



Online Media Literacy

1: Introduction to Persuasive Technology

FACILITATOR GUIDE

INTRODUCTION TO PERSUASIVE TECHNOLOGY

Today's learning outcomes:

- To be introduced to what persuasive technology is
- To reflect on your digital lives and the role technology plays in it
- To begin to recognise persuasive technology in your everyday lives



Topic: persuasive technology



Duration: 60 minutes



Resources

Slide deck 1

Sticky notes

Activity 1:1

Pens

Activity 1:2

Blu-tac

Session structure



Introduction

Introducing 'persuasive technology'

Explaining the forces behind online apps



Starter

Getting to know our digital selves

Exploring our lives online



Main activities

Time spent on platforms

Exploring what we do on different platforms



Reflection

Reflecting on what we have learnt

Thinking about the session and our digital lives

Key vocabulary

Persuasive technology, online, screen time, apps, platforms, persuasive design, attention economy, algorithms

Introduction - 10 mins

Introducing 'persuasive technology'



Resources

Slides 1 and 2

The focus of this session is introduce young people to 'persuasive technology', and to get them thinking about their digital lives and the role technology plays in it.



Facilitator input

'**Persuasive technology**' is the phrase used to describe the clever technology that is specifically designed to change our behaviour, like keeping us hooked to social media and gaming platforms. Our favourite online apps are built on this technology, although many people may not know this. The key goal of this persuasive technology is to convince you (the user) to change your behaviour and routine to come back to the platform, to keep scrolling and keep engaging with online content.

Ask students: **Do you ever feel compelled to take another look at your social media feed, or open up your messages? Do you sometimes feel like your favourite apps are addictive?** Explain that's because these platforms have been created to make users feel these things.

Social media and gaming platforms make their money from the time users spend on their platforms, so this is why they want you returning again and again to them, spending more and more time on them. They rely on the 'attention' you give them to create their money so that's why we call this system the '**Attention Economy**' (explored in Session 2).

Persuasive technology uses carefully created '**persuasive design features**' to grab user attention and keep them coming back to an app. These design features have the work of psychologists and human behaviour specialists behind them, with the roots of these techniques being in classic psychological studies that investigated how to influence human behaviour (explored in Session 3). Persuasive design features include aspects that students may already be aware of. Work though some common features listed below:

- **The like or heart button** - this aims to create feelings of validation, to make users feel liked or popular. It also makes users feel anticipation - when they post a new selfie, they are left waiting for the likes and comments on it to start coming in.
- **Endless scroll** - do you ever find yourself scrolling through social media feeds for ages? This is because there is no endpoint on the scroll. It is 'endless' or 'infinite' and it is so easy to keep scrolling because you lose track of time, all the while staying engaged with the platform like the company who owns it wants you to.
- **Notifications** - these work as a way to pull you back into an app to read messages, reply to comments, check feeds, respond to friend requests etc.

Introduction continued

Introducing 'persuasive technology'



Facilitator input (continued)


Ask learners:

Have you ever taken the time to think about these features, why they are used and their effect on you? Or have they always just been a part of your online experience?


Explain that social media companies analyse our behaviour every time we use their platforms, by taking note of the people we follow, the things we like, comment on, videos we watch and so on. The platforms then feed this information they have on us into something called an **'algorithm'**, which aims to influence our behaviour. An algorithm is essentially a set of instructions that tells a computer how to operate. The algorithm will use the information it is told about your online use and will present you with content that it knows you will engage with, as another way of keeping you on an app for longer. Algorithms play a key role in how social media platforms present information, content, images, videos and suggestions to you every time you go on an app. They are an incredibly intelligent part of persuasive technology that are linked with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and it can prove difficult for us all to resist their powers!

Explain that through the course of the next 6 sessions, we will go onto explore all of these elements of 'persuasive technology' in much more detail. For the rest of this session, learners will reflect on their own online use - the platforms they use, their favourite things to do online, the amount of time they spend online and exploring what they spend this time doing. By the end of the session, learners will find themselves thinking more about the ways 'persuasive technology' may influence their digital world and day-to-day lives.

Key questions



Have you ever taken the time to think about these features?



Have you ever thought about their effect on you?



Today's objectives:

- To be introduced to what persuasive technology is
- To reflect on your digital lives and the role technology plays in it
- To begin to recognise persuasive technology in your everyday lives

Starter - 10 mins

Getting to know our digital selves



Resources

Slide 3

Activity 1:1 posters - on wall

Sticky notes

Pens

The purpose of this activity is to get young people thinking about their online lives.



Facilitator input

Place Activity 1:1 posters around the room and read out the following questions:

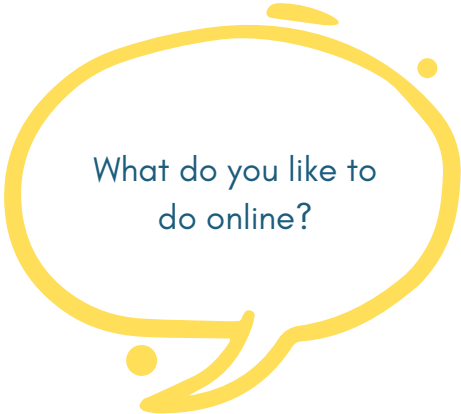
- **What do you like to do online?**
- **What are your favourite apps, platforms, websites and games?**
- **How much time do you spend online?**

Students are to explore their online lives by writing answers to the above questions on sticky-notes, and stick them to the corresponding poster. At the end of the activity you should have a response from each child on each poster/for each question. The anonymity of their responses helps here.

Encourage students to come up to the posters to read the questions - this will encourage them to engage directly with the posters, writing their answers up at the wall or at nearby tables, then sticking them on the sheets. Pupils may need a bit of encouragement to get moving initially, but they should feel comfortable after a few minutes and follow each other's lead. Give them around 5 mins to write their responses - keep things short and speedy - to encourage honesty and authenticity with their responses.

After they have written their answers, encourage students to stay standing, gathered around the posters to discuss the responses shared. Engage the pupils in a whole group discussion up and pull out the common responses or particularly interesting responses. Participants are to be asked their thoughts on the answers provided. Some may feel comfortable to offer further insights about their own answers.


Key questions



What do you like to do online?



What are your favourite apps, platforms, websites and games?



How much time do you spend online?

Discussion after Starter

- 10 mins

Thinking about our time spent online



Resources

Slide 4

Activity 1:1 poster - 'How much time do you spend online?'

The discussion aims to get young people thinking a little more about what they spend their time doing online.



Facilitator input

Once students are back at their seats, focus thinking on the **'How much time do you spend online?'** poster. Stick the poster up at the front, re-iterating some of the answers provided on the poster.

Ask the students to consider the time they've said they spend online each day. Ask them the question **"What are you spending your time doing online?"** They should think specifically about what activities, actions or tasks take up their time on platforms.

For example:

- Reading messages/replying to messages
- Scrolling
- Video calling
- Reading comment sections
- Exploring the suggested sections or images/videos
- Editing you own content to be uploaded etc.

Strike up an open group discussion around this question before doing the next activity - it will help them going forward.

Optional: The learners could take the opportunity here to look at their screen-time reports on their phones, which will provide accurate accounts of their time spent online.

To access screen-time reports on an iPhone: Go into 'Settings' on your phone, and then select 'Screen time'. Here you can see your daily average, graphs that illustrate your week and you can also add app limits and organise 'downtime' to help yourself gain a bit more control over your screentime. At the bottom of the graph, press 'See all activity' to see further details of screentime use, including most used apps based on minutes of use, 'pickups' and notifications.

Key questions

How much time do you spend online?

What are you spending your time doing online?

Do your screen-time reports surprise you?
Why?

Main activity - 20 mins

Exploring what we spend time doing on different platforms



Resources

Slide 5
Activity 1:2 sheets - 5 apps per group
Pens



Facilitator input

Organise the students into groups of 4 or 5. Organise chairs so that they are facing each other in their groups and ask them to nominate a scribe. This task is to be a collaborative process and involves discussion. Each group is given 5 posters. At the top of each poster, they write the name of their favourite social media or gaming platform.

Explain to the participants that this activity is a continuation of their previous discussion regarding "What are you spending your time doing online?" They are now going to apply these thoughts to some of the most popular social media apps and gaming platforms. In their groups, they need to discuss the question on the slide 5 **"What are you spending your time doing on this app?"** Participants are expected to think a little more here - consider all the things they do on that app that take up their time on it, and the features and purpose of each app. Some of these things might be app specific, whilst others may also take place on other apps. An example is provided on Slide 5 to help.

Circulate the room during this activity and help young people engage in conversation with each other about this. It would be best if they can discuss it all together and then write down their collective answers, as opposed to each taking it in turns to write. Once all groups are complete, discuss their answers as a whole group, going through each app and asking for suggestions.

Key questions

What are you spending your time doing on this app?

Key point: As described at the start of this session, each platform or app discussed in this activity has been designed to keep users engaged using a range of persuasive technology strategies, including specific persuasive design features. The things you have identified that you spend time doing on these apps, will be related to or influenced in some way by a persuasive design feature. These things keep you coming back to these popular apps and spending more time on them.

For example, you spend time on a messaging app, checking and reading group chat messages - push notifications and sound alerts would have notified you of these and persuaded you to check them.

Reflection - 10 mins

Reflecting on what we have learnt so far



Resources

Slide 6 and 7



Facilitator input

Display Slide 6 and ask whether anyone relates to this quote:

I'm never sure how it happens, but I pick up my phone to do something and before I know it, an hour has gone by and I've been on my phone the whole time.



Explain that this is an experience that many of us can probably relate to, and is one that describes the effects of persuasive technology - making us spend longer on our devices than we initially intended. Explain that this is a scenario we will return to next session.

Ask learners for a summary of learning from this session and provide an opportunity for them to reflect on what they have learnt and the activities completed.

Ask the participants to consider the key questions opposite and engage in a whole group discussion.



Key questions

Are you surprised by the amount of time you spend online?

Do you think you have a healthy relationship with online technology?

What have you learnt this session - about persuasive technology and yourself?

Online Media Literacy



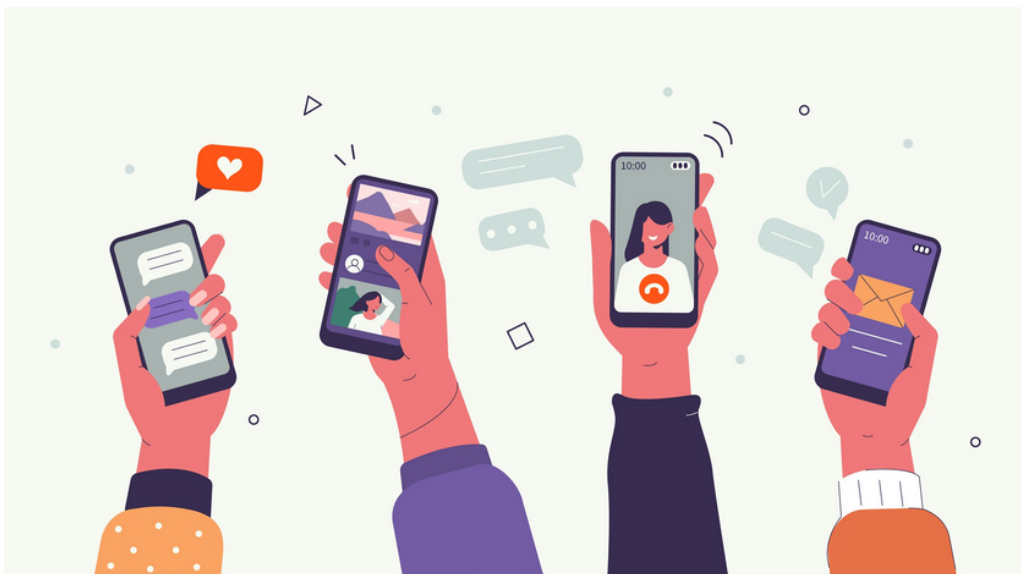
SESSION 1:

Introduction to Persuasive Technology

Toolkit developed by **Praesidio**
safeguarding

Slide 1

Persuasive Technology



Slide 2

Activity 1:1



Slide 3

Discussion



Slide 4

Activity 1:2

What are you spending your time doing on this app?



