

Teacher Notes - Persuasive Design - Lower-Middle Secondary



Learning Objectives

Aim of the lesson:

- Recognise persuasive design tactics commonly used in the online world.
- Develop an awareness of how the algorithm works.
- Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the algorithm.
- Discuss strategies for taking back control of your algorithm.

Not familiar with this topic

Here's what you need to know before teaching it!

What is persuasive design?

The way something is designed to influence behaviour, often to increase user engagement or spending. In the same way that shops use warm air as you enter to create a welcoming environment that makes you want to stay for longer, online platforms use persuasive design for a similar effect.

What is the algorithm?

The algorithm picks what posts to show you. It looks at what you've liked or interacted with before and uses that information to decide what you'll see in your feed. It's there to make your social media experience more interesting and relevant to you.

Why should we educate our young people about this?

Increased engagement in online activities can lead to more screentime. In turn, this can have a negative impact such as anger, distraction, addiction, overspending on in-app purchases, staying up late, and anxiety.

What do healthier habits look like?

Advice in this lesson includes unfollowing accounts and reporting content that is upsetting, remembering to select 'not interested' on videos you want to see less of, taking breaks and setting screen time limits for yourself, and speaking to trusted adults if needed.

Definitions

This lesson facilitates discussion about social media platforms that feature persuasive design. However, it's important to remind them that for platforms like TikTok, Instagram or Snapchat, users must be 13 years old.

Persuasive Design Features

Push Notifications: Messages that pop up on a device to prompt immediate action or engagement.

Energy Systems: Game design feature limiting the number of actions or playtime, encouraging users to wait or make in-app purchases to continue.

Suggested Friends: Platforms use your friend list, phone's contact list and other means to determine who you might know. These people are added to a list of 'suggested friends'. This might increase your chances of staying on the platform for longer if you are engaging with more people that you know offline.

Snapchat Streak: A Snapchat streak is a measure of how many consecutive days two users have exchanged at least one snap (photo or video) with each other on the popular social media platform, Snapchat. It is represented by a fire emoji and a number next to the names of the users involved in the streak.

Daily Challenges: Many apps and games offer daily challenges that come with rewards. Completing these challenges gives you a sense of accomplishment and often provides incentives to return regularly.

Loot Boxes: Virtual items or rewards in games that players can purchase, containing random items of varying value. Loot boxes have been criticised as a form of gambling.

'Free' Prizes: Platforms often offer seemingly free prizes or bonuses, but they may come with strings attached, like watching ads or engaging with the app. It's a way to get you involved and keep you hooked.

Unlocking New Characters/Weapons: Games frequently have characters or weapons that you can only access after reaching a certain level or completing specific challenges. This motivates you to keep playing and striving for that next unlock.

Haptic Feedback: This is what makes games and apps feel more real. When your device vibrates, moves, or mimics movements, it creates a tactile connection to what's happening on the screen. For example, your controller vibrating as you navigate a bumpy road in a game—it's like being right there in the action.

Endless Scroll: Continuous content loading to keep users scrolling and engaged without giving them a stopping cue.

FYP: For You Page. Used by TikTok to describe the page a user will see that will be filled with content based on their algorithm.

For more information on any of the content within this lesson,
see your Safer Schools App.

