

Living Life Online with Live Streaming

Have you ever thought about sharing your life with the world, and maybe making a little money along the way? Take a look into live streaming, one of the Internet's fastest-growing phenomena. With live streaming, anyone can become an online celebrity---all you need is a camera, Internet access, and something to show an audience.

On sites like YouNow, Periscope, and Twitch, streamers log in and connect with fans from all over the world. These fans are able to interact with streamers through chat windows, passing along comments, requests, or questions and receiving responses live.

There is something for everyone in live streaming, from fashion tips to live music to online gaming. While there are many streamers, a number of people have been able to achieve celebrity status in streaming circles. But you don't have to be especially skilled at something to become a great streamer. Some streamers do little more than set up a camera and act as they normally would in day-to-day life, but their everyday activities or the things they say may draw interest. In particular, an attractive sense of humor goes a long way with audiences and can quickly elevate an average streamer to social media stardom.

To become successful, streamers must offer their audiences what they want to see in a unique way. Patience is key, as it can take a long time to gather followers. Once enough followers are tuning in, streamers can begin earning real money from the streaming site.

There are many reasons for the increasing popularity of live streaming. Streamers often wish to share their interests with like-minded people. Perhaps someone in Taiwan wants to showoff local attractions to people outside the country, or a fitness expert wants to demonstrate exercise methods—live streaming content is extremely diverse.

On the other side of the stream, viewers choose to watch for the purposes of self-improvement, entertainment, or interaction with others. The degree to which viewers can interact with a streamer varies; notably, streaming communities have developed conventions for attracting a streamer's attention. On some popular streams, for example, a viewer can pay for digital stickers as gifts for streamers, which encourages the streamers to address the viewer.

The Internet has provided us with many avenues for self-expression and opportunities to learn from others. With its ever-increasing popularity, live streaming could prove to be the ultimate means of digital interaction.

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Plastic Microbeads: Small Beads, Big Problems

Plastic microbeads may be small, but they're causing big problems. These tiny pieces of plastic, usually less than two millimeters in size, are found in many personal care products such as bodywash and facial scrub. The companies that make these products add microbeads for their exfoliating properties, which enable the products to better clean the skin. Unfortunately, the story doesn't end there.

Microbeads are washed down the drain after use, but they're too small to be collected by the filters in water processing plants. Therefore, trillions of these tiny bits of plastic are released into our rivers, lakes, and seas each day. This plastic not only causes harm to the environment, but also takes hundreds of years to degrade.

Additionally, some sea creatures can't tell the difference between microbeads and food. The beads are eaten by small sea animals, which are in turn eaten by bigger ones. In this way, the plastic can wind up in our favorite seafood—and can then end up in our bodies. Because this plastic contains harmful chemicals, microbeads may therefore pose a serious risk to human health.

Fortunately, people have begun to take notice of the problems caused by microbeads. Scientists and worried citizens around the world have called for a ban on the beads. As a result, several countries—including the United States, Canada, and Taiwan—have announced plans to phase out the use of plastic microbeads over the coming years. Governments will give companies time to switch to alternatives before products containing microbeads are finally banned, which could be as early as 2017.

In the meantime, natural alternatives to plastic alternatives are widely available. Many leading brands already use small pieces of shell, charcoal, or even salt for the same exfoliating effect. A quick look at the ingredients list will tell you which item is used in a product. There's even an app that can let you know which products contain microbeads so that you can avoid buying them.

Removing plastics from our personal care products is a great goal that will benefit the environment. Though it doesn't solve the problem of the large amount of plastic already polluting our oceans, ending the production of plastic microbeads is a step in the right direction.

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