

What is YouTube?



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YouTube is a website designed for sharing video. Millions of users around the world have created accounts on the site that allow them to upload videos that anyone can watch. Every minute of every day, more than 35 hours of video is uploaded to YouTube.

Video files can be very large and are often too big to send to someone else by email. By posting a video on YouTube, you can share a video simply by sending the other person a url 'link' – that is, the 'address' of the relevant internet page.

When YouTube was created in 2005, it was intended for people to post and share original video content. But since then it's also become both an archive for storing favourite clips, songs and jokes, as well as a marketing site for companies to promote their products.

Nowadays the term 'viral video' is common. This refers to a video clip that people have liked so much that they've shared its link by email with millions of others around the globe – in effect, it's spread like a virus. Companies have realised that they can harness this ability to reach potential customers and have created their own YouTube accounts for posting advertisements and other marketing videos.

Film and television companies maintain a tight control over their own content and block illegal sharing of their programmes. However, several now use YouTube to allow fans to see high-quality trailers or repeats of recently aired shows.

Key benefits and features of YouTube

- Create an account to share videos up to 15 minutes long with your family and friends. You can upload videos that are longer than 15 minutes if you follow steps to verify your account. There is a [guide to doing this on the YouTube Help pages](#).
- Use the YouTube edit facility to create a movie with music and other features.
- Restrict who views your videos with YouTube's privacy option.
- Search the archive for your favourite clips.
- Catch up with programmes you've missed via 'channels' like 4oD, Channel 4's playback channel.
- Comment on and rate movies you've watched.
- Watch a full-length feature film on your computer.

- Use YouTube's caption and subtitle facilities, and take advantage of its 3D and high-definition capability.

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Next steps

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