Reading group chat messages

Replying to messages

Sending photos
and videos

Sending gifs and memes

Video calling a friend

Slide 5



I'm never sure how it happens,
but I pick up my phone to do
something and before I know it,
an hour has gone by and I've
been on my phone the whole
time

Slide 6

Recap and reflection

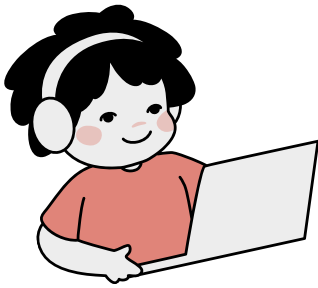




Online Media Literacy

1: Introduction to Persuasive Technology

RESOURCES



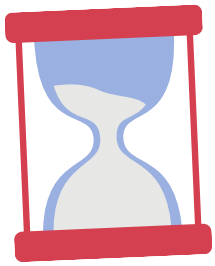
What do you like to
do online?





What are your favourite apps,
games, platforms and
websites?





How much time do you spend
online each day?







Online Media Literacy

2: The Attention Economy

FACILITATOR GUIDE

THE ATTENTION ECONOMY

Today's learning outcomes:

- To understand how social media and gaming companies generate money through 'the attention economy'
- To be able to correctly identify the step-by-step process of the attention economy



Topic: the attention economy



Duration: 60 minutes



Resources

Slide deck 2

Pens

'The Attention Economy' flow chart

Money jar/box

Activity 2:1

Activity 2:2

Activity 2:3

Session structure



Thinking points

How do platforms generate money?

and why do I spend so much time on my phone?



Explanation

The Attention Economy explained

Talking through the attention economy flow chart



Main activities

Figure it out step-by-step

Kinaesthetic whole-group activity



Close

Attention economy worksheet

Solidify your new knowledge

Key vocabulary

The attention economy, data, algorithms, time, attention, advertisers, targets/personalised advertising, social media, gaming

Introduction to Session 2 - 2 mins

Welcome to Session 2 of the Online Media Literacy project. Last week provided an 'Introduction to Persuasive Technology' and explored digital lives and time spent online. It also provided a broad overview of what 'persuasive technology' is, including the role of algorithms in suggesting content, explaining some of the features that have been especially designed to pull users back to a platform, and the way these companies make money through our users giving apps their time - also known as 'The Attention Economy'. This will be explored during this session, as it underpins how social media companies operate as a whole, and their relationship with users.

Thinking points - 10 mins

How do platforms generate money?

Why do I spend so much time on my phone?

Resources

Slide 2

Activity 2:1 and money jar

Slide 3



Have you ever thought about how social media companies make money? Most platforms are free to use - so how do they generate money?

Activity 2:1 - Children to take a fake bank note and write all the ways they think a social media company may make money. Encourage them to think individually. After they have done this, add the fake money into the money jar. Pick out a selection of 'notes' and read the suggestions aloud, allowing for a short discussion.

Explain that students will re-visit these suggestions at the end of the session once they have explored the attention economy thoroughly.

Display Slide 3. Recap that learners considered this quote at the end of the last session, to get them thinking about the effect persuasive technology has on them as users.

Ask learners:

- Who can relate to this scenario?
- How do you think this happens?

Ask learners to reflect back on the previous session: is there anything you remember from our discussion that would explain how this happens?

The Attention Economy explained - 15 mins

Talking through the attention economy flow chart

Display Slide 4. The scenario on the previous slide is an outcome of 'The Attention Economy' - or the way social media and gaming companies make their money. The companies have specifically designed their platforms and apps to have this effect on its users. Explain that online platforms want to keep your attention, as this generates more money - and this is why it is known as the 'attention economy'. It is a complex system, so this session is dedicated to exploring it.

Resources

Slide 4

Slide 5

The Attention Economy flow chart - print out

Display Slide 5 and hand out the flow-chart sheets. Explain that this illustrates 'The Attention Economy' and how social media and gaming companies make money from their users.

Note: Take time here to read the process out, taking it step-by-step and referencing the number of each stage. It is quite a complex area for students to understand. The aim of this session is for the young people to learn this process and feel confident in their understanding of it. It is important that they have a good grasp on it for future sessions, as it underpins the workings of persuasive technology and online platforms. This flow chart can also act as a tool (especially in the print-out format) that you can return to throughout the project to remind the young people of 'The Attention Economy' process.

Some extra points to make the participants aware of:

Stage 2 - this data collection includes things like the content you 'like', comment on and share. Videos you watch, posts you hover over and what you send to friends

Stage 3 - algorithms are powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and are a clever set of instructions that tell a computer system how to operate

Stage 5 - the more time, or attention, you provide, the more data is collected

Stage 7 - this is individual to you and will come up on your feeds or platforms



Key questions:

- Have any of you thought about any of this before?
- Have you noticed the attention economy at work in your online use?
- Do you notice the suggested content or adverts change based on what you search for or watch the most?

Main activity - 15 mins

Kinaesthetic step-by-step activity



Resources

Slide 6

Activity 2:2 - already cut out

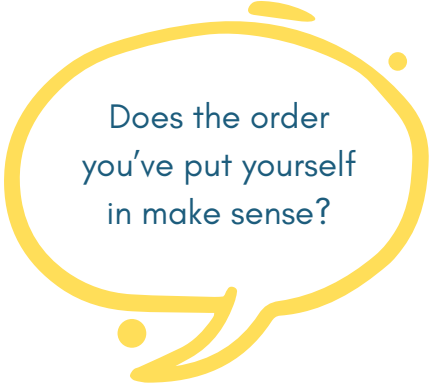
Slide 7 - answers

The students may still struggle to understand 'The Attention Economy'. Reassure them that we will spend the duration of the session developing understanding.

For the next activity, the students can either work individually or in pairs. You will need to have a bit of space for this activity as it requires the participants to be on their feet and moving around.

Hand out the Activity 2:2 resources (except the completed flow-chart print-outs). Give each pair one of the text boxes at random and have a pile of corresponding numbers and a pile of corresponding pictures on a table.

Key questions



Does the order you've put yourself in make sense?



Explain they have each been given a print-out of a text box from the flow chart. On the table there are also print outs of the corresponding numbers (1-8) and a picture, all from the attention economy flowchart they reviewed earlier.

Display Slide 6 as an example. Explain students need to read their text box and see if they can correctly choose the corresponding number and picture from the piles on the table.

The final task is then to get themselves as a whole group physically in order from Stage 1 to 8 of 'The Attention Economy' process.

Once complete, read out the order in which they are standing. Encourage learners to reflect on their choices and prompt them to reconsider positioning as necessary.

When the participants have settled on a final order, reveal the flow chart on Slide 7. Read it out and discuss along the way.

Encourage learners to reflect on this activity:

- What parts of the attention economy process were easy to identify?
- What were the more challenging parts?

Close - 10 mins

Attention economy worksheet - embed new knowledge



Resources

Slide 8
Activity 2:3
Slide 9



Activity 2:3 aims to embed the students knowledge and understanding. Provide each pupil with a print-out of the flow-diagram that has had the text removed. This could be printed on A4 paper for individual work, or A3 for group work. Explain students are going to fill in the flow chart

Give the students a good amount of time (10 minutes at least) to consider this properly.

When all of the groups are complete, reveal Slide 9 and the answers again.

Allow time for review and discussion of misconceptions. Learners could edit their sheet in a different colour pen to show any amendments.

This worksheet can then act as a tool for them to as a reminder throughout the rest of the project.

Key questions

Does your flow chart make sense?

Is there anything you are unsure of?

The outcome of 'The Attention Economy' ...

Advertisers get what they want, social media and gaming companies have money in their pocket and you are left spending more time online than you bargained for!

You have given the platforms your valuable **attention!**



Online Media Literacy



SESSION 2:

The Attention Economy

Toolkit developed by **Praesidio**
safeguarding

Slide 1

Activity 2:1



Slide 2



I'm never sure how it happens,
but I pick up my phone to do
something and before I know it,
an hour has gone by and I've
been on my phone the whole
time

