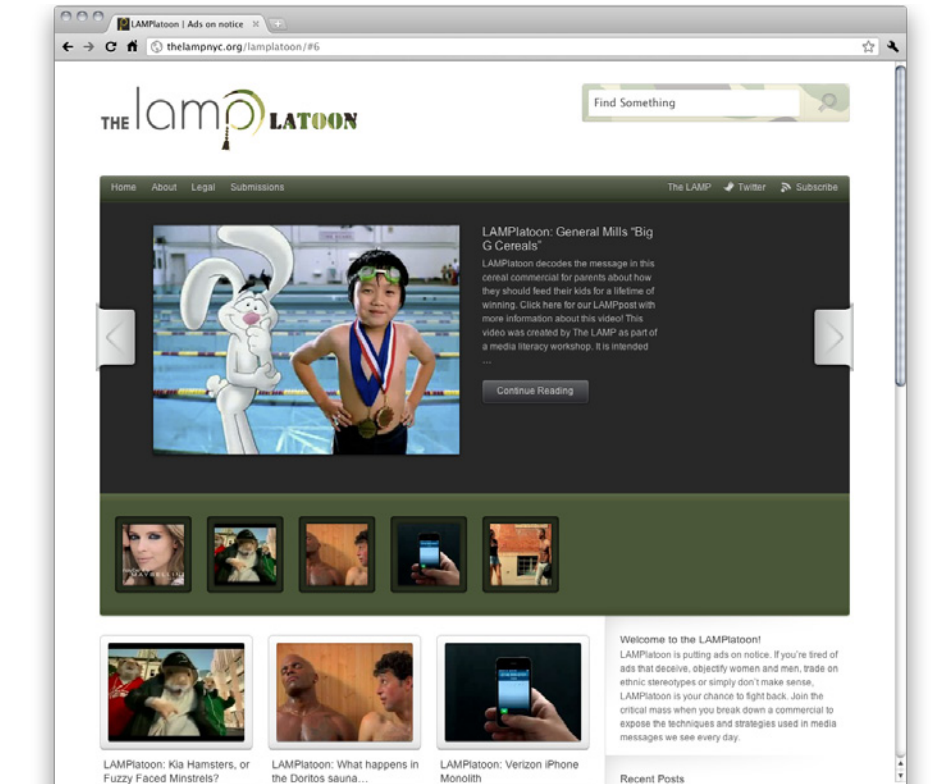


## The LAMPlatoon Wants YOU!



### HOW TO USE THIS LAMPLIT

The average American sees around 3,000 advertisements every day as marketers try to sell food, makeup, toys, movies, insurance and everything in between. Most of the time, we take those messages in but don't have a chance to respond and engage with them on our own terms. It's important to do this so we can think critically about the media we see and make conscientious choices, rather than consume media with no real thought about how they impact our lives and decisions. That's where [LAMPlatoon](#) comes in.

As a member of LAMPlatoon, your mission is to take an existing commercial and use it to talk back to the advertising and messages you see every day—we also call this process 'breaking a commercial.' You can do this on your own, with friends or even in school to learn basic media literacy skills, create your own video and

send a wake-up call to media companies telling them what you think about how they sell their products. In the process, you'll also learn about Fair Use, which is the right to use copyrighted material and also a key component of the LAMPlatoon project and media literacy. This LAMPLit will teach you how to spot persuasive techniques in commercials, choose an ad you want to break, get started in editing your video and join the growing corps of LAMPlatoon members.

### ADVERTISING 101

The basic purpose of an ad is to make you want to buy something. In itself, that's not so horrible; after all, everyone needs things like food and clothing in order to live. And of course we want to be entertained by games and movies, wear clothes we like and generally do things that make us

### WHAT'S INSIDE?

[HOW TO USE THIS LAMPLIT](#)

[ADVERTISING 101](#)

[FAIR USE BASICS](#)

[EDITING](#)

[SEND US YOUR VIDEO](#)

### WHAT'S THE LAMP?

The LAMP's vision is that one day media literacy will be seen as the critical requirement to understanding the world and our place in it. Educated consumers demanding more accountable media will create a ground swell to which media companies will have to respond. As part of this movement, The LAMP works in communities to build healthy relationships with all forms of media.” and then offset on another line, “The LAMP is for a media-savvy youth. For a more involved parent. For a modern and innovative educator. **For a critical mass.**

### WHO IS THE LAMP?

DC Vito, Co-Founder & Executive Director  
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### WHERE IS THE LAMP?

