BREAK-A-THON IN A BOX

www.thelamp.org
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INTRODUCTION

CALL TO ACTION/OBJECTIVES

More than thirty million people watch the Oscars every year. Thirteen million young adults watch MTV’s Video Music Awards. And the Super Bowl draws an astonishing one hundred million-plus viewers. These events are spectacles of unparalleled scale, and the industry that produces them understands this. They have turned these massive “must-watch” showcases into a media bonanza - showcasing commercials, music videos and movie trailers. We, as viewers, tune in to what is essentially a non-stop advertisement for a way of life. It’s time to stop passively consuming these epic pageants, and actively push back on the deluge of stereotypes, misrepresentations and unattainable/unsustainable lifestyles.

A break-a-thon is like a high-powered antidote to the passive consumption habits that make it possible for advertisers and marketers to influence the way we live our lives. By remixing (or ‘breaking’) movie trailers, commercials, music videos and more with our MediaBreaker remix tool, young people get to pull back the curtain on how media communicate to us, and uncover the subtle messages that otherwise go unnoticed. Break-a-thon events focus on a live event or a theme, with teens breaking media related to that event.

For example, during our annual Break the Super Bowl event, teens come together to watch the big game. We provide wings, pizza, soda and snacks, and it looks like any other Super Bowl party - except that teens are on laptops, breaking commercials and talking back to the stereotypes, misinformation and hype that are such a big part of Super Bowl ads.

The LAMP designed this Break-a-thon in a Box so that you have everything you need to host your own break-a-thon. You’ll find templates and suggestions for planning, publicizing and documenting your break-a-thon based on our years of producing these events in a variety of settings, and we’re here to help if you need it. This guide is organized chronologically, walking you through what you need to do from four weeks prior to your event. Let’s get started!
PICK A DATE OR EVENT

When picking a date for your Break-a-thon event, you should also have an idea of what kind of media breaks you want to make. For example, when The LAMP held its first Break-a-thon event, we knew we wanted to break television commercials. Since the Super Bowl is the year’s biggest event for commercials, we thought it would be fun to hold our Break event around the game, and thus was born Break the Super Bowl. Maybe you want to break TV shows or music videos, so you could time your event around a big moment for TV and music, like the Emmys or the Grammys.

Of course, your Break event doesn’t have to take place around a major media event like an awards show or a big game. We have found it helpful because it adds some excitement, but if you want to break movie trailers and the Oscars are nine months away, by all means go for it in June!

We recommend naming your Break-a-thon according to the media event - this is how we got “Break the Super Bowl” and “Break the VMAs.” If you’re not focusing on an event and instead are focusing on a particular type of media, include that in the name. Examples include “Break the Trailer” for movie trailers or “Break the Beauty Ads” for commercials on beauty.

BUDGETING

The cost of a Break-a-thon event can vary greatly. If you have staff, equipment and space you can dedicate, additional costs may only be food and prizes. And if you can get these things donated or sponsored, then you may have no additional costs at all. For our purposes, however, we’re going to pretend as though you’re starting completely from scratch - paying for staff time, space, food, prizes and equipment.

See the appendix for our budget template.
The decision on when to hold your event often happens at the same time as the decision on where to hold your event, since you have to make sure the place you want is available for your date. But there are some other points to consider as well:

How many people can the venue hold?
You should have a rough idea of how many people you want to host, and the number of staff or volunteers you’ll need for support. (More later on how to determine staffing numbers.)

What are the technology capabilities?
At The LAMP, we provide laptops for editing and bring our own projector, so all we need is a room with tables, chairs, outlets and a big blank wall or screen where we can project. If you’re not providing equipment, then your space might need to be like a computer lab.

Also consider Wi-Fi capabilities; you’ll be using a lot of bandwidth and need a network that can support many people being online at the same time. If your venue of choice has unreliable Wi-Fi, then you may want to consider buying or renting mobile Wi-Fi hotspots.

Transportation: Is public transportation nearby? Is parking available?

What will the space cost?
If your group is already connected with a physical space, like a school or community center, this may not be an issue. But if your group doesn’t have its own space, or if that space isn’t suitable, then you may need to rent space or have it donated.
PICKING A VENUE (cont’d.)

