eSmart

Classroom delivery slides

Year 5-6:
Hooked by design



Nov 2026

proudly resourced by
alannah & madeline foundation

Trusted eSafetyProvider
esafety.gov.au

Safeguarding information

Some of the things we talk about in the lesson today might make us feel worried, uncomfortable or remind us of something that has happened before. If that happens, remember we are not alone. These lessons are designed to help us learn, build on our strengths, and know what to do if we ever need help or support.



The 4Cs of online safety risk

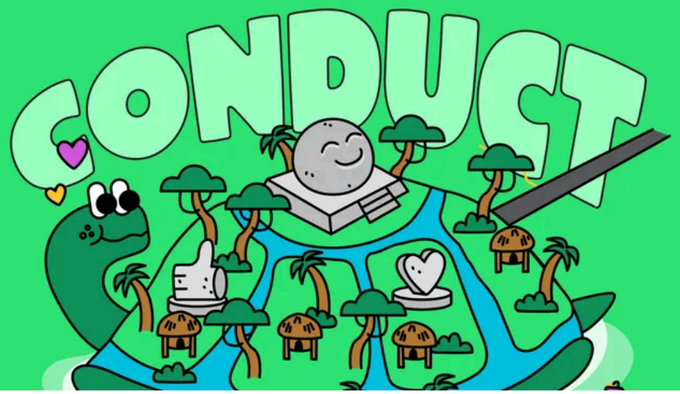
At eSmart, we use the 4Cs to help young people stay safe online. Our lessons are designed to give you knowledge and skills to successfully navigate each of these risk areas.



What we consume and create online.



How much time we spend online.



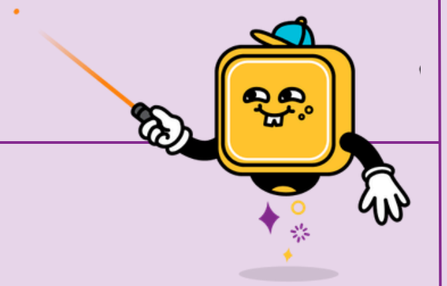
How we behave online.



Who we connect with online.

Learning intention

We are learning how persuasive design features in apps, games and devices can influence our technology use, and how technology can be designed to support digital balance.



Success criteria

- I can explain how persuasive design features are used to capture attention and encourage people to keep using technology.
- I can design features that help users stay in control of their technology use and support healthy digital habits.

Key vocabulary

Persuasive design features:
Features in apps, games and devices that are designed to grab your attention and encourage you to keep using them.

Digital balance:
Balancing technology use with other important parts of your life.

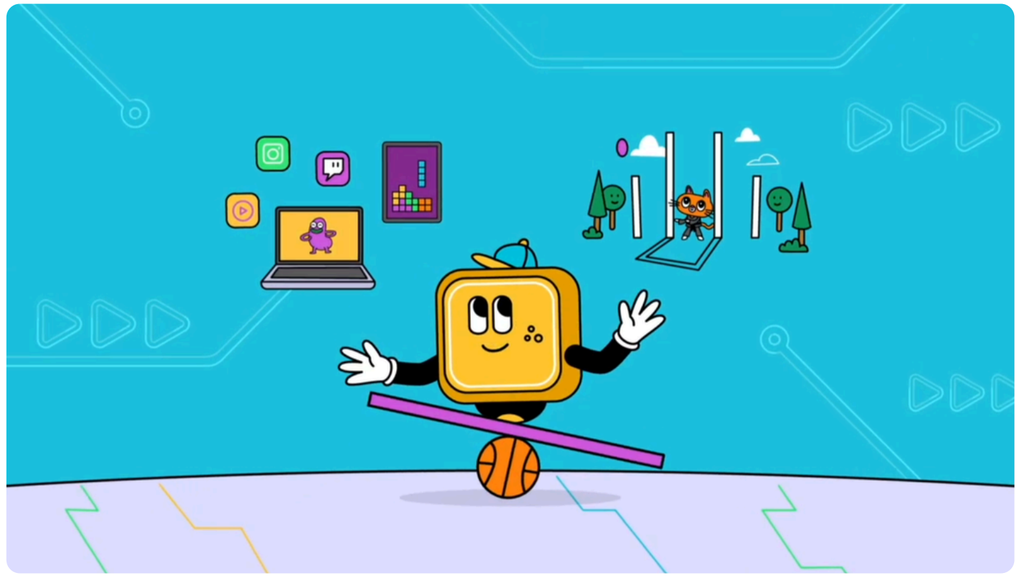
Healthy digital habits:
Positive choices that help you stay in control of your technology use.