The Attention Economy explained



The Attention Economy



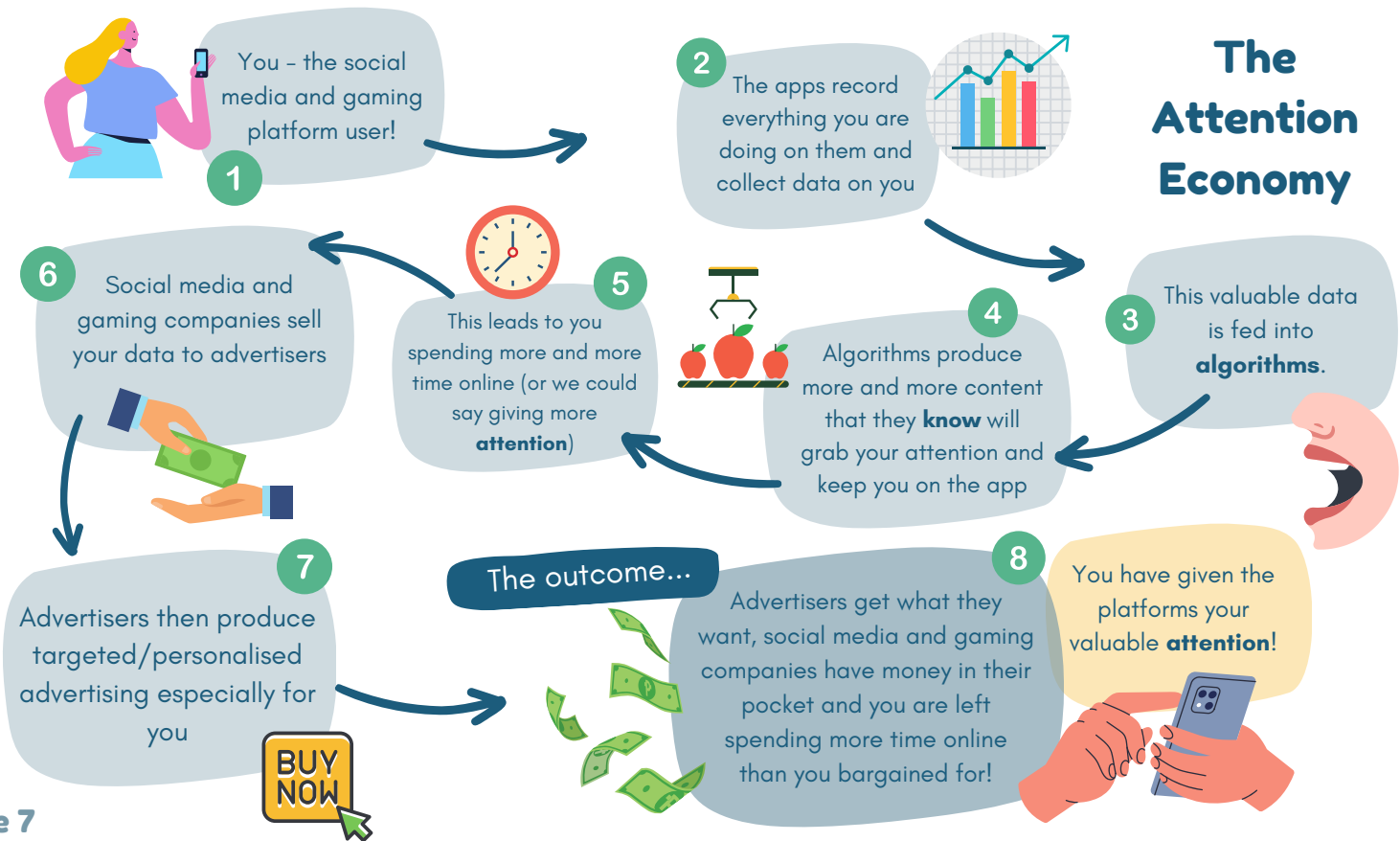
Slide 5

Activity 2:2



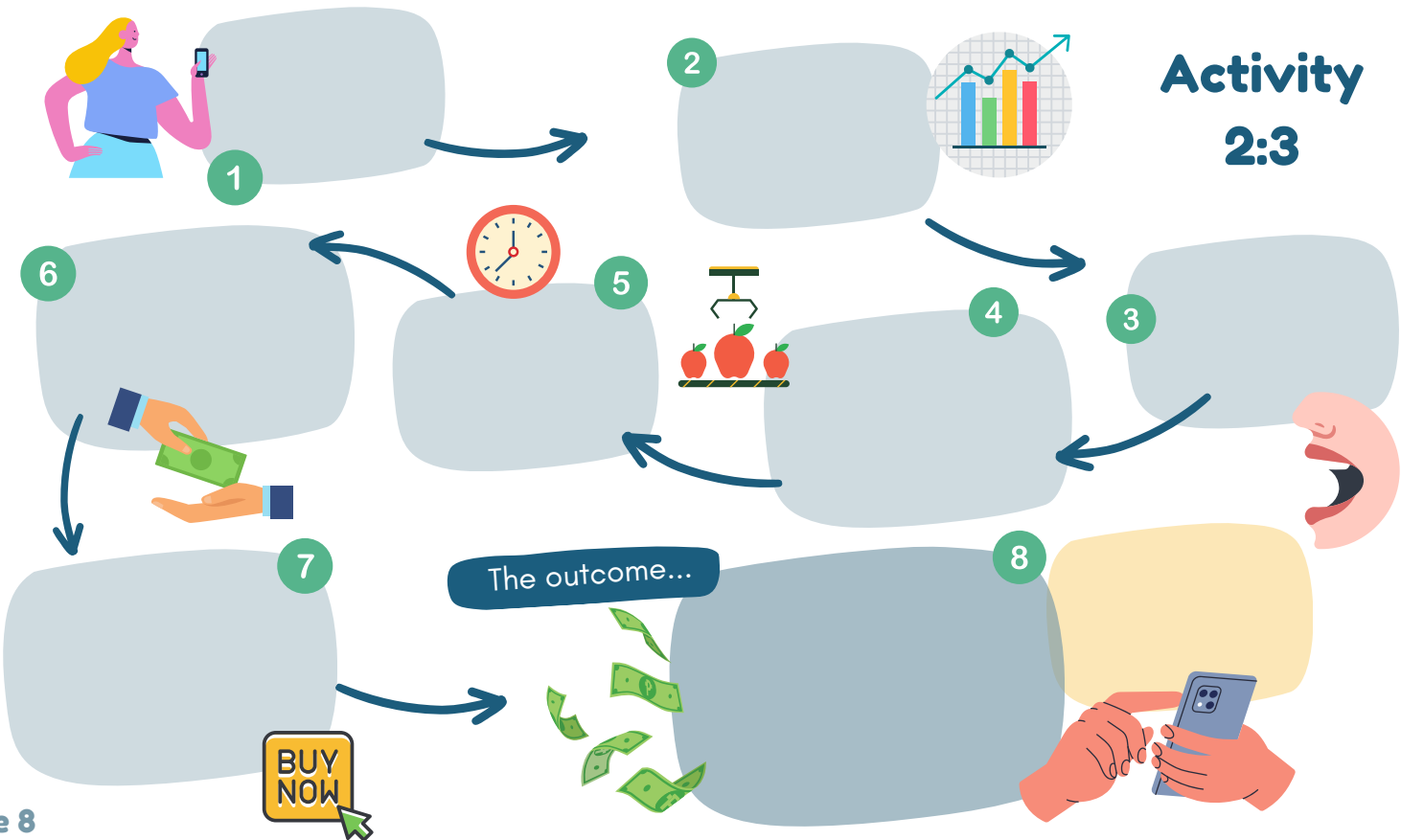
Slide 6

The Attention Economy



Slide 7

Activity 2:3



Slide 8

The Attention Economy



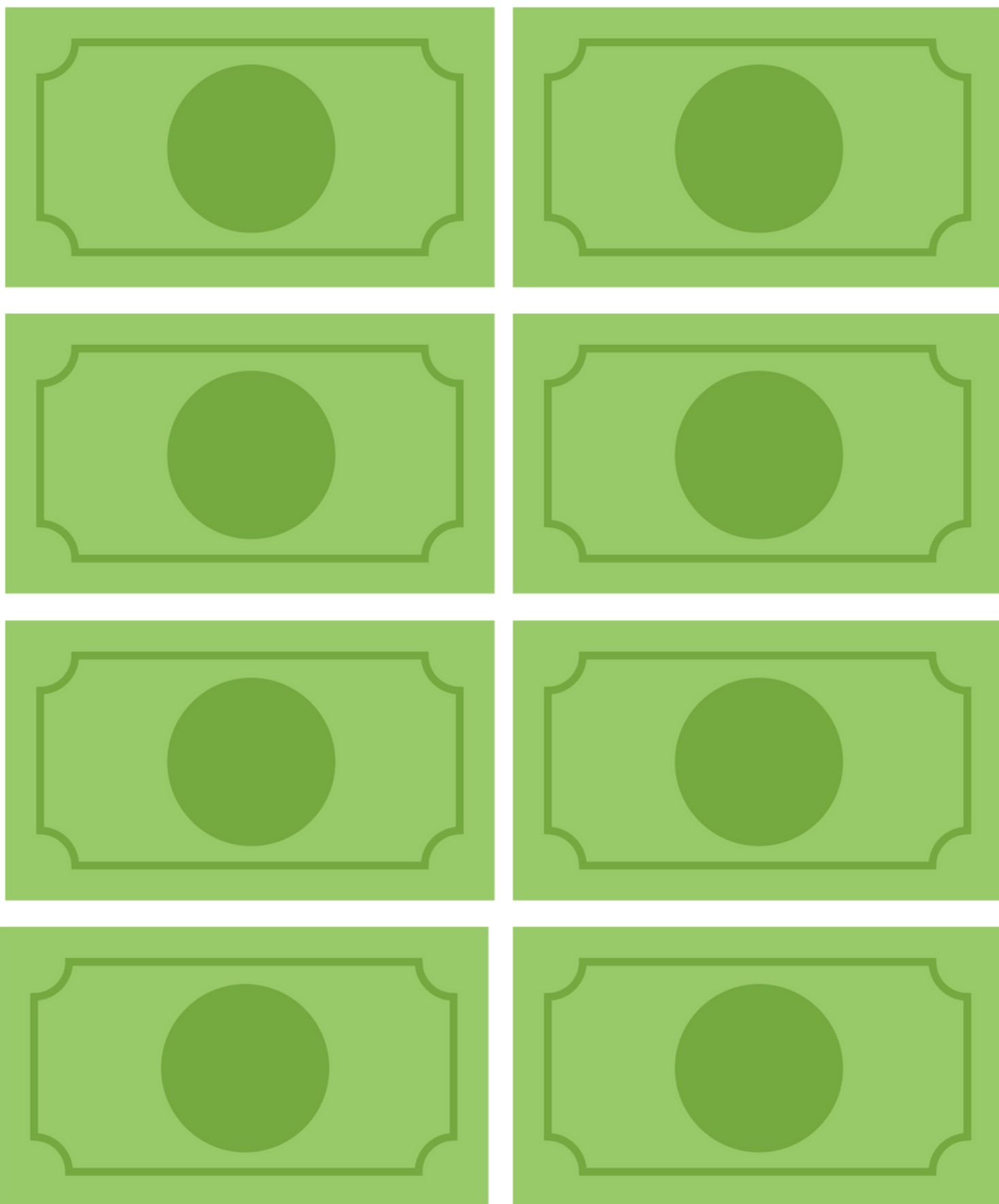


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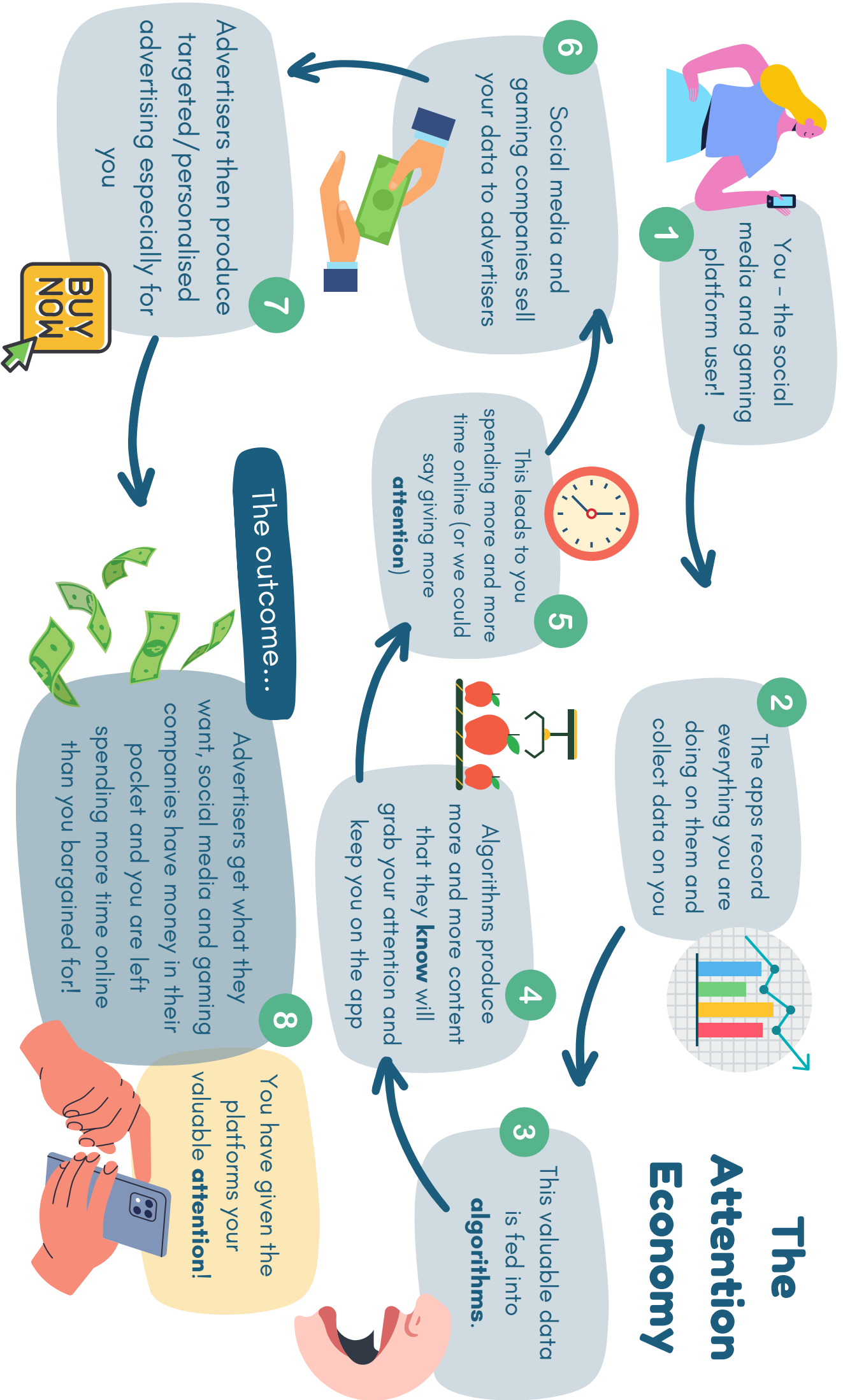
2: The Attention Economy

RESOURCES

Please make sure you have enough bank notes printed for each participant, and that they are cut out in advance of your session



The Attention Economy



Please make sure these are individually cut out in advance of the session

1

You - the social media and gaming platform user!