Can we bring in food?
As all event planners know, you can never underestimate the importance of food!
Some technology labs have very strict policies around having food and beverage around, so in this case, make sure there is a room nearby that you can use for eating.

How can the space be configured?
Do you want people working in small teams, or independently? Do you need everyone facing one direction, like towards a projector or program leader, or do you want students to face each other so they can interact? There’s no right answer for this, but keep it in mind as you scout potential venues.

STAFFING

How many support staff/volunteers?
Because a lot of individual attention can be required when helping people learn to edit video, we recommend having no fewer than one program facilitator per eight students, so if you have fifteen participants then you need two staff to work directly with the youth. We also recommend having at least one person who can focus on the logistics of the event and address any issues that may come up (which they will!). Beyond that, a few extra hands are helpful, and this is a great event for engaging your volunteers. Just make sure everyone knows what they need to do during the event itself – try not to have extra people in the room with nothing to do.

Choosing the right facilitators
We suggest that a Break-a-thon facilitator have experience with making at least one broken video, and that they have made a break using the same tool your students will use in the program. They should also have a basic understanding of fair use (visit thelamp.org for learning resources) and some experience with leading classroom or program activities designed to provoke critical thinking.
CHOOSING / RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

Choosing / Recruiting Participants

Of course in order to have a great event, you need to have enthusiastic participants. For The LAMP, that’s where strong partnerships come in since (unlike a school or community center) we don’t have one dedicated program facility working with a consistent group of students. We partner with organizations like the YMCA of Greater New York to select branches for Break-a-thons, paying close attention to the interests of the branch youth and their existing skill levels. Participants can be new to the concept of remix or of thinking critically about media, but it’s important to have a sense of their interests and background before getting started. We typically get this information by talking with the youth program leaders working closely with the young people whom we’ll be recruiting to participate.

Teens are the ideal age group for Break-a-thons, as the concepts are often too challenging for younger students to grasp without more practice. Furthermore, teens are at an age where they are considering their own identities and what roles they want to play in a world that, for them, is starting to grow larger with opportunity. This is also a time when questioning structures of power and authority come naturally, and Break-a-thons can harness those impulses in a positive way for building critical thinking and communication skills.

We recommend that Break-a-thons take place with no more than twenty-five youth participants, and that you plan on providing at least one program facilitator for every eight participants. There’s a lot of hands-on work that happens during breaking which often requires personal attention and assistance, and you need to ensure you have plenty of staff to help answer questions, facilitate editing and address any technical difficulties that can (and usually do) pop up.

Recruiting these youth takes a bit of effort. It helps to set aside some time during a regular program to explain the event so everyone knows what to expect, and have a flyer of some kind that lays out the details. You’ll also need to have release forms that allow you to publish the videos produced by teens, and to publish any photos or videos documenting the event which may include faces of underaged young people. Every participant should submit a release form signed by a parent or guardian prior to the event. We’re including samples in the appendix of the forms we’ve used in the past, but you should consult with your own legal team to develop your own.
If you or someone on your team has an existing relationship with a local business, by all means, reach out and see if they are able to contribute prizes or food. If not, you can start by sending some emails to local businesses explaining the event and asking if they can contribute. Only small prizes are needed, and include your tax-exemption information if you’re a nonprofit. Keep following up by email, phone or even personal visits until you get a response. An immediate positive response is not a rejection, so keep trying. Use our template in the appendix to keep track of who you’ve contacted, so everyone on your team has the same information. Also, we do recommend you keep it local. Big businesses and chains usually have a cascade of people who have to approve even small in-kind donations questions. Here’s a sample of our Break the Super Bowl 2015 page: http://thelamp.org/btsb15/.

**Event image.** You don’t need something fancy from a graphic designer; this can be as simple as lettering against a colorful background or image, but should act as a visual anchor for your materials. Here’s what we used for Break the Super Bowl 2015 - which, by the way, is fair use because we significantly altered the original image:
MARKETING (cont’d.)

Social media posts. Draft status updates for Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or whatever networks you use to engage with your communities and supporters, and come up with a hashtag (keep it short!) so you can easily gather your promotional efforts in one place and help others share their excitement. We used #BTSB15 for Break the Super Bowl 2015.

