

CML covid-19 wave

What is TikTok?

TikTok is a video-sharing platform, previously known as Musical.ly, which is owned by a Chinese technology company. It hosts a stream of short-form videos (primarily around 15 seconds long) which have been made and shared by users on the platform. Dancing or lip-syncing videos are particularly popular, in which the user records their own video alongside a pre-recorded soundtrack.

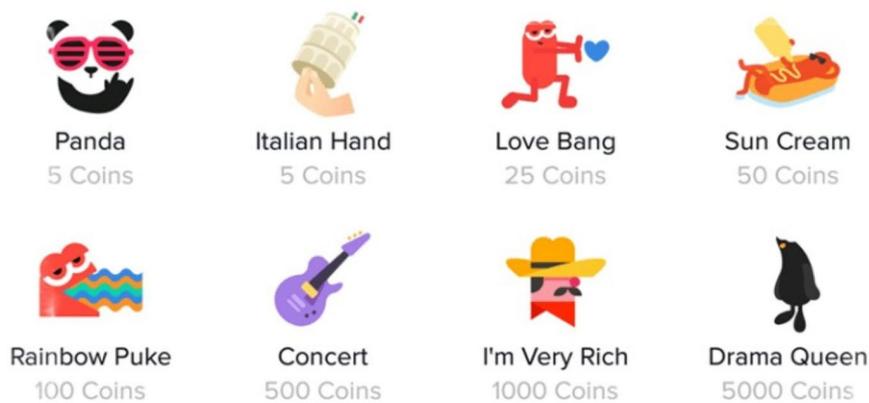
Many people use the app to scroll through the feed and watch content uploaded by others, and some also make and share their own videos. 'Effects' can be used like filters to enhance or change the appearance of the user. There are also a range of interactive features on the app, which allow users to comment, like or link their own content to that of others. Some examples include:

- **Likes, Comments** – As with other social media, users can 'like' or 'comment' on videos posted by another user
- **Challenges** – Either created by those using TikTok or as sponsored content from advertisers, 'challenges' invite users to post content according to a particular theme, such as a dance or song. These are often grouped by #s which allow users to tag their content to a particular challenge.
- **Duets** – This feature enables users to post their own content alongside that created by another user, so viewers can see both at the same time.
- **'Virtual items' like TikTok coins or gifts**¹ - ostensibly available only to users over the age of 18 in some countries², TikTok coins can be purchased in bundles using standard currency, and these can

¹ We saw no evidence that any of the children in this sample were using TikTok coins or other virtual items

² <https://www.tiktok.com/legal/virtual-items?lang=en>

be used to buy 'gifts' that are given to other users to show appreciation for their content. The gifts are in the form of a colourful icon, each worth a different amount, with a different title³:



- **Diamonds** – Once given to another user, 'gifts' convert to 'diamonds'. Diamonds are therefore a signifier of popularity on the app. They cannot be bought or transferred on the app, but they can be sold back to TikTok exchange for standard currency.

As with YouTube, TikTok offers a platform for some users to become famous, which they are consequently able to monetise. At the time of this research, the biggest 'stars' on TikTok were the American 16-year-old Charli D'Amelio (with 72.4 million followers), and the American 19-year-old Addison Rae (with 51.2 million followers)⁴. The pair have both previously been associated with the 'Hype House'⁵ collective of around 20 famous TikTokers, some of whom lived together in a collective space to create collaborative content.

³ <https://social.techjunkie.com/how-do-tiktok-gifts-work/>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_most-followed_TikTok_accounts

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hype_House