2

The apps record everything you are doing on them and collect data on you



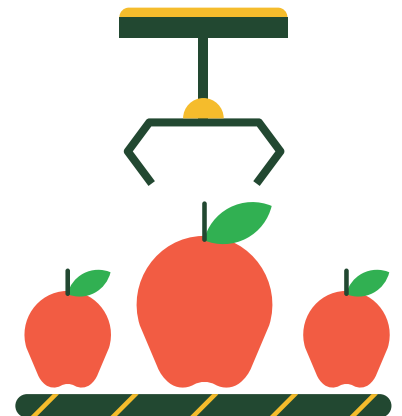
3

This valuable data is fed into **algorithms.**



4

Algorithms produce more and more content that they **know** will grab your attention and keep you on the app



Please make sure these are individually cut out in advance of the session

5

This leads to you spending more and more time online.



6

Social media and gaming companies sell your data to advertisers



7

Advertisers then produce targeted advertising especially for you



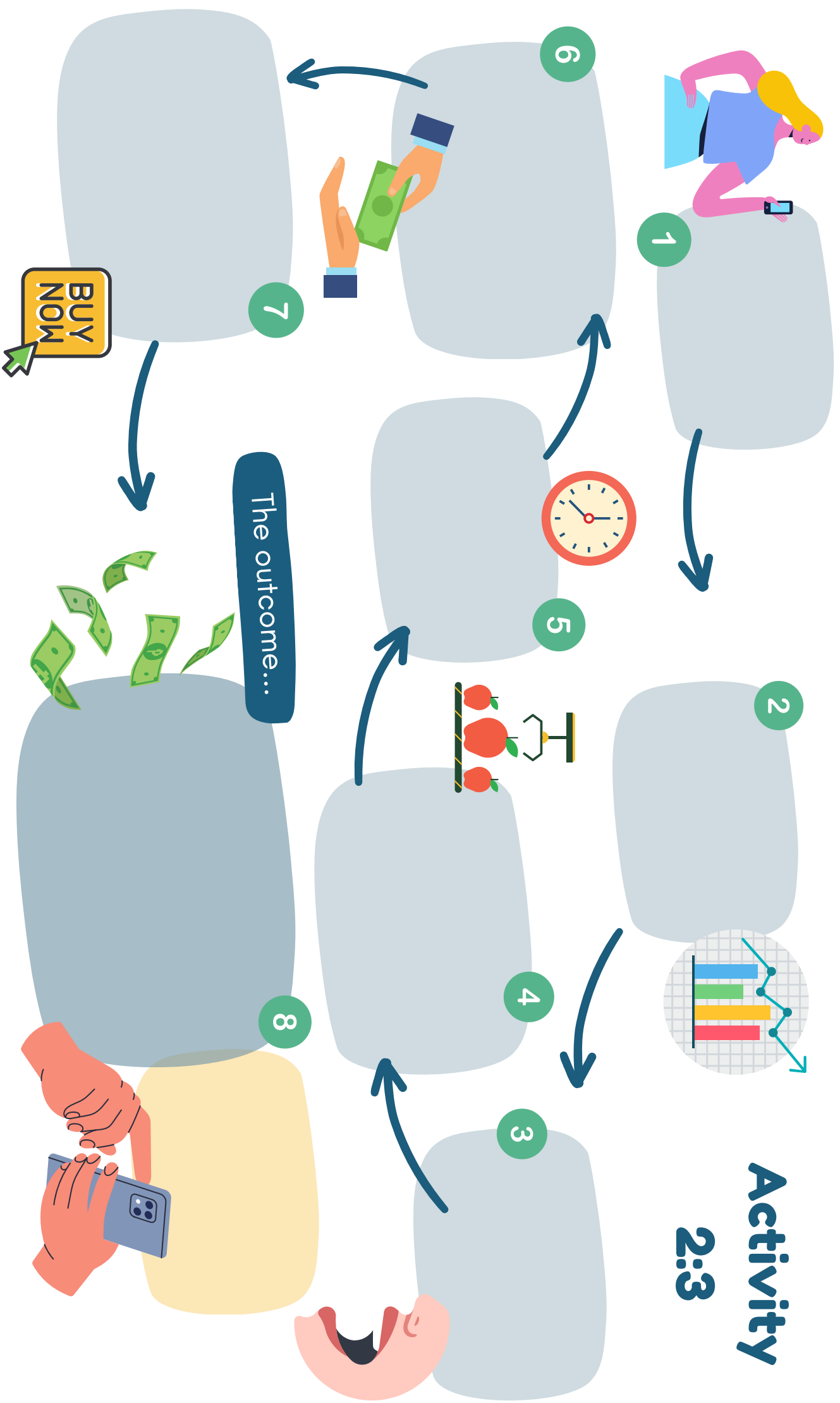
8

Advertisers get what they want, social media and gaming companies have money in their pocket and you are left spending more time online than you bargained for!



Activity

2:3





Online Media Literacy

3: Algorithms & Echo Chambers

FACILITATOR GUIDE

ALGORITHMS & ECHO CHAMBERS

Today's learning outcomes:

- Explore what the algorithm may know about us through our online use, and how it impacts our online experience
- Understand the concept of the 'echo chamber' and how it impacts on our experience online and our world vision



Topic: Algorithms and echo chambers



Duration: 60 minutes



Resources

Slide deck 3

Pens

Activity 3:1

Activity 3:2 - red and green paper plates/cards/pieces of paper

Sharpie pens

Session structure



Re-cap

The Attention Economy

Can you remember?



Explanation

What is an algorithm?

Understanding what this means



Solo activity

What do apps know about you?

What does the algorithm tell them?



Group activity

Exploring the 'echo chamber'

What impact does this have to our online experience?

Key vocabulary

The attention economy, algorithms, data, echo chambers

The Attention Economy - 5 mins

Allow for reflection time on the previous sessions, including that on the attention economy.

Who can remember how social media and gaming companies make money?

It is important that the young people remember what this process is called and the different stages of the process.



THE ATTENTION ECONOMY



Resources

Slide 2 - blank

Slide 3 - answers

Display Slide 2 - the Attention Economy flow chart that has blank boxes on it.

Who can remember the different stages?

Using their suggestions, work through it, correcting or prompting where necessary. On completion, reveal Slide 3 with the answers.

Algorithms - 10 mins



Resources

Slide 4



Have you ever heard of an algorithm?

Explain that we are now going to focus on the part of 'The Attention Economy' flow-diagram which states, *"Algorithms produce more and more content that they know will grab your attention and keep you on the app"*.

Have you ever heard of an algorithm? Do you know what it might be?

Definition: "An algorithm is a set of rules and signals that social media sites use to show their users the videos, pictures or content that they are most likely to interact with."

Algorithms (*continued*)



Process of an algorithm...

- Not only do the social media apps track our behaviour in order to sell our time to advertisers. They will also manipulate the social media content (non-advertisements) that we see on our feeds (we discussed this last session).
- Apps feed all of the data it knows about us into complex algorithms that decide which content to show us next.
- Algorithms use what they know about us to show us content that it knows we will like.
- The more you watch/like/share/engage with it, the more it serves up.

Consider this scenario...

Have you ever remembered someone you followed on social media ages ago and realise you haven't seen any posts from them in a while? You check their page and realise there's lots of posts you haven't seen. You wonder why. This is the work of algorithms. Perhaps if you didn't engage with their page much, scroll through their photos, like or comment on their pictures, view or like their story - then the algorithm notes that you're not that interested or engaged with their content. There's no point showing you their content when there's other content you're much more engaged with. The same works the other way round - the more you engage with someone, the more it shows you of their content.

So, what might the algorithm pay attention to?

The online behaviour that an algorithm might use includes:

- **Liking** a video, picture, article or comment
- **Subscribing** to an account
- **Watching** a video all the way through
- **Skipping** a video or stopping it halfway
- **Leaving comments** or reviews
- Using the **share button** to send videos, pictures or articles to others

The algorithm may also know the times of day you go on an app and your daily habits on it...

As a result of these things, the app can predict our future movements easily and use this knowledge in tailoring content towards us specifically as individuals.

Solo activity - 15 mins

What do apps know about you? What does the algorithm tell them?



Resources

Slide 5

Slide 6

Activity 3:1



Present Slide 5.

With so much content generated everyday, it must be impossible for a platform to show it all to me. How does it choose what to show me?

The quote on this slide is very much the work of algorithms.

Activity 3:1

Display Slide 6 and hand out Activity 3:1. Explain the sheet has an outline of a human form that is meant to represent the learners. Explain they need to fill the spaces inside the body with answers to the questions below:

- **What information do you think your favourite apps know about you?**
- **What do they know about your daily habits?**
- **Consider the 2 points above - what personalised content do you think algorithms show you as a result of these?**

Students are to use 3 different colour pens to distinguish the questions/answers from each other - use a colour code like the example on the slide.

Discuss ideas that the group have noted down. Ask for students to share their ideas and explore similarities and differences between their responses. (5 minutes)

Optional



You can ask pupils (13+) to have a look at their feed on the same social media platform and compare the first 3 posts they see. **How do they compare? How are these similar? How are these different? Why are they different?** Get the pupils thinking about the actual content they are engaging and how it affects the content they are presented with.

Group activity - 20 mins

Exploring the 'echo chamber' - what impact does this have on your online experience?

Resources

Slide 7

Slide 8

Activity 3:2 - red and green paper plates/card pieces

Sharpie pens



Facilitator input



One of the issues with algorithms is that they result in individuals having a lack of exposure to a variety of viewpoints.

An algorithm will show users content it thinks they will like. This also means that you're more likely to just be presented with content that aligns with your world view, and will not be presented with content that shows a differing opinion.

An **echo-chamber** is when the same ideas are bouncing back to you all the time and you are being presented with a very one sided view. This can happen in the real world and online - and is a real problem caused by the algorithm. Being presented with an 'echo chamber' is an issue because you do not get exposed to a variety of viewpoints that mean you would question or carefully consider your own. One of the reasons conspiracy theories can be so compelling for people is the algorithm will simply serve you more and more of the content it has calculated that you find interesting, regardless of whether or not it is actually true. So sometimes people are simply bombarded with content of the same viewpoint, even if it's false

Another issue with the algorithm is surrounding exaggerated information and realities. With all big tech platforms competing for user attention, they end up promoting more attention-grabbing content to keep users engaged. As a result, creators start posting more exaggerated content in hope of being picked up by the algorithm; content which is less authentic than they would typically produce.