In-Kind Donations. It’s a good idea to have your landing page ready to go before you start contacting potential in-kind donors so they can see details of your event online. It’s up to you whether you reach out to potential donors in person, over the phone or by e-mail, but in any case you should be prepared to provide all event details, including name, date, location, purpose and description of students (i.e., teens at the local community center, students from an area high school, etc). Also have an in-kind donation form prepared so the donor will have a record of the gift for their own tax records. We’ve included a sample form in the appendix. You should also track who you’ve contacted and keep the information in a shared space so everyone working on the event can access it. We’ve created a template, also in the appendix, which you can upload to Google Docs or other resource sharing site.

Press release (optional but highly recommended). If you’re interested in having local press cover the event, start putting together a press release and a list of area news outlets or journalists that might be interested. Gathering press attention is a good way to call attention to your organization’s work, share the amazing work of your students, and acknowledge any partners, sponsors or contributors. We’ve included some of our past Break-a-thon press releases in the appendix. Press releases can also help spread the word about the event and help you recruit students or potential donors.
CHOOSE YOUR REMIX TOOL

If you’ve never made a remix before, you should try it yourself before you lead a group. The LAMP’s own MediaBreaker is a great tool for remixing; we designed it for people who are new to editing video, and you can submit completed videos directly to us for review. If the video meets fair use compliance as determined by our legal team, then we’ll post the video publicly on our MediaBreaker YouTube channel.

In addition, we also have MediaBreaker Studios, an online learning environment, where you can upload content ahead of time for your students to choose from. Submitting a video for publication is optional when using Studios. To get started, visit: https://mbstudios.thelamp.org/.

However, you can use virtually any video editor to create a remix. If you and your students are comfortable using something like iMovie, Adobe Premiere or Final Cut, go for it!

PRODUCE PROGRAM MATERIALS

You can find samples and templates for these items in the appendix.

- Lesson Plans
- Presentation
- Release Forms, Attendance Sheets, etc.
- Activity Materials
- Examples of Breaks: Try choosing some from our MediaBreaker YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/mediabreaker
- Program Supplies
- Documentation Plan
  - Photos
  - Interviews
  - Shot List
  - etc...
GATHER SOURCE MEDIA

- Commercials
- Music Videos
- Trailers
- TV Clips

Age appropriateness: Is it ok for your students to hear strong language or work with graphic images?

Length: We find shorter media pieces tend to be best for breaking. The smaller file size is easier to manage, and it’s easier for a student to work with in a short amount of time.

Interest: Would this piece be interesting to students? For example, if you’re breaking music videos, don’t offer up videos that are twenty years old; choose something your students are already enjoying.

Here are some other suggested resources for choosing and managing source media:

Source for Current Media:
- YouTube (best source)
- Vimeo, Vevo
- DailyMotion

Conversion site options:
- YouTubetomp4s.com
- DETUrl.com
- Clipconverter.cc
- Keepvid.org
- Onlinevideoconverter.com

Storage of Media options:
- Cloud-Based:
  - Dropbox
  - Google Drive
  - ShareFile
- External Drives

Tips on Curating, Downloading, Storing and Distributing Media

The media you choose for your Break-a-thon will vary greatly according to the topic or event you’ve selected. However, you will always need to factor in the following:
A/V Needs

Break-a-thons can be adapted to work in almost any space, but we like best when participants work from a desk with a laptop or other computer. We also like to have students facing each other so they can talk and swap ideas. One formation we like looks like this:

- **Equipment**
  - Laptops/Mobile Devices for Participant Use
  - Editing Software (iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, Final Cut, Adobe Premiere, etc.) - unless using MediaBreaker
  - Facilitator/Presenter Station
    - Laptop
    - Projector/Screen or Monitor
    - VGA/HDMI Dongle (Adaptors)
  - Internet connection (for research, streaming, and MediaBreaker)
  - Wi-Fi
    - Mobile Hotspots?
    - Headphones/ Splitters
    - Speakers
    - Extension Cords, Power Strips

**Live Event Source**

- Cable/Satellite
- Network Online Streaming Site

**TV Monitor / Projector/SmartBoard**

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**UPDATE EVENT PAGE**

- Did you get any new event donors?
- Is there still room for interested youth to sign up?
- Any press on the event?
- Make sure all of this is current on your event page or website!
CONTINUE GATHERING SOURCE MEDIA

Was any new media released in the last week that you’d like to add? In the case of events like the Super Bowl, new videos and commercials are released right up until the event itself, so check again in the week ahead to see if there’s anything new you want to use.