[thelampnyc.org](http://thelampnyc.org)



SCAN THIS QR CODE WITH YOUR SMART PHONE TO GO TO OUR WEBSITE RIGHT NOW!



**You should really cut out the coffee cups if you're selling dolls to 7 year olds!**

➔ Just one example of talking back to a commercial.

happy. What advertisers are trying to do is convince you not only that their product is the right choice for you, but also that you *need* it.

So, one of the first things advertisers do is try to figure out who would be interested in their products, and how they can market it to that group, or 'target audience.' For example, if an advertiser is trying to sell action dolls, it probably wouldn't run its commercials during the evening news or a late-night talk show, because the people watching those shows generally are not interested in toys. You can figure out a target audience by considering who would use whatever is being advertised, but also by looking at the people and images in the commercial. Try doing this the next time you see a commercial on television. Are the people young or old? Male or female? Is there anything to indicate if they are wealthy, educated or from a specific cultural background?

Next, think about the assumptions being made, both about the product and the target audience. Maybe the commercial assumes that long eyelashes are more beautiful, which is why you should use this mascara that will make your eyelashes look longer. But who got to make that decision? And how do you know the mascara works? (And why are so many cosmetic ads aimed at women out there anyway? Why is being beautiful as a woman such a high priority?) Or maybe the commercial assumes that Mom does the cooking while Dad watches football, or, as in this LAMPlatoon video of a [car insurance commercial](#), that a young black woman is sassy and defensive. Commercials sometimes reinforce assumptions about gender groups, ethnicities and others as they try to demonstrate the "type" of person or lifestyle for which their product would be "right," but those assumptions are frequently unfair.

This is just one way you can get started thinking critically about a commercial. You can also think about any words, images or music which make an impact on you, any statements or facts that can be questioned, or pieces of information which might be left out. But remember, the point here is to be critical about the overall message. For example, commenting on actors in a commercial for wearing clothes you think are ugly doesn't really say anything about the advertising message or tactic. But, if you think the commercial

draws on a stereotype that girls like the color pink and should wear dresses, then you're headed towards a real criticism of how the message is supporting a very limited view on how girls should behave and appear. See the difference? Try to think about the way the message might use and trigger larger cultural assumptions.

If you can come up with at least three critical points to make, then you're ready to get started on breaking your commercial and join LAMPlatoon. As you work, take note that the video you are creating is based on a commercial owned by somebody else. You're legally able to do this because of an important copyright clause known as Fair Use, but what does that mean and why is it important?

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ADVERTISING, CHECK OUT:**

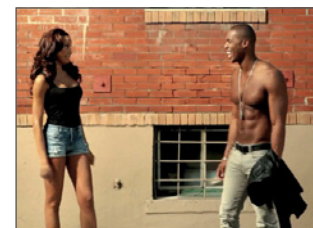
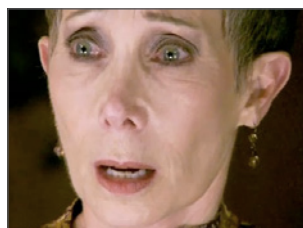
➔ [Media Literacy](#)

**FAIR USE BASICS**

When you make the decision to re-work or "break" a commercial as part of the LAMPlatoon project, you are engaging in something called "culture jamming." That means you're taking something that a corporation (like an advertiser) has created for a large audience and changing the message somehow. In the United States we take pride in our First Amendment free speech rights, and feel strongly about having the ability to talk back and offer our own personal opinions. Breaking a commercial is a form of personal expression, but the law puts certain limits on our freedoms to re-work messages that have been created for mass consumption by corporations such as advertisers. Copyright laws were written to protect these kinds of message producers.