Display Slide 5 again and explain the content you are presented with by the algorithm is likely to be more attention-grabbing, to gain more likes and views, and is probably being shared with you as it already has a high number of likes/views. It becomes a cycle.

Can you think of any examples of attention-grabbing content?

This means on social media platforms, users start seeing more 'fake' versions of each other and the world around us. Each user will see our own uniquely crafted version of a 'fake world' based on what the algorithm knows about us. This can cause problems when people become absorbed in their own version of reality/life and are not exposed to other perspectives.

Why is this an issue? Discuss.

Group activity (continued)

Exploring the 'echo chamber' - what impact does this have on your online experience?

Group activity

Display Slide 8 and hand out the red and green paper plates/cards.

Ask students to choose a green plate (if they are 'for' the topic displayed) or a red plate (if they are 'against' the topic). Pupils are to write on the plate all the reasons for their chosen opinion, using a pen.

Once all the pupils have written down their ideas, ask all of the plates of the same colour to move around the room to sit with each other. The pupils are then to share their ideas with each other.

What do you notice from this conversation?

Are your thoughts similar?

Are they balanced conversations?

Note: You can choose your own topic to share with the pupils (age appropriate) that you feel will divide opinion. Our suggestion here is "I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here!" For older pupils, you could use the example of another reality TV show like "Love Island".

Important

Explain that this is a visual representation of what happens online when the algorithm only serves you content that it knows will align with your interests/views (echo-chamber)

Ask for a volunteer from each group to swap groups, keeping their original plate colour. Each volunteer is to share the reasons they wrote on their plate with their new/opposite group.

Does anyone in the new group agree with you?

Come back together as a whole group and discuss: **How do you think this one-sided perspective can impact on society more generally? Is it healthy?**

Reflection - 5 mins



**Were you aware that these systems existed?
Are you able to recognise these systems in your own online experiences?
What steps could you take to try and counter the curated content you are being served?**

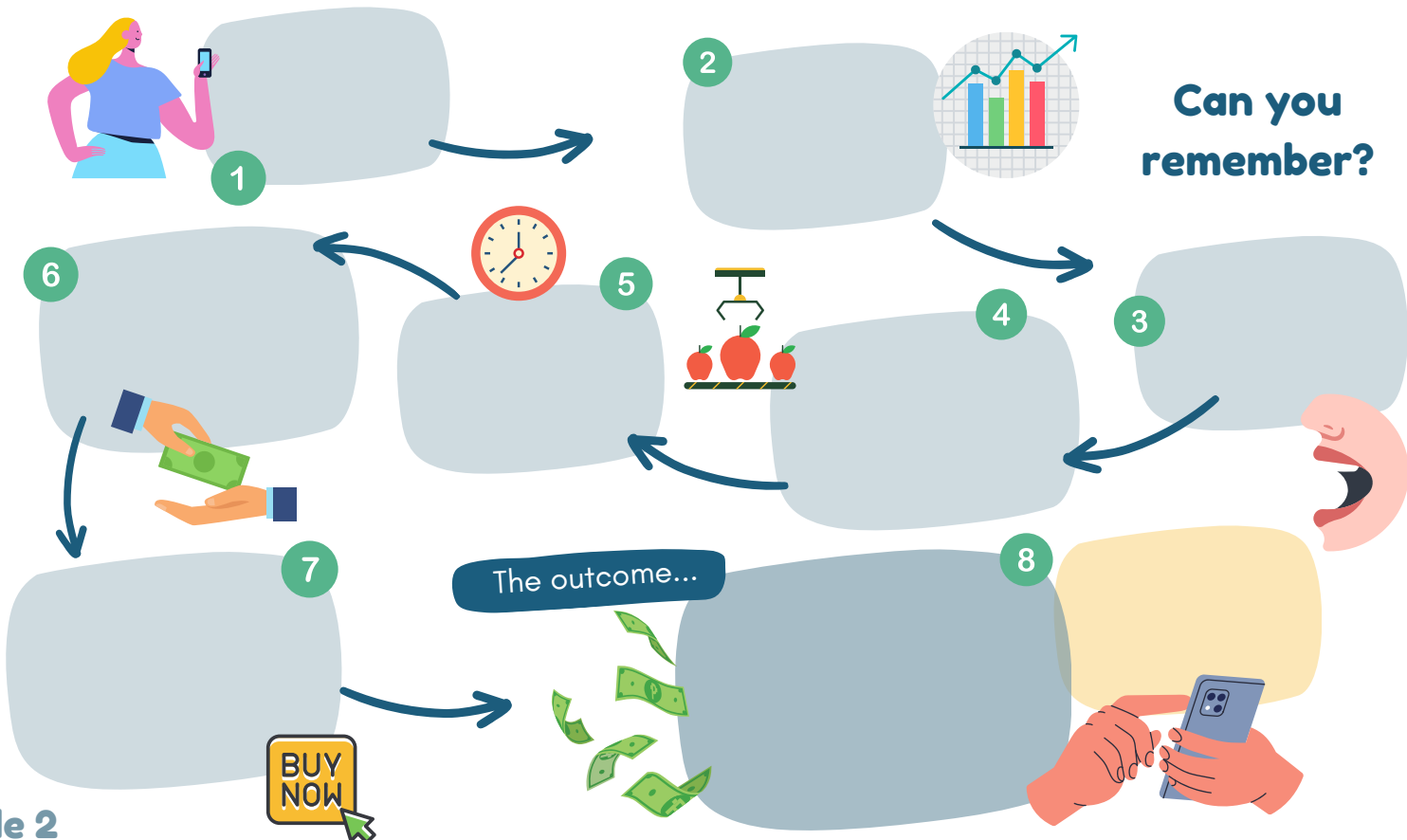
Online Media Literacy



SESSION 3: Algorithms & Echo Chambers

Toolkit developed by **Praesidio**
safeguarding

Slide 1



Slide 2

The Attention Economy



Slide 3

Algorithms



Slide 4



With so much content generated everyday, it must be impossible for a platform to show it all to me.

How does it choose what to show me?

Slide 5

Activity 3:1



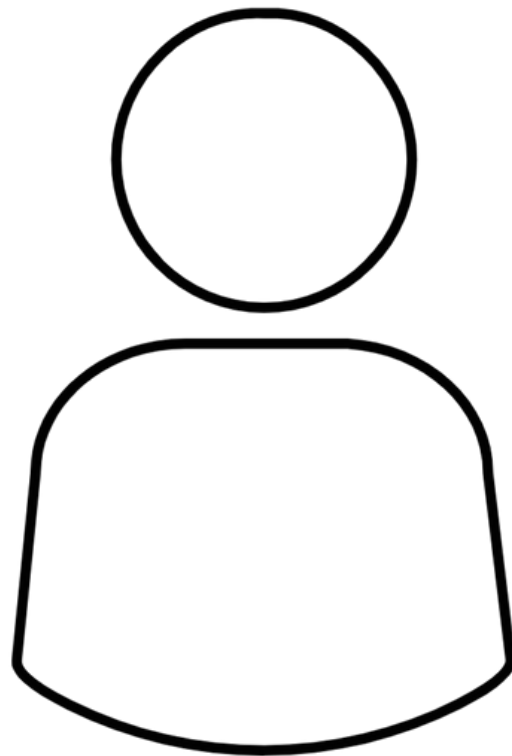
What information do you think your favourite apps know about you?



What do they know about your daily habits?



Consider the 2 points above - what personalised content do you think algorithms show you as a result of these?



Slide 6

Echo Chambers



Slide 7

Activity 3:2



Slide 8

Reflection





Online Media Literacy

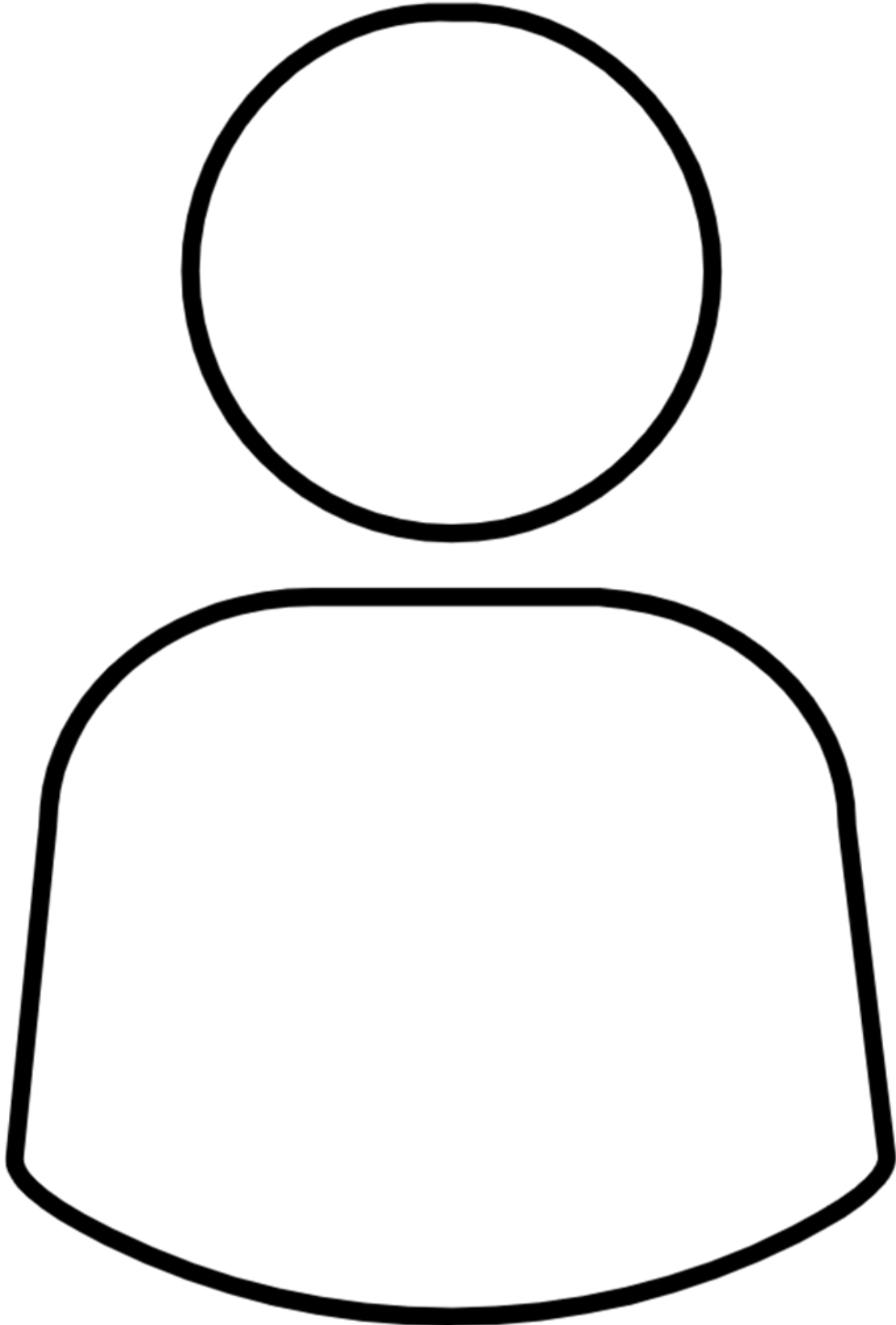
3: Algorithms & Echo Chambers

RESOURCES

What information do you think your favourite apps know about you?

