

'Sesame Street' nears 1 billion views on YouTube

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This image from video released by Sesame Workshop shows the character Telly from the children's show "Sesame Street." The children's program is closing in on a kind of rarified digital milestone usually reserved for the likes of pop stars and "Gangnam Style." "Sesame Street" will soon pass 1 billion views on YouTube. (AP Photo/Sesame Workshop)

(AP)—Nearing 1 billion views on YouTube, "Sesame Street" is headed for Justin Bieber territory.

The children's program is closing in on the kind of digital milestone usually reserved for the likes of pop stars and cat videos. ["Sesame Street](#)

" will soon pass 1 billion views on [YouTube](#), and it's celebrating the mark with a campaign to get it there.

"Sesame Street" on Thursday will post a video featuring the character Telly Monster, urging viewers to click the show past the final 20 million views and unlock a "top secret video." Naturally, for the nonprofit children's series, it's a teaching moment, too. Don't be surprised if Count von Count shows up to ponder such a big number.

For "Sesame Street," the milestone—a first on YouTube for a nonprofit or U.S. children's media outlet—reflects the increasingly multimedia nature of kid entertainment. [Big Bird](#) and Oscar the Grouch are now about as likely to be watched on an iPad, phone or laptop as they are on PBS.

"We have this theory that if we get content on multiple platforms and devices, it gives kids and families a chance to reinforce and experience the curriculum multiple times," says Terry Fitzpatrick, executive vice president of content and distribution for Sesame Workshop, who emphasizes videos are best co-viewed with child and parent. "It blows me away to think about how popular and strong a platform (YouTube) has become for us."

"Sesame Street," a mainstay on PBS since 1970, launched its YouTube channel in 2006, but has continually expanded its mindfulness of online and mobile viewers.

Sesame Workshop last year integrated its digital media group into its TV production, so that digital and interactive elements are considered from the start of an idea. Its most popular video is "Elmo's Song," which has been watched nearly 86 million times since being uploaded in 2009. More recently, another PBS hit, "Downton Abbey," was parodied in "Upside Downton Abbey," a video where British muppets have trouble

drinking tea and eating crumpets because, well, they're upside down.

Caitlin Hendrickson, strategic partner manager for YouTube's educational realm, YouTube EDU, says that education is one of the fastest growing content categories on the Google Inc.-owned site.

"Sesame Street" reaching 1 billion views, she said in a statement, "is proof of their outstanding leadership in this space and their creative use of YouTube."

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