Compulsion

is today's focus risk area.

Let's recap what compulsion means.



Click the video thumbnail above or use this link:
https://bit.ly/compulsionVID

Reflect on your digital habits

On the next few slides, I will read out some scenarios you might experience while using your device.

1. Imagine it is happening to you.
2. Be honest and think about what you would usually do.
3. Follow Ninja Whiskers and choose your move:

Stop using your device



Cross your arms

Not sure



Put one arm up

Keep using your device



Pretend to keep tapping, scrolling or watching

Reflect on your digital habits

SCENARIO 1

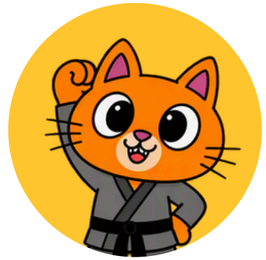
After an hour of playing, a bright progress bar shows you are really close to unlocking the next reward.



CHOOSE YOUR MOVE



Stop using your device



Not sure



Keep using your device

Reflect on your digital habits

SCENARIO 2

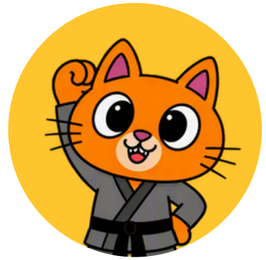
You are getting ready for bed and are about to turn your device off when the next video starts automatically.



CHOOSE YOUR MOVE



Stop using your device



Not sure



Keep using your device

Reflect on your digital habits

SCENARIO 3

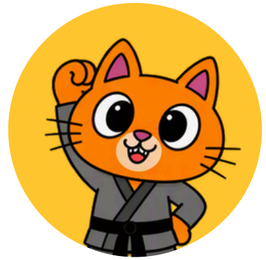
You need to get ready for school, but your group chat has lots of new message notifications.



CHOOSE YOUR MOVE



Stop using your device



Not sure



Keep using your device

Reflect on your digital habits

SCENARIO 4

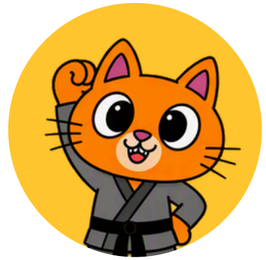
Dinner is ready, but the next scroll brings up something your friends are all talking about.



CHOOSE YOUR MOVE



Stop using your device



Not sure



Keep using your device

Reflect on your digital habits

SCENARIO 5

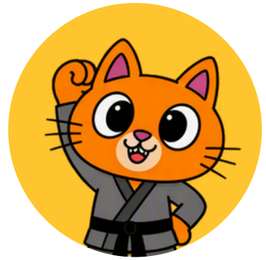
You need to leave for sport, but you notice your post is getting lots of new likes and reactions.



CHOOSE YOUR MOVE



Stop using your device



Not sure



Keep using your device

True or false challenge

It is time for a true or false challenge! On the next few slides, I will read out some statements.