What do they know about your daily habits?

Consider the 2 points above - what personalised content do you think algorithms show you as a result of these?





Online Media Literacy

4: Persuasive Design Features

FACILITATOR GUIDE

PERSUASIVE DESIGN FEATURES

Today's learning outcomes:

- Learn about different persuasive design features and how they play a part in the attention economy
- Consider the role of persuasive design features in your own online life
- Learn from real-life scenarios and work towards solutions in your own life



Topic: Persuasive design features



Duration: 60 minutes



Resources

Slide deck 4

Pens

Activity 4:1 - some cut out

Activity 4:2

Activity 4:3

Session structure



Re-cap

Algorithms and Echo Chambers

Can you remember?



Explanation

Persuasive Design Features

What are they all about?



Main activities

Understanding persuasive design

Identifying them and their impact on your habits



Reflection

Steph's Snapchat Story

Exploring scenarios and solutions

Key vocabulary

Persuasive design features, attention, attention economy, time, Snapstreaks

Display Slide 2: ask pupils to identify what we discussed last week using the images as stimuli. Reflect on learning from previous sessions, including algorithms and echo chambers.



Algorithms and Echo Chambers

Algorithms



“An algorithm is a set of rules and signals that social media sites use to show their users the videos, pictures or content that they are most likely to interact with.”

Platforms use algorithms so that they can present you with more of the content you like, leading you to spending more and more time on the app.

An algorithm will show you content it thinks you'll like. This also means that you're more likely to just be presented with content that aligns with your worldview, and will not be presented with content that shows a differing opinion.

*Remember the plate activity at the end of Session 3?
What was that trying to represent?*



Echo Chambers



An **echo-chamber** is when the same ideas are bouncing back to you all the time and you are being presented with a very one sided view. This can happen in the real world and online - and is a real problem caused by the algorithm. Being presented with an 'echo chamber' is an issue because you do not get exposed to a variety of viewpoints that mean you would question or carefully consider your own. One of the reasons conspiracy theories can be so compelling for people is the algorithm will simply serve you more and more of the content it has calculated that you find interesting, regardless of whether or not it is actually true. So sometimes people are simply bombarded with content of the same viewpoint, even if it's false.

Persuasive Design Features - 10 mins

Resources

Slide 3

Explain that all of the above manipulates our behaviour and brings our attention more towards our phones. Now we understand how social media companies work, how they make money and the issues with this, the role of the algorithm and how online echo chambers are created - we are now going to explore the specific **tools** that social media companies use to directly engage with you. Let's revisit the term '**persuasive technology**'.

Can you remember what '**Persuasive Technology**' means?

Discuss and offer a definition. 'Persuasive technology' is an overall term for the clever technology behind all social media and gaming platforms - **technology that is specifically designed to change attitudes and behaviours through persuasion**. 'Persuasive Design Features' are a part of this - referring specifically to the **tools** used to hook you and get your attention.

PERSUASIVE DESIGN FEATURES



This term refers to the features or tools used by social media companies and platforms to convince you to take notice of them, and can include numerous things. The idea of persuasive design, combines the worlds of computer technology and behavioural design explored by famous psychologists like B.F. Skinner (famous for Pavlov's Dog).

"Behavioural design uses a system of rewards and punishments to influence human behaviour patterns."

Persuasive design today uses the same idea of rewards to influence our behaviour online. If we can feel reward, pleasure, gratification - things that make us feel positive about ourselves - through our use of social media or gaming, then we will keep coming back to get these feelings again. Social media companies use certain tools to create these feelings, or provide us the illusion that we might achieve these feelings - to keep us hooked and coming back to their apps. As we will go on to explore, some of these features do not in reality create this good feeling.

Some of the most common '**persuasive design features**' include:

- A like/heart button
- Notifications telling you about interactions with your photos, posts or photos you've been tagged in - these are called '**push notifications**'
- Sounds/buzzes/alerts
- A red dot icon in the corner of your apps - telling you how many notifications you have on that app

Let's explore more of these techniques in the next activity.

Paired activity - 15 mins

Understanding persuasive design features



Resources

Slide 4

Slide 5

Activity 4:1 - blu tac to stick answers down

Provide each pair with the 'blank' Activity 4:1 (as displayed on Slide 4) and a set of corresponding answers in boxes (cut-out in advance.)

Explain they have been given 6 different design features, and the broader categories they come under ('type'). The task is to match the 'description' and 'example' to the 'type' and 'name'.

Note: for this exercise you could provide differentiation depending on the ages and needs of the group you are teaching. For example, a younger age group could be provided with some help and be given the 'description' boxes - and therefore just need to place the 'example' boxes in the correct place.

This exercise will help learning to develop thinking around WHAT these features are actually designed to do, and how they manipulate us as users.

Extra bits to explain...



Dopamine hit and anticipation:

- Each app/game/platform has been designed with input from behavioural psychologists to include features which evoke a particular response in the user. For example, features such as the 'like' button have been designed to cause a dopamine response in the brain. Humans respond to the promise of a reward by releasing a chemical in the brain called dopamine. So, when you post on social media, your brain releases dopamine in the hope of someone hitting the 'like' button on your post.

Social proof or 'Fear of missing out' (FOMO):

- Social proof shows your engagement with others, and their engagement with the platform. FOMO or 'fear of missing out', is when you worry about missing, or being left out of, an event or conversation.

Seamlessness:

- Features that are on-going and do not involve new web pages

Come back as a group and discuss. Go through the list and provide the right answers by displaying Slide 5 and talking through it. (Keep the grids on tables and answers stuck down)

Have you ever thought about these features in this way before?

Have you learnt anything new from this exercise?

Solo activity - 10 mins

What is the impact of persuasive design features on my life?

Resources

Slide 6

Activity 4:2 - 2 pages

Consider the previous grid exercise. Ask students:

What persuasive design features do you think are used on your favourite social media or gaming platforms?

Working individually, students are to think about one social media and one gaming platform that they use regularly. Using Activity 4:2, encourage learners to think about the features on these platforms that grab their attention and keep them engaging with the platform. Learners can refer to the complete Activity 4:1 grid to help support.

Encourage learners to share their ideas in pairs before opening up to whole group discussion.

Ask learners:

Have you given much thought to these features before?

Scenario: Steph's Story - 10 mins

Resources

Slide 7

Activity 4:2 - 2 pages

Explain that now we know about these techniques, we are going to start thinking about how these features impact on users and their wellbeing. Introduce 'Steph's Story' as a case study to illustrate the point.

Background to Snapchat's 'Snapstreaks'



Snapchat, like many messaging services, has a feature that shows how many friends you have and how often you message each other. The 'Snapstreaks' feature is hugely popular amongst young people, and taps into the human desire for competition and popularity. A Snapstreak with another Snapchat user is a continuous 'streak' of messages, (at least) one a day back and forth. The number in the streak dictates the number of days you have kept it up for - think of it as a rally in tennis. You miss a day, the number drops back down to zero and you start again. Not only does a high number in a streak, and having multiple streaks ongoing, equate to popularity amongst young people - the rewards you get for the number/duration of Snapstreaks is hugely compelling and keeps users going, returning to the app again and again.



Steph's Story

This is a fictional case study to encourage learners to reflect on their own user experiences.

Steph started using Snapchat after moving schools, as a way to keep in touch with friends from her old school. Keeping in regular contact with her old friends was helping her to manage the recent changes in her life.

As Steph started using the app more and more to keep in contact with her old friends, the more she felt she *needed* to maintain regular contact with them. Especially as she was building up rewards on the platform for staying in touch with each of her friends on a daily basis - her *Snapstreaks*.

It wasn't long before Steph started spending more time on the messaging app speaking with her old friends, than she was making new ones. With nearly 400 *Snapstreaks* to maintain, she would often be up late into the night messaging. If she missed a day, she would lose her streaks.



Let's reflect...

- What impact is the messaging app having on Steph?
- What are the possible consequences if she continues to maintain her *Snapstreaks*?
- What are the possible consequences if she loses her *Snapstreaks*?
- Have you ever been in a similar situation to Steph?
- How did it make you feel?
- Do you have any strategies that you use to manage your relationships on messaging apps?

Reflection – 10 mins



Resources

Activity 4:3
Slide 8

Provide the Activity 4:3 worksheet.

Ask pupils to think of a scenario where they have felt a similar pressure to Steph on their phones, social media, or a gaming platform. It may be similar to Steph's experience, or something smaller and more simple. The important point is that the scenario has had an impact on them personally.

For example:

You are about to go to sleep, your phone is on silent but buzzes – how do you feel? If you can't hear the alert but only the buzz, what platform is it from? Is it a message, a push notification, a like, a comment, or something boring? Are you left wondering, or are you not bothered? What do you do? If you check it, how do you feel afterwards?

Pupils are to note down their scenario – step-by-step in bullet points or as a short description. Once they have identified their personal scenario, they need to think of a solution to the problem. Students should write their personal 'scenario' and 'solution' under the headings on the Activity 4:3 page.

The solution does not need to be complex – it could be practical things like adjusting settings on their phone, or a small change they could make to their habits. These are, however, in many cases easier said than done. Reassure the pupils that you understand this – it is difficult for adults too. But this is a small start to making some positive changes to help our digital wellbeing.

Prompt questions for the 'solution'

- How do you usually respond in this 'scenario'?
- How does this make you feel?
- How would you like to respond?
- How do you think this would make you feel?
- What can you do to get to this outcome?

Optional extra questions

What are the positive impacts of your online use?
What are the negative impacts of your online use?
What would you like to have more time for in your life?
How can you change your online experiences, based on your reflections?



Online Media Literacy

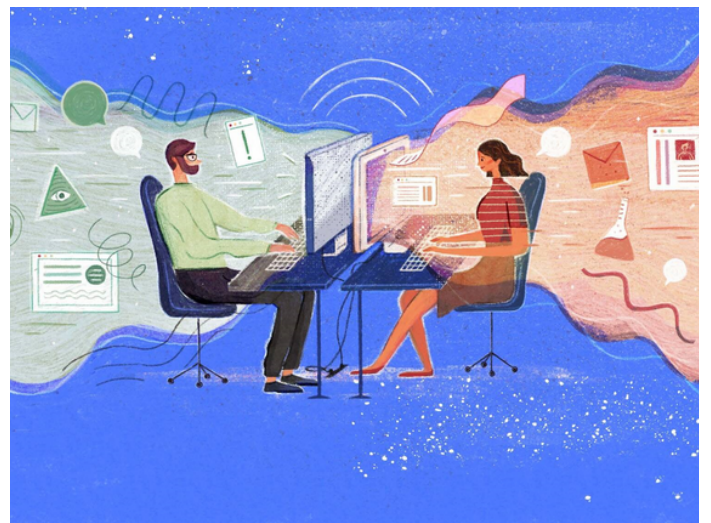
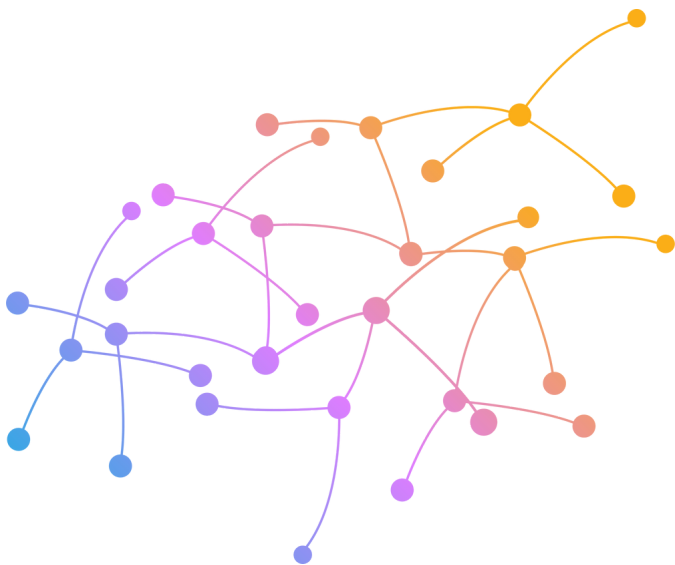


SESSION 4: Persuasive Design Features

Toolkit developed by **Praesidio**
safeguarding

Slide 1

Who remembers last week?