UPDATE EVENT PAGE

Again - any new donors, space remaining to sign up, press or other promo videos? What’s the hashtag? If you’ll be putting up social media posts during the event, start letting people know via social media and share your hashtag.

Break the VMAs hashtags as example:
Hashtags are used as a label or keyword function that allows your break-a-thon to be searchable. Hashtags when used correctly prompt a space where discussions can take place. For example, during Break the VMA’s a heavily digitalized sourced event, hashtags were created by some of our students to prompt engagement and relevancy. The main hashtag used was #BTVMAS which stood for Break the VMAs.

PRIMER SESSION

We know you’re itching to start breaking videos, but we highly recommend that you take some time with participants to go over some basic concepts around remixing videos. This way, everyone will have a better understanding of what they’re doing, why they’re doing it and how they can create videos that pass fair use guidelines and can be shared publicly. It’s also a good opportunity for everyone to meet and get to know each other a bit. You can have a primer session right at the start of your break-a-thon, or dedicate a time on another day in the time leading up to your event - it’s up to you. In either case, a primer session might look like this:
PRIMER SESSION (cont’d.)

**Introductions**
Everyone introduces themselves to the rest of the group. An icebreaker activity will come a bit later.

**Media Breaking overview**
This is where you do a brief overview of the type of media you’re breaking. In the case of Break the VMAs, our presentation talked a bit about what a music video, why they are produced, and some common tools of persuasion used to communicate a message. But for Break the Super Bowl, we focused on commercials, going over how and why commercials are made, and some different tactics marketers might use to get our attention and make us want to buy a product. We end each presentation with some discussion questions. You can find samples of both presentations in the Appendix.

**Screen some samples**
At the end of the basic overview, we start talking about what it means to break a video and screen some examples of broken videos (you can make your own, or find loads on our YouTube channel at youtube.com/mediabreaker).

**Fair Use and Critical Commentary**
Use the samples to lead into a short lesson on Fair Use by asking why students think this is legal - this is a good way to get a discussion going about when it’s ok to reuse a video someone else made. We have a very basic fair use overview presentation which you can use or adapt in the appendix, and we’ve also included a fair use worksheet students can use as they make their broken videos. This is also where you’ll introduce the concept of critical commentary, and what it means to be truly critical and thoughtful in deconstructing messages. The LAMP has produced short animated video tutorials on fair use and critical commentary which you might find helpful, both of which can be found at youtube.com/mediabreaker.

See the appendix for our fair use worksheet
**PRIMER SESSION (cont’d.)**

**Icebreaker Activity: Bingo!**

Games are a great way to practice some of the basic concepts you’ve gone over in the primer session. We typically do a Bingo game, where the boxes represent various concepts we’ve discussed and ask students to find them in the library of media available for them to break. Check out our sample Bingo game for Break the Super Bowl, and feel free to adapt it as needed.

You can run this activity during the primer session, or at the opening of your Break-a-thon event. It’s up to you and what you think will work best with your schedule and students.

And that’s it! Now it’s finally time to start breaking some videos. Here are some other tips we have for running a successful event:

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**BREAK THE SUPER BOWL BINGO!**

Find Super Bowl 2014 commercials that include each of the following elements, and write the name or a brief description of the ad in the box. Try to black out a row or the entire card, but remember – you can only use an ad once!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Celebrity Endorsement</th>
<th>Racial Stereotype</th>
<th>Emotional Manipulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad:</td>
<td>Ad:</td>
<td>Ad:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Stereotype</th>
<th>Target Audience: Women</th>
<th>Questionable data/facts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad:</td>
<td>Ad:</td>
<td>Ad:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Audience: Men</th>
<th>Age Stereotype</th>
<th>Sex Appeal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad:</td>
<td>Ad:</td>
<td>Ad:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Get there early

Arrive early to the event space to get everything set up, including furniture, food, equipment, and any projection arrangement you’re using to screen the show.