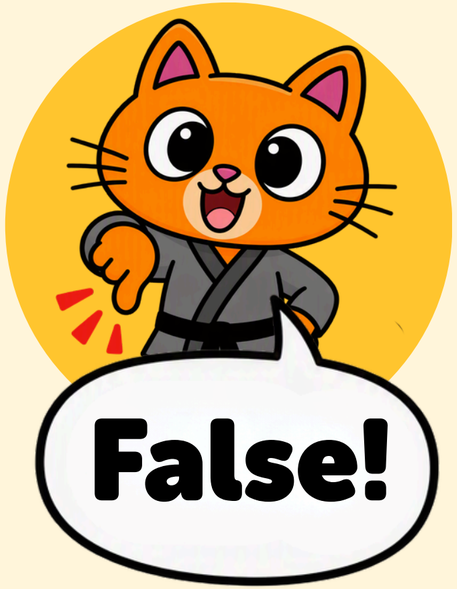
Your job is to decide if each statement is true or false.

Show a thumbs up



or

Show a thumbs up



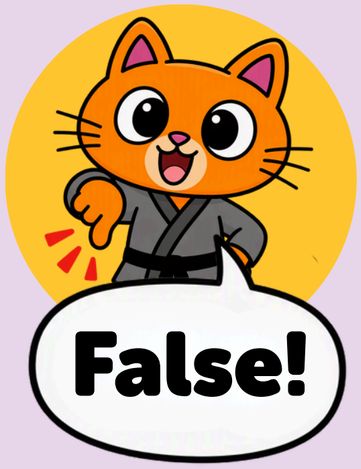
True or false challenge

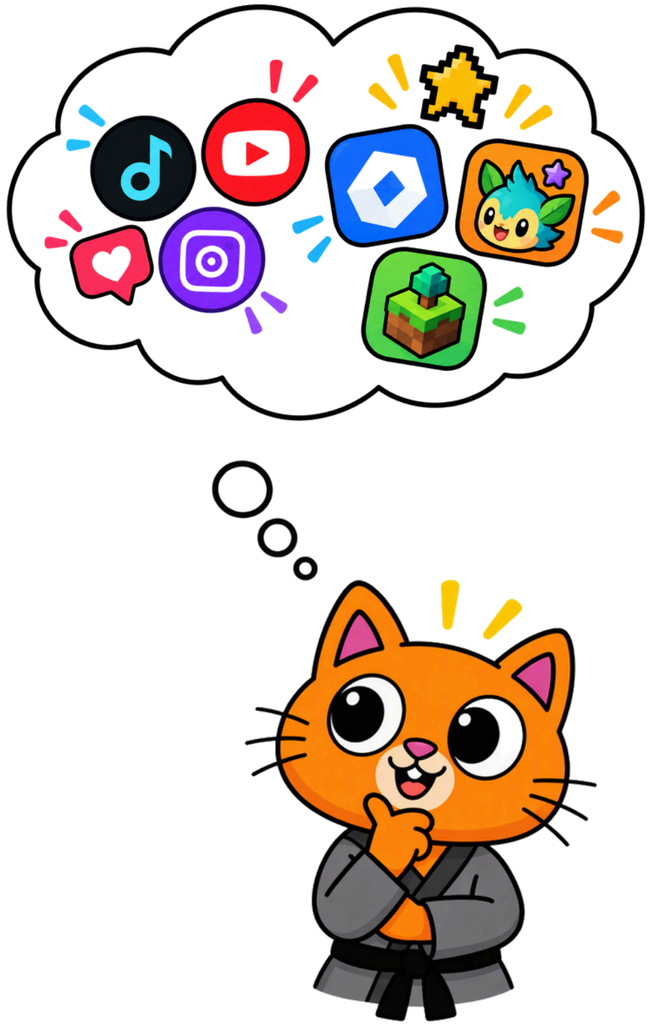
STATEMENT 1: TRUE OR FALSE?

Many apps and games are designed to keep us interested and engaged while also helping us keep a healthy balance with technology.

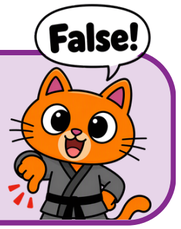


or





Many apps and games are designed to keep us interested and engaged while also helping us keep a healthy balance with technology.