Slide 2

Persuasive Design Features



Slide 3

Activity 4:1

Type	Name	Description	Example
Dopamine hit and anticipation. Dopamine is the brain's 'feel-good' chemical that is released when we use social media.	Notifications		
	Affirmation – when something is confirmed or validated by others.		
Social proof or fear of missing out (FOMO) Social proof shows your engagement with others, and their engagement with the platform. FOMO is when you worry about missing out on an event or conversation.	Popularity measure		
	Activity messages		
Seamlessness Features that are ongoing and do not involve new web pages	Autoplay		
	Infinite scroll		

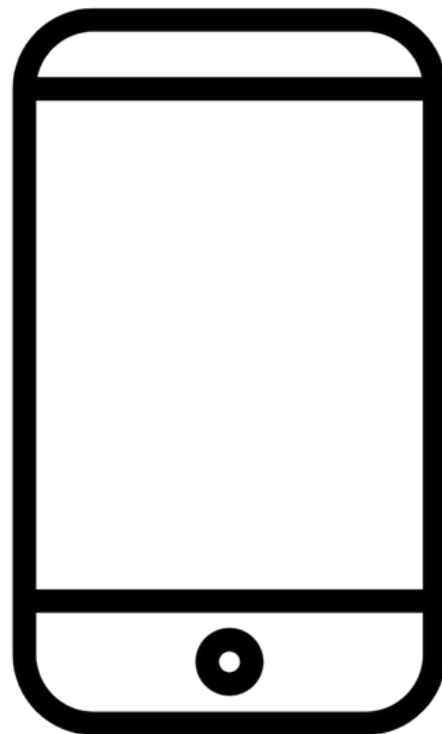
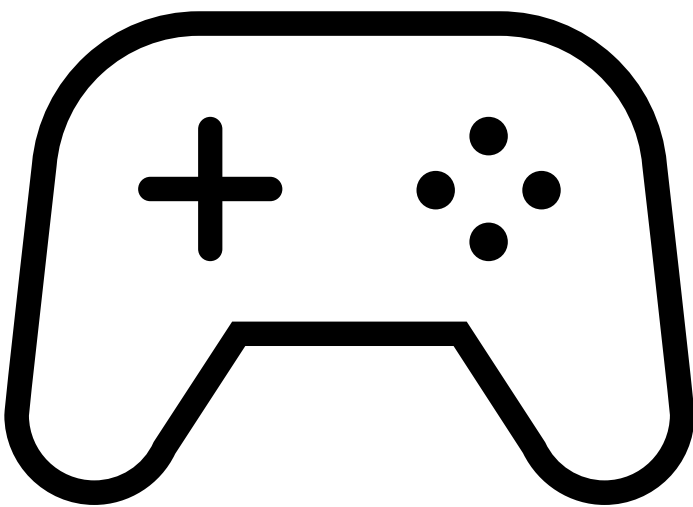
Slide 4

Activity 4:1

Type	Name	Description	Example
Dopamine hit and anticipation Dopamine is the brain's 'feel-good' chemical that is released when we use social media	Notifications	Alerting you to something, like a new message, update, social media post etc.	Buzzes, pings, vibrations, pulses, the colour red
	Affirmation – when something is confirmed or validated by others	Features that make us feel approved and liked	Likes, hearts, claps
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	Activity messages	Updates about someone else's actions that makes you feel anticipation or 'FOMO'	Read receipts, 'last seen' and 'online' status
Seamlessness Features that are ongoing and do not involve new web pages	Autoplay	Reels or videos that automatically play when you go on an app, or after you've finished watching something	TikTok automatically plays videos when you scroll
	Infinite scroll	Content feeds that load automatically without any end point	Social media feeds on Facebook and Instagram

Slide 5

Activity 4:2



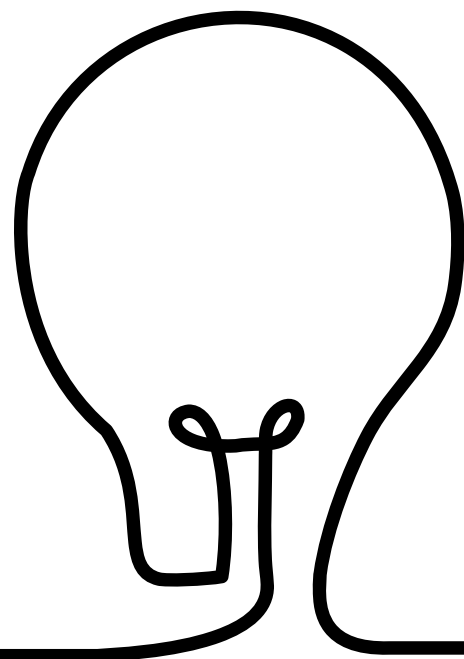
Slide 6

Steph's Snapchat Story



Slide 7

Activity 4:3



Slide 8



Online Media Literacy

4: Persuasive Design Features

RESOURCES

Type	Name	Description	Example
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Table adapted from the taxonomy of dark patterns, published by the OECD in 2022.

[OECD, "Dark commercial patterns", OECD Digital Economy Papers, No. 336, OECD Publishing, \(2022\)](#)

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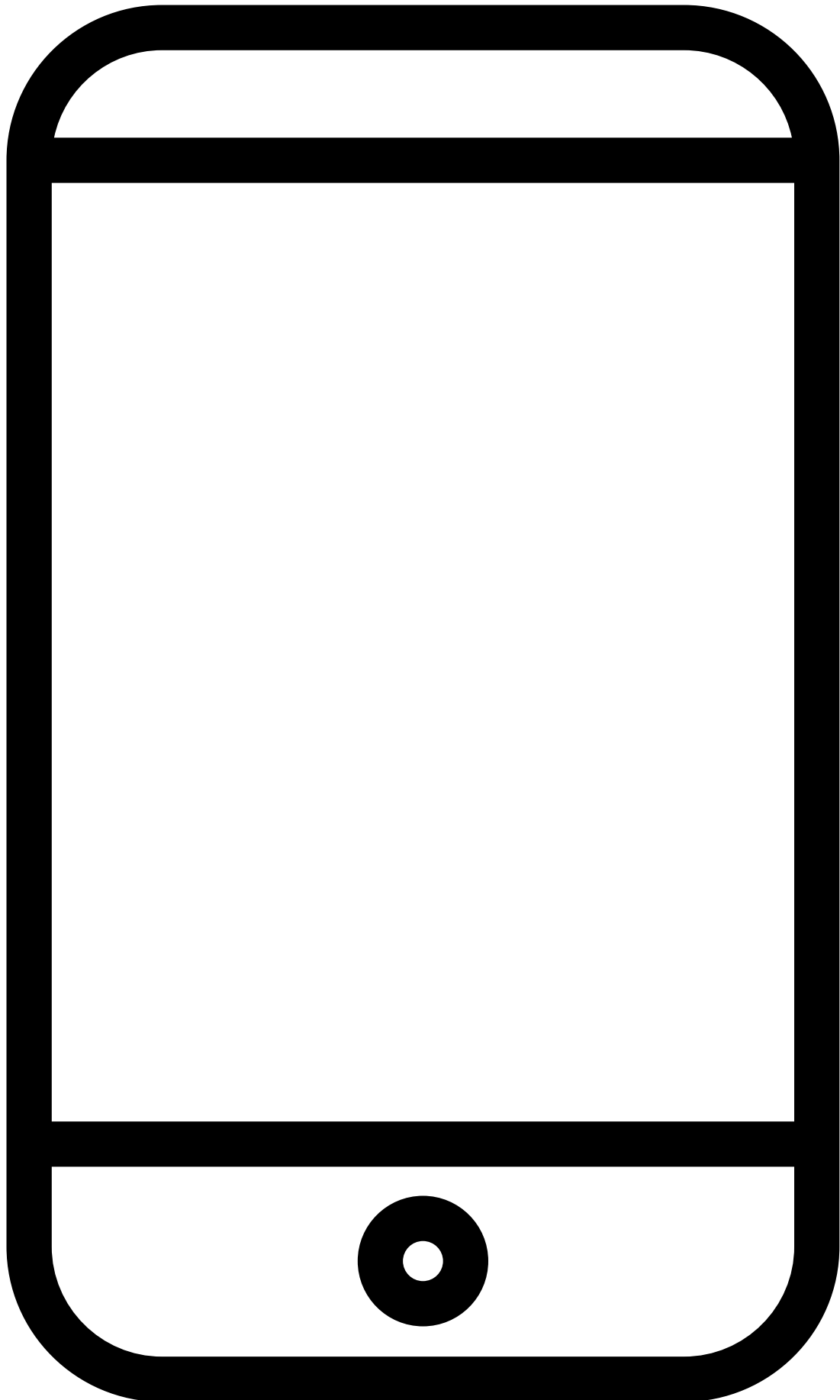
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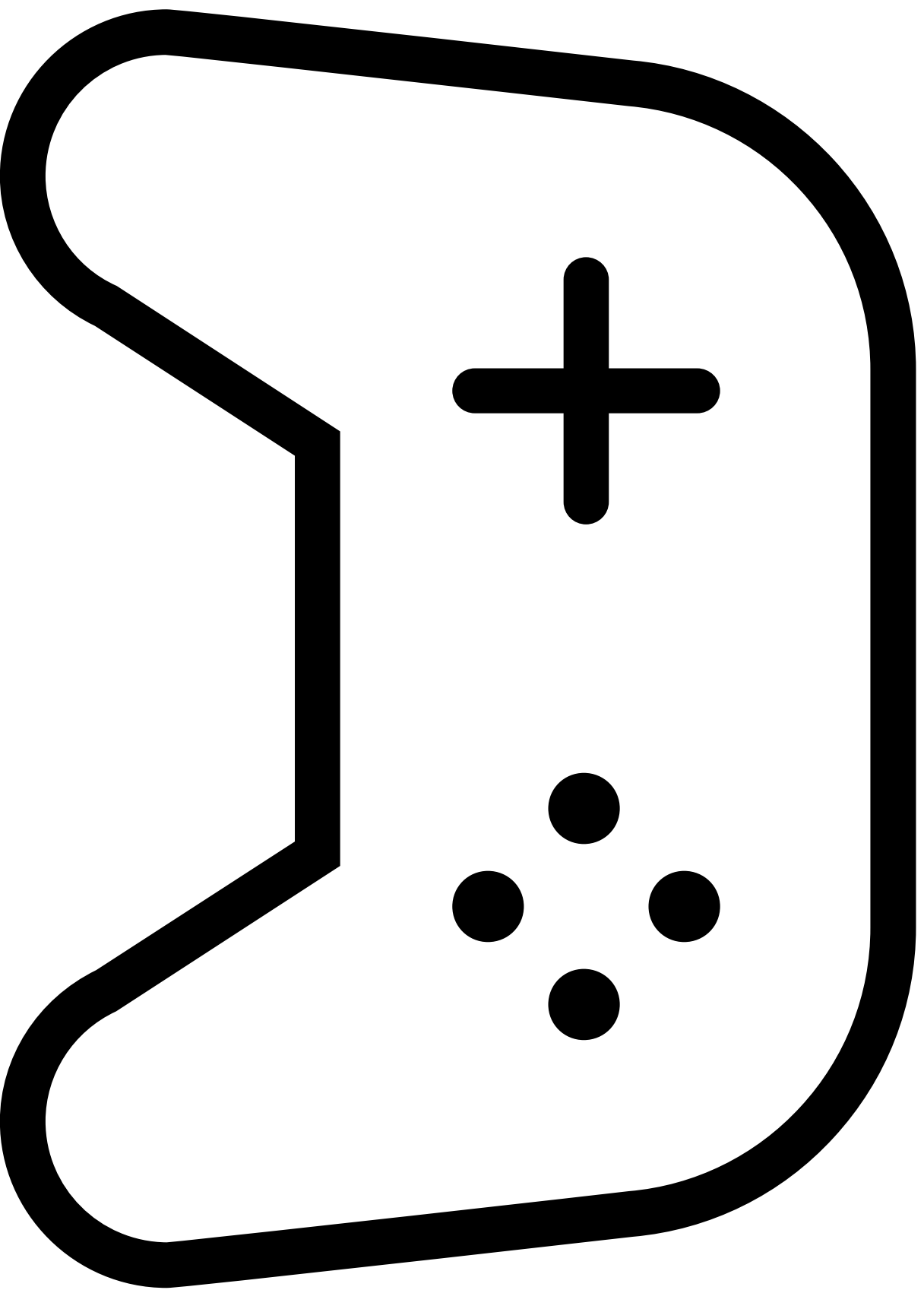
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What persuasive design features do you think are used on your favourite social media platform?