Fortunately, U.S. copyright laws include something called Fair Use that allows anyone, like you, to use parts of messages in different ways, especially for critical comment and for educational purposes, without breaking copyright laws.

As stated on the website for American University's [Center for](#)



[Social Media](#), “Fair Use is the right, in some circumstances, to quote copyrighted material without asking permission or paying for it. Fair Use enables the creation of new culture, and keeps current copyright holders from being private censors.” Without Fair Use, we would all be living in a very different world. As one example, teachers would not able to use copyrighted material, such as most movies and books, without filing boatloads of paperwork first. Artists, software developers, publishers, lawyers, students, scientists and anyone who depends on the Internet would be greatly stifled, if not altogether silenced, in a world without Fair Use. However, there is a difference between Fair Use and stealing, and it is important to understand that difference. As an example, you cannot copy, distribute or sell a piece of media without permission from the copyright holder, but in some circumstances, you can legally build off of it to make your own piece of work. Violating copyright can result in heavy fines or even jail time, but it is up to you to learn your rights. Fair Use is a right, and we believe you should learn how to use it.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT FAIR USE, VISIT:

- ➔ [United States Copyright Office](#)
- ➔ [Center for Social Media at American University](#)
- ➔ [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#)
- ➔ [Public Knowledge](#)

## EDITING

Most computers come programmed with basic video editing software. If your computer is a Mac, it probably has iMovie; if you have a PC, look for Windows Media Maker. Unless you already have some editing experience, we recommend you stick with either iMovie or Windows Media Maker. Final Cut Pro for Mac is another popular video editing program, and YouTube has an editing program as well.

If you’re new to editing videos, you can keep things simple if you think of your video like a series of photos from a vacation. When you lay them out in an album, they tell a complete story, but in editing, you’re going to add some other pictures and change the story a little bit. In a program like iMovie, this can consist of choosing a background, then dragging and dropping to the point in the commercial where you want to make a comment. Use the title function to add text on top of the background, and that’s it—you’re talking back, and making a LAMPlatoon video.

You can also talk back in your video by doing things like recording your own voiceovers for a commercial, running subtitles with your comments, inserting still images, adding clips from other videos or any number of techniques we haven’t come up with yet. Check out existing LAMPlatoon videos for examples, and be creative!

The best resources for learning how to use your editing software are probably online. You can find loads of video tutorials on YouTube or your software’s support website, and they will walk you through everything from the most basic edits to the most complex. Remember that a LAMPlatoon

commercial doesn’t need to be fancy or perfect, but if you have some spots where you’d like a little fine-tuning, let us know and we’ll put our editing experts on the job.

## SENDING US YOUR VIDEO

When you’re done, email your video to [lamplatoon@thelampnyc.org](mailto:lamplatoon@thelampnyc.org). Since it will probably be a large file, we recommend using a file sharing software service like [YouSendIt](#), which is also free. We will review your video and add the LAMPlatoon intro and outro images, but before we post it to the [LAMPlatoon video portal](#) and the [LAMPlatoon YouTube channel](#) we will ask you to complete an online release form. This acknowledges that the video is property of The LAMP, and we will not redistribute it outside of the video portal or YouTube channel without your written permission, or repurpose it in any way. We also accept full legal liability for any Fair Use or copyright infringements.

In order to meet Fair Use and copyright guidelines, we may have to ask you to make a few edits to your video. This usually happens if the comments mention a specific product or company name, factual statements that cannot be supported, or the comments are not interspersed throughout the video (they cannot be in one lump at the beginning or end of the video). It’s also important that you remember the mission of LAMPlatoon, which is to talk back to commercials in a thoughtful, critical way.

AS YOU EDIT, KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU ARE  
**LEARNING A VALUABLE TECHNICAL SKILL!**  
BASIC VIDEO EDITING IS USEFUL FOR SCHOOL  
PROJECTS, WORKPLACE PRESENTATIONS OR  
EVEN MAKING A HOME MOVIE.