FUN FACT:

- Apps and games are often designed with 'persuasive design features' such as flashing lights and rewards that trigger dopamine, the hormone that makes us feel good!
- These apps are deliberately designed to keep us using them.
- Overuse of technology can make us feel worried, lower our mood, and increase stress, especially when we do so for more than a few hours each day.

Source: How the Attention Economy Impacts K-12 Students' Focus

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

What design features are we already familiar with that encourage people to stay online longer?



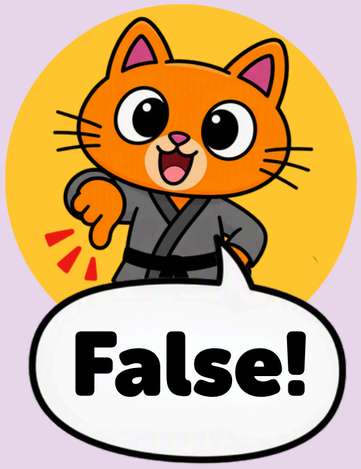
True or false challenge

STATEMENT 2: TRUE OR FALSE?

Generally speaking, the more time we spend using apps, platforms and devices, the more money developers and companies make.



or





Generally speaking, the more time we spend using apps, platforms and devices, the more money developers and companies make.



FUN FACT:

- In video games, our time spent playing equals money.
- On platforms like Roblox, we don't even have to spend actual money for developers to make money. Every single minute we spend playing earns them money!
- According to the official Roblox Creator Rewards system, developers are paid based on how many 10 minute blocks of time we stay online inside their worlds.

Source: Roblox: Creator Rewards

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

What are some of the design features developers may use to keep us playing for longer?



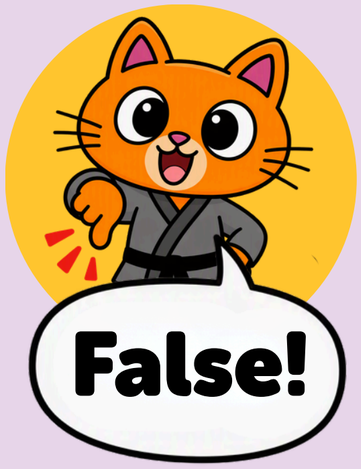
True or false challenge

STATEMENT 3: TRUE OR FALSE?

Features like streaks, rewards and notifications encourage us to keep playing or using an app.



or





Features like streaks, rewards and notifications encourage us to keep playing or using an app.



FUN FACT:

- A notification is like a digital fishing rod, and the sound it makes is the bait.
- Our brains react to the chime before we even read the screen because we are addicted to guessing what the reward will be.
- This constant guessing game makes it almost impossible for us to ignore our devices.

Source: The Psychological Concept: "Variable Rewards"

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Why do you think apps and devices send notifications, even when we are not using them?

