they give evidence? (eg. Statistics, sources)
- Does the video agree with information you've found in other sources?

When?

- How old is the video?
- If it's old, is it still useful to you?

Why?

- Who is the intended audience?
- What is the purpose of the video? (Inform? Entertain? Persuade? Sell something?) Is the purpose clear?
- Is the language intended to get an emotional reaction from you?
- Does the video take sides?
- Does it make claims that sound too extreme to be true?

How to search for reliable videos on YouTube

Instead of searching for videos, search for channels dedicated to videos on your topic. If you know of a very good one, search for videos made by that channel.

You can filter your search results-

- If you need captions, you can use the filters to find videos with captions

Check the number of views on a video or the number of subscribers on a channel. More views or subscribers can mean a video is more likely to be trustworthy.

But this is only a hint about whether a video is reliable.

That's because:

- Some videos have attention-grabbing headings designed to get people to watch them, but they aren't reliable videos
- If someone stops the video after a few seconds it still counts as a view
- So even though a video has a lot of views it doesn't always mean it's reliable for school
- A video with a small number of views can still be reliable, it just might not be on a topic many people search for

Or just Google it

You can skip YouTube altogether and use Google Video, and add `inurl:edu` at the end of your search to find reliable educational videos.

Traps to look out for

Student projects

How can you tell if it's a student project?

- If it's a very basic animated video and it has a computer voice narrating it
- If the narration or the written description or title says it's a student project
- If the video looks like something you'd make for an assignment

Don't use student projects, because you don't know whether they are reliable or not. The student might know much less than you about the subject, or they might have got a terrible mark for their video!

Clickbait

What is clickbait?

Titles that are designed to grab your attention so you will open the video, article or website. They are usually misleading, provocative or exaggerated. They are designed to target your emotions.

Examples:

Six things your teacher has told you that are wrong (number five is unbelievable!)

Use this one simple trick to get 95% in every test

Why you've probably been using YouTube wrong your entire life

You won't believe what this girl did to pass English

See why Menai students are using this website

A year 10 class bought their teacher a present. What happened next will make you cry!

Is your calculator the reason you failed maths?

Why do you need to be careful of clickbait titles?

- They are often used on videos that contain incorrect information
- Things with a clickbait heading are never as exciting as they claim, so they can distract you and waste your time
- Because they attract your attention you might miss a better video with a less sensational title

BUT...

Because clickbait titles work so well at getting you to open things, people use them on videos that ARE correct and trustworthy so you shouldn't rule out a title just because it's clickbait.