



IMMANUEL COLLEGE

# PARENT RESOURCES

## Curated Content: How Algorithms Shape What Your Child Sees Online

**It's useful to have a conversation with your child about how online content is selected and shown to them. Help them understand how data collection and content curation influence their digital experiences and encourage them to think critically while navigating the internet.**

### WHAT IS ALGORITHMIC CURATION?

We often hear about the physical health concerns tied to too much screen time, but its impact on sleep is just as critical. Poor sleep caused by excessive device use doesn't just result in groggy mornings; it can lead to difficulty concentrating, emotional ups and downs, and behaviour that mirrors conditions like ADHD. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to lose track of time on YouTube, TikTok, or Instagram? Maybe you started by watching a quick video about cute animals, and before you knew it, an hour had passed. Have you ever wondered why this happens?

Many websites and apps use something called algorithmic curation. This is a process where computer programs (algorithms) analyse what you watch, like, or search for and then choose what to show you next, based on your interests.

But how do they know what you enjoy? Every click, scroll, and like is tracked and analysed. The more you interact with certain types of content, the more the platform tailors its recommendations to keep you watching for longer. It can feel like magic-unlimited content, perfectly suited to your tastes!

### THE DOWNSIDES

#### LIMITED PERSPECTIVES

It's important to keep in mind that while personalised content can be entertaining, it can also make it difficult to take a break from screens. It might also limit exposure to different opinions and viewpoints. If you're only shown content that reinforces what you already believe, it can be harder to understand other perspectives.

#### EMOTIONAL IMPACT

The content you see can also affect your emotions and mood. Watching positive or inspiring videos can uplift you, while consuming too much upsetting or negative content can bring you down. Sometimes, algorithms get things wrong and might show content that isn't appropriate for your age or interests.



## IMMANUEL COLLEGE

# PARENT RESOURCES

## Is Screen Time Robbing Your Child of Sleep and Success?

### TAKING ACTION

The good news? You and your child can take control of what you see online. You can adjust settings, block or report inappropriate content, and make conscious choices about what you engage with.

Helping kids understand how online platforms work gives them the skills they need to be thoughtful and informed digital users. Below are some activities that can help with this.

#### DISCUSSION TIME

Have you and your child ever disagreed about screen time? How could you find a balance that works for both of you?

What do you think about companies collecting and selling data? Would you change anything about how you use the internet after learning this?

#### WRITE A LETTER TOGETHER

Imagine you are writing to a social media company's privacy team. What would you ask about data collection or content curation? What changes would you suggest?

Then, switch roles and pretend to be the company responding to the letter.

#### GUESS THE INTERESTS (3+ PLAYERS)

Each write down 10 things you enjoy (hobbies, music, shows, games) on separate pieces of paper.

Take turns reading the lists and guessing who they belong to. This helps show how much information can be learned about someone just from their online habits!

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'DATA' AND AN 'ALGORITHM'?

Data is information collected about users, such as names, emails, or browsing habits. An algorithm is a step-by-step set of instructions that helps computers make decisions—like deciding which videos to recommend next.

#### WHICH WEBSITES USE ALGORITHMIC CURATION?

Many platforms use algorithms to personalise content and keep users engaged. Here are a few:

- **Social Media:**
  - **Facebook:** Suggests posts and friends based on user interactions.
  - **Instagram:** Recommends posts, Reels, and Stories tailored to personal interests.
  - **TikTok:** The 'For You' page is one of the most advanced examples of algorithm-driven content.
- **Streaming Services:**
  - **Netflix:** Suggests movies and shows based on what you've watched before.
  - **YouTube:** Curates recommended videos and the 'Up Next' queue.
  - **Spotify:** Creates personalised playlists based on your listening habits.
- **Search Engines & Online Stores:**
  - **Google:** Adjusts search results based on previous searches and location.
  - **Amazon:** Recommends products based on browsing and shopping history.

**By understanding how these platforms work, families can make better choices about their online experiences. Take the time to discuss and explore these ideas with your child, helping them develop healthy digital habits and a critical approach to the content they see every day.**