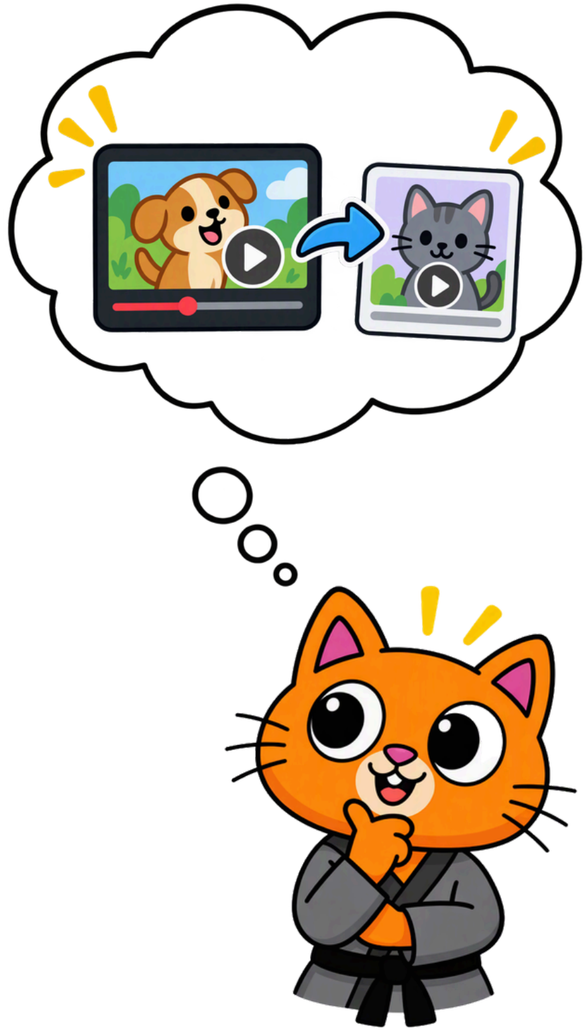


True or false challenge

STATEMENT 4: TRUE OR FALSE?

Autoplay starts the next video for us so we don't have to make another choice, helping us use our time wisely.





Autoplay starts the next video for us so we don’t have to make another choice, helping us use our time wisely.



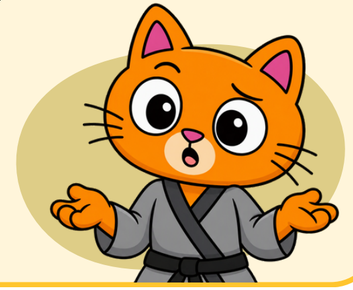
FUN FACT:

- Autoplay is a digital trap designed to trick our brain into taking the path of least resistance.
- By automatically starting the next video or episode before we can even think, the app steals our 'moment to choose'.
- This makes us spend way more time online than we usually plan too.

Source: The Hidden Cost of Netflix’s Autoplay: A Study on Viewing Patterns and User Control

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Is it fair for tech companies to use science to keep us online, or should they let us decide when to stop watching all on our own?



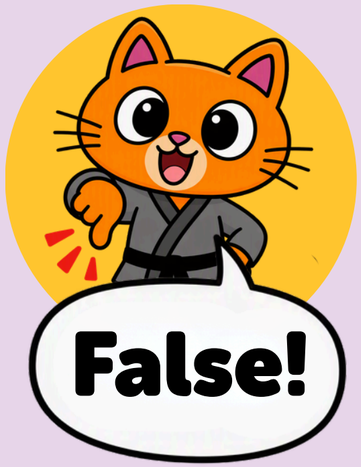
True or false challenge

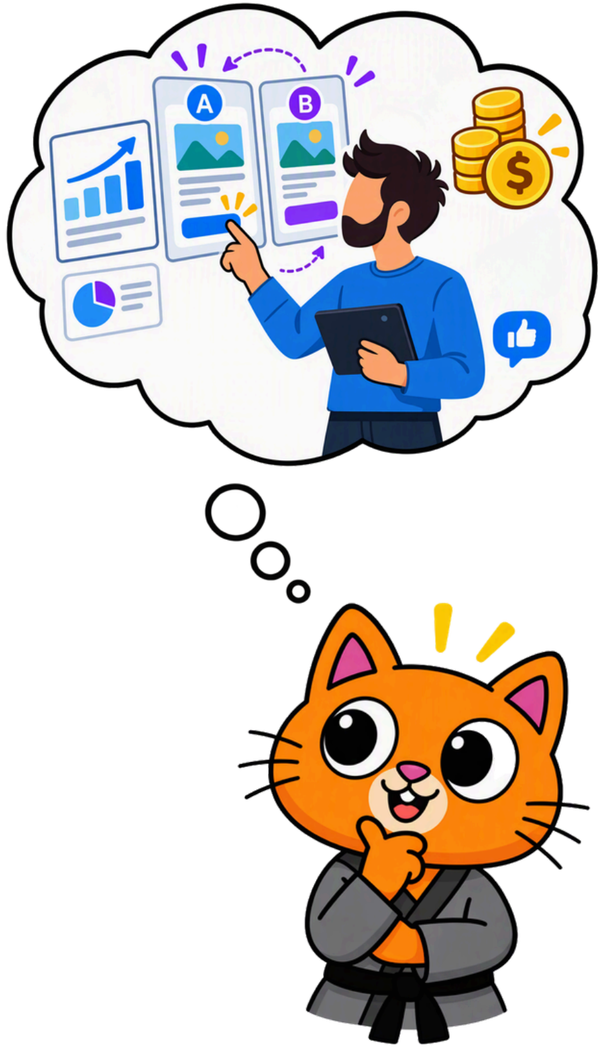
STATEMENT 5: TRUE OR FALSE?