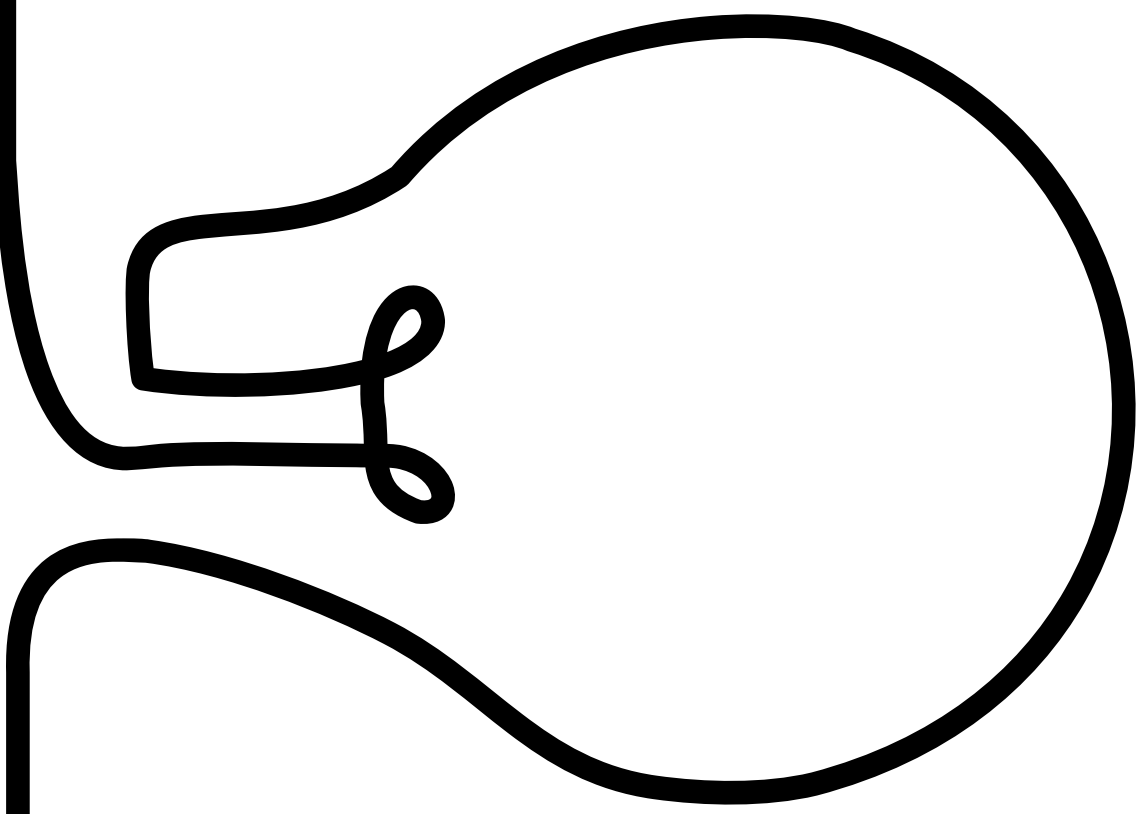


What persuasive design features do you think are used on your favourite gaming platform?



The Scenario

The Solution





Online Media Literacy

5 & 6: Create a social media campaign

FACILITATOR GUIDE

CREATE A SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Today's intended outcomes:

- To put the knowledge gained over the previous sessions into the planning and developing a social media campaign that promotes healthy online lives
- To develop a campaign to discuss the impact a particular app and feature on young people's wellbeing, and provide advice



Topic: creative task - create a social media campaign



Duration:
2 x 60 minute sessions
Delivered in a way best suited to your setting



Resources

Slide deck 5
Activity 5:1
Pens
Large paper and felt tips (optional)
Tablets/computers
Access to Canva (or similar simple graphic design tool)

Session structure



Re-cap

Persuasive Technology as a whole

What can you remember?



Planning

Activity 5:1

Planning your social media campaign



Main activity

Creating your campaign

Using social media to help promote healthy online lives

Key vocabulary

Apps, features, social media, wellbeing, mental health, habits, young people, advice



Re-cap - 10 minutes



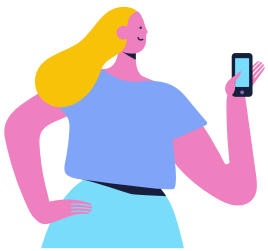
Resources

Slide 2

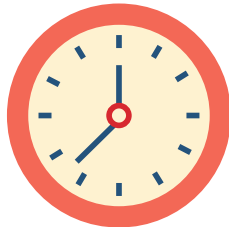
Explain students are going to reflect on the past 4 sessions.
"What have we learnt?"

Session 1: Introduction to Persuasive Technology
Session 2: The Attention Economy
Session 3: Algorithms and Echo Chambers
Session 4: Persuasive Design Features

Show Slide 2 (that has been used in previous weeks) as stimuli to encourage students to recall the topics covered in the past 4 sessions. This is a good opportunity to refresh knowledge as required.



Me, you, us all! The social media user



Time spent online - we spend more and more time on apps, sometimes longer than we expect. Why is this? How does it happen?



How do social media and gaming companies make money from our time? What is this process called?
THE ATTENTION ECONOMY



How do the companies convince us to spend our time their platforms? ALGORITHMS



What clever features are used to grab your attention and keep you checking your apps?
PERSUASIVE DESIGN FEATURES



Planning - 20 mins



Resources

Slide 3

Activity 5:1 - can print double sided

Introduce the task for this session:

Your task is to



Create a social media campaign to promote healthy online lives

Explain that learners have 2 hours to plan and create their own social media campaign, with the aim of promoting healthy online lives to other young people, and raise an awareness of 'persuasive technology'.

Encourage learners to reflect back on Session 1:

- What did you know about persuasive technology then?
- What do you know now?
- What would you like your friends, peers or younger online users to know about this topic?

Activity 5:1

They could alternatively plan on large pieces of paper with felt tip pens

Hand out Activity 5:1 worksheets.

Explain that learners will spend some time planning their social media campaigns. They will then have the rest of the session (and any subsequent sessions) to create it.

Working in pairs, encourage students to use the questions on the double-sided sheet to guide their thinking.

Note: some pupils may need guidance and more reminders of what they have learnt.

Key questions on the worksheet to complete:

- **What app would you like to create your campaign about?**
- **What feature on your chosen app do you want to focus on?**
- **What effect does this feature have on young people's wellbeing?**
- **What advice can you share to help young people with this problem?**



**Main activity -
1 hour and 30
mins**



Resources

Slide 4 and 5
Activity 5:1 - completed planning
Tablets/computers
Access to Canva (or similar simple
graphic design tool)

Creating the campaign!

The task...



Students are going to use an online graphic design programme to create an image and supporting text that could be posted on a social media platform. Encourage learners to think of it like an Instagram post.

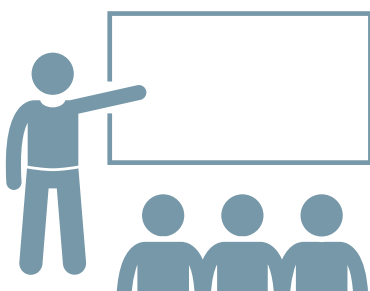
Step-by-step help



Students have the rest of this session and the next session to complete their work

1. Choose a square design to create an image that could be posted on social media.
2. Use the tools available to make an eye-catching design focused on the app and feature you have explored on your planning sheet.
3. Use the 'notes' section on the graphic design programme to write the text that would be the caption to your social media post.
4. Check your spelling. Make edits and changes. You need to imagine this could be posted online for other children to see

Time left over?



If time allows, learners could present their designs and text to their peers for evaluation.

Online Media Literacy



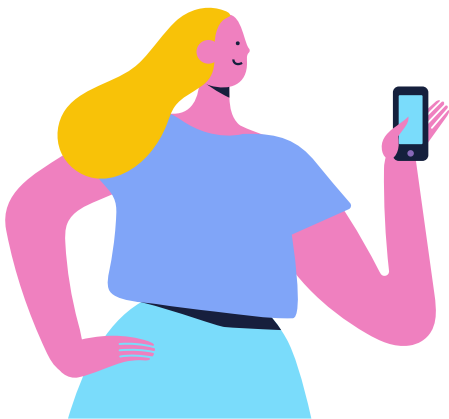
SESSION 5 & 6:

Create a social media campaign

Toolkit developed by **Praesidio**
safeguarding

Slide 1

Let's think about the last 4 weeks...



Slide 2

Create a social media campaign to promote healthy online lives

Think about...

What app would you like to create your campaign about?

What feature on your chosen app do you want to focus on?

What effect does this feature have on young people's wellbeing?

What advice can you share to help young people with this problem?

Slide 3

Creating your campaign



Your task:

You are going to use an online graphic design programme to create an image and supporting text that could be posted on a social media platform.

Imagine it is an Instagram post.



Slide 4

Step-by-step help

1. Choose a square design to create an image that could be posted on social media
2. Use the tools available to make an eye-catching design focused on the app and feature you have explored on your planning sheet
3. Use the 'notes' section on the graphic design programme to write the text that would be the caption to your social media post
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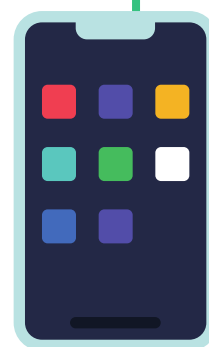
Online Media Literacy

5 & 6: Create a social media campaign

RESOURCES

Create a social media campaign to promote healthy online lives

What app would you like to create your campaign about?



What feature on your chosen app do you want to focus on?



Create a social media campaign to promote healthy online lives

What effect does this feature have on young people's wellbeing?



What advice can you share to help young people with this problem?

