

- **Goal:** justify a point of view
- **Language focus:** infinitive phrases
- **Vocabulary:** connotation 1

Reading

influencer (n)

a person who uses social media sites (e.g. YouTube, Instagram) to promote or recommend products and services to followers. Also: *social media influencer*

kidfluencer (n)

a social media influencer who is still a baby or child

- 1 **Work in pairs. Read the definitions and discuss the questions.**
 - 1 Do you know any influencers or kidfluencers? What do you know about them?
 - 2 What sort of people are influenced by influencers and kidfluencers? Have you ever been influenced by them?
 - 3 Would you like to be an influencer/kidfluencer? Why/Why not?
- 2 **Read the article quickly. Is it generally positive or negative about kidfluencers? Underline words and phrases that helped you decide.**

Kidfluencers

One of the biggest trends of the internet age has been the rise of social media influencers – people who share their advice and recommendations with subscribers on their YouTube channels, or followers on their Instagram accounts. The most successful influencers have audiences of millions, all hungry to learn what's hot and what's not.

Needless to say, where there's influence, there's money. Marketers were quick to realise that a glowing recommendation from a top influencer can be far more powerful than a traditional marketing campaign. As a result, influencers can make outrageous sums of money in exchange for a few not-so-subtle recommendations. **To be sure**, many influencers started out with modest ambitions, by giving genuine recommendations based on their expertise, but later, once their audiences have grown and the marketers start offering money, the temptation to give paid-for recommendations can be overwhelming.

Of course, it wasn't long before a few pushy parents spotted the potential for turning their babies and toddlers into child influencers – or kidfluencers, **to give them their proper title**. After all, what better way to sell tacky toys and sugary snacks to children than to get other children to do the selling? Marketers have long known that their most powerful allies are children, who have the ability to manipulate their parents into spending money on junk, **not to put too fine a point on it**. And the best way to drive those kids crazy with the urge to spend their parents' money is to show them other cooler kids using the same products.

In many countries, there are tight restrictions on advertising to – and with the help of – children. But because kidfluencing isn't exactly advertising, the kidfluencers (or, **to be more precise**, the marketers pulling the strings) are able to exploit loopholes in the restrictions and make a fortune.

And so we see toddlers making millions from unboxing videos before they can walk, pre-schoolers launching their own branded product lines before they can read and write, and pre-teens with larger followings of adoring fans than A-list pop and film stars. This creates all kinds of ethical problems, **to put it mildly**, but as long as the money keeps flowing, the rise of kidfluencers is only likely to continue.



- 3 **Work in pairs and discuss the questions.**
 - 1 Where might you see an article like this? What is the writer's purpose in writing it?
 - 2 Do you think the writer is being reasonable in their assertions and opinions?

Vocabulary

4 a Match adjectives 1–7 with nouns a–g.

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1 pushy | a fans |
| 2 tacky | b recommendation |
| 3 glowing | c sums of money |
| 4 modest | d parents |
| 5 sugary | e toys |
| 6 adoring | f snacks |
| 7 outrageous | g ambitions |

- b **Work in pairs. Which adjectives in Exercise 4a have a positive (+) connotation? Which have a negative (–) connotation?**
- c **Here are some more adjectives that go with the nouns in Exercise 4a. Do they have positive (+) or negative (–) connotations?**
 - 1 die-hard/obsessive/screaming fans
 - 2 lukewarm/gushing/informed recommendations
 - 3 meagre/moderate/phenomenal sums of money
 - 4 firm/doting/supportive parents
 - 5 educational/flimsy/durable toys
 - 6 nutritious/bite-size/processed snacks
 - 7 blind/driving/consuming ambition
- 5 **Add adjectives from Exercise 4 to this sentence to make it as positive as possible and then as negative as possible.**

Kidfluencers make sums of money by making recommendations to their fans and persuading their parents to buy snacks and toys.



Go to page 166 or your app for more vocabulary and practice.

Language focus

6 a Match functions 1–6 with the phrases in bold in the article in Exercise 2.

- 1 to clarify something you just said
to be more precise
- 2 to provide the official name for something
- 3 to point out that you're using delicate language, although you want to say something stronger
- 4 to admit that you're going to say something that the listener/reader probably already knows
- 5 to admit that you're not really using delicate language
- 6 to admit that your statement might contradict your previous argument

b Read the language focus box and choose the correct alternatives.

Infinitive phrases

Infinitive phrases ¹*always/usually* start with a *to*-infinitive (e.g. **to tell the truth**), but some have a negative word before the *to* infinitive (e.g. **needless to say**).

We often use them to show how we feel about ²*an action/a whole statement* or to explain why we're making it.

To come back to my earlier point, I think we should ...

They can come at the beginning or end of a statement and are usually separated from the rest of the statement by ³*commas/full stops* or brackets (in writing) or pauses (in speaking).

To be honest, I'm not sure./I'm not sure, to be honest.

Many infinitive phrases are fixed expressions (i.e. you ⁴*can/can't* usually change the words).

7 Complete the infinitive phrases in bold with the verbs in the box.

add be begin cap cut make name put

- 1 You spend far too much time on social media. You're going to lose all your friends soon if you're not careful, **to _____ it bluntly**.
- 2 I don't like social media. **To _____ with**, everyone's so negative, and in addition there's so much false information.
- 3 I've had a terrible day. And **to _____ it all**, I've been locked out of my social media account.
- 4 I use loads of social networking sites: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, **to _____ but a few**.
- 5 He didn't reply to my invite. Then, **to _____ insult to injury**, he planned something for the same day.
- 6 **To _____ perfectly honest**, if you post strong opinions on social media, you'll probably regret it ten or twenty years from now.
- 7 They started the network as a homework project as students and, **to _____ a long story short**, 20 years later it has grown into one of the biggest in the world.
- 8 I accidentally upset someone on Twitter today – I was trying to be funny but it didn't work. Then, **to _____ matters worse**, I tried to send a smiley emoticon but I sent an angry one by mistake.

8 Work in pairs. What do the infinitive phrases in Exercise 7 mean? Write another example sentence for each one.

9 a Work in pairs. How does the comma/pause change the meaning in each pair of sentences?

- 1 a It's not a good idea to be brutally honest.
b It's not a good idea, to be brutally honest.
- 2 a She tried her best to be fair.
b She tried her best, to be fair.
- 3 a I'm not keen to say the least.
b I'm not keen, to say the least.

b 1.6 Listen. Which version do you hear, a or b?

Go to page 146 or your app for more information and practice.

Speaking

PREPARE

10 1.7 Listen to Ann and Jordan discussing kidfluencers. Who expresses these opinions, Ann (A) or Jordan (J)?

- a Parents have selfish motives regarding their children becoming kidfluencers.
- b Some kids may want to be kidfluencers.
- c Their argument won't be resolved.

11 Work in pairs. Think of arguments for and against each statement below.

- 1 Social media platforms should be responsible for the content that users post on them.
- 2 It shouldn't be possible to post anonymous comments on the internet.
- 3 Influencers provide a valuable public service – sometimes it's good to be told what to think.
- 4 It's reasonable for 'free' websites and apps to make money from advertisers.

SPEAK

12 Work with a different partner. Discuss the statements in Exercise 11. Try to disagree with your partner – but always justify your opinions.



Master your
listening
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