Tech companies regularly test features to see what keeps us interested and engaged, so that ultimately we spend more time online.



or





Tech companies regularly test features to see what keeps us interested and engaged, so that ultimately we spend more time online.



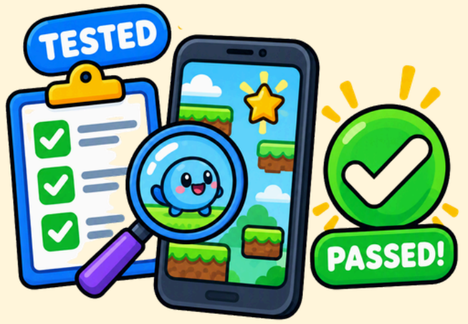
FUN FACT:

- Tech companies are like mad scientists, and our screen activity is like their laboratory.
- Every day, apps test thousands of tiny changes on us without us even knowing.
- For example, changing the colour of a button or tweaking an algorithm to see if it keeps us using their apps for longer.

Source: Is A/B Testing Effective? Evidence from 35,000 Startups

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

What parts of an app or game do you think companies might test to make it more appealing?

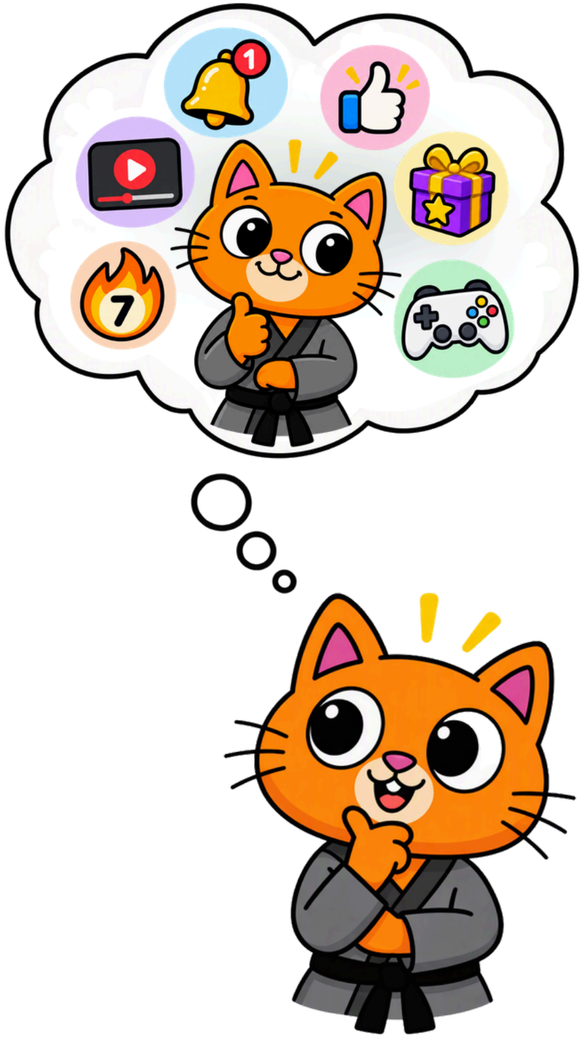


True or false challenge

STATEMENT 6: TRUE OR FALSE?

Understanding how technology is designed can help us make better choices about our screen time.





Understanding how technology is designed can help us make better choices about our screen time.



FUN FACT:

- Learning how apps are built gives us the power to make better choices.
- When we learn about ‘persuasive design features’, we build better digital literacy.
- This means we can spot the feature that developers use and choose to close the app on our own, instead of letting a screen control us.