Documentation

Capturing your event is key! Videos and images communicate to the world about how fun your event was, tell a story about how you engage youth, show your supporters how their contributions were used, provide material for real-time social media updates and can be valuable for promoting future events. We find it’s best to designate someone to take pictures and handle social media posting during the event so the program facilitators can focus on working with students, and also recommend creating a shot list of images or video you want that person to be sure to capture. See our sample shot list in the appendix.

Social media updates are also a great way to document and tell the world in real time about your event! Try posting photos, short videos or interesting things people have said. Use your hashtag, and make the sure the hashtag is visible to all participants in the room so they can use it as well. The hashtag will help you find and gather all the posts related to your event.

Once again, make sure you have signed image release forms from anyone in your event under eighteen years old, and hang on to those signed forms. If you don’t have a signed form for a participant, he or she should not be included in any event documentation that you make public.

Agenda

Make sure you have an agenda for the event, showing when people will arrive, when you’ll do the icebreaker/warm-up game, when you’ll award which prizes, etc. We put a sample in the appendix. Copies should be distributed to all event and program leaders.

See the appendix for our sample agenda
**Icebreaker**

**Let the breaking begin**
Once everyone’s completed the icebreaker, you’re ready to go!

**Screening**
If you like, build some time in at the end of your agenda to have everyone screen their completed broken videos. It’s fun to see how everyone approaches media differently and gives the groups a chance to show off their creations.
Follow Up
Congratulations, you ran a successful event! Now, it’s time to do a little follow-up. Post pictures and videos to any social media channels, taking care to note who signed release forms allowing their images to be posted publicly.

Closing Statement
We hope this guide has been helpful for you and want you to have a successful event. We’d love to hear about how it went, and answer any questions you might have and take your suggestions for how we can make this guide better. Please feel to email us directly at info@thelamp.org, or follow us on Twitter twitter.com/thelampnyc or Facebook www.facebook.com/thelampnyc.
APPENDIX A: FAQs

Who is The LAMP?

The LAMP is a nonprofit organization based in New York City, teaching youth, parents and educators how to comprehend, create and challenge media messages. Learn more at thelamp.org.

What’s the MediaBreaker and MediaBreaker/Studios?

MediaBreaker is an online video remix editor we created to make it easy for people to talk back to media, even if they have little or no experience with media. MediaBreaker/Studios is a learning environment we designed that connects with MediaBreaker. With Studios, educators can upload content in advance for students to remix, and students can view each other’s work in a safe, closed environment. Access MediaBreaker directly at mediabreaker.org and check out MediaBreaker/Studios at mbstudios.thelamp.org.

What if the event we want to focus on takes place on a Sunday, when it can be hard for us to get staff and students together?

You can work around this! Try holding your event during the week before or the week following the Super Bowl, awards show or whatever. Dozens of Super Bowl commercials are released online far ahead of the game itself, and once nominations are announced for an awards show, that will give you a guide of what media your students should break. Sure, you’ll lose some of the excitement that comes with having a live event unfold in the background, but you can still have a great event.

Do I need to let you know I’m hosting my own Break-a-thon?

You don’t have to, but we’d love to hear from you about how it went and get your ideas! We plan to keep updating Break-a-thon in a Box with your tips and feedback.

I still have other questions. Can you help?

We’ll try! Drop us a line at info@thelamp.org. You can also reach us on Twitter (@thelampnyc) or on Facebook (facebook.com/thelamp).
# Appendix B: Resources, Samples & Templates

## Resources We Think Might Be Helpful


## Samples & Templates


- Blank Budget Template
- Sample Release Form
- Sample Web Landing Page: Break the Super Bowl 2015
- Sample Break the Super Bowl flyer
- In-Kind Donation Form Template
- Sample In-Kind Donation Acknowledgment/Thank You Letter
- Sample Press Release
- Sample Bingo Game
- Sample Shot List
- Blank Shot List Template
- Sample Lesson Plan
- Sample Presentation on Deconstructing Media
- Sample Event Agenda (with supplies list)
- Fair Use Worksheet