Source: Developing an educational model of digital socialization to prevent internet addiction among university students in Kazakhstan

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Even if we know exactly how design features work, why can it still be hard to put our devices down?



Student worksheet

Year 5-6: *Hooked by design*

Student name: .....

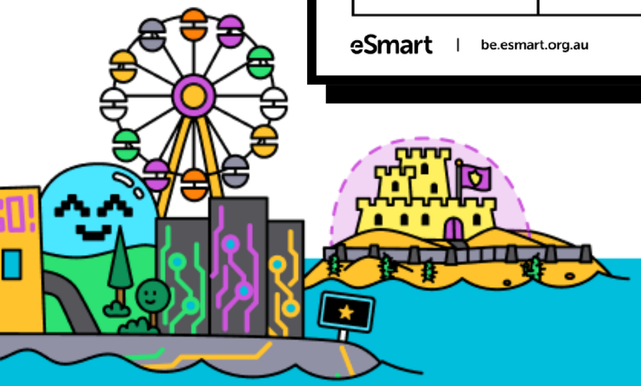
Activity 1: Cracking the compulsion code

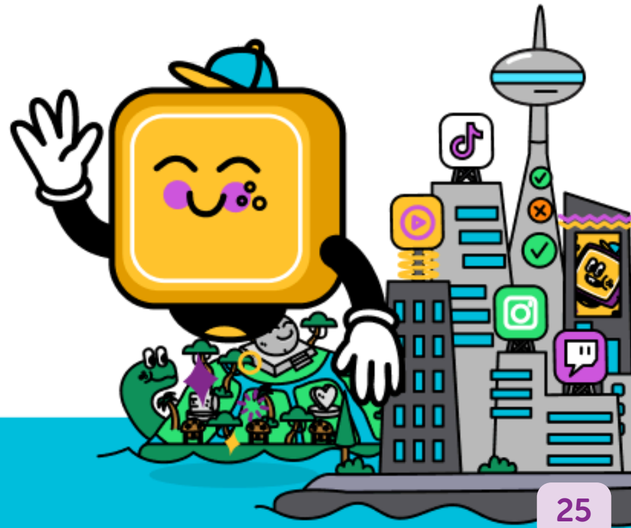
Use the completed first row as a guide, and refer to the research sources below to help fill out the rest of the table:

- Balancing your time online: https://bit.ly/balancing-time
- Hooked by Design: How Technology Keeps Our Kids Glued to Their Screens: https://bit.ly/hooked-by-design

Persuasive design feature	What is it and how does it work?	Why does it make people want to keep using technology?	What can be done to manage it?	How could this feature be redesigned?
Bright colours and flashing lights	Apps, games, and notifications use bold neon colours (like red badges) and moving or flashing animations to stand out on the screen.	Our brains naturally notice bright and moving things right away. It makes the app feel exciting and urgent, so we feel like we have to click on it or keep playing.	Turn on "grayscale" mode (black and white) in device settings, turn down screen brightness, or switch off app notification badges.	After 20 minutes of using an app, the screen automatically fades to black and white (grayscale) to remind your brain that it is time to take a break.
Infinite scroll				
Notifications				

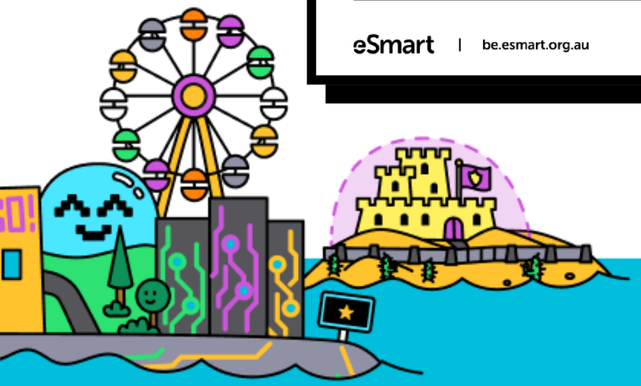
Complete the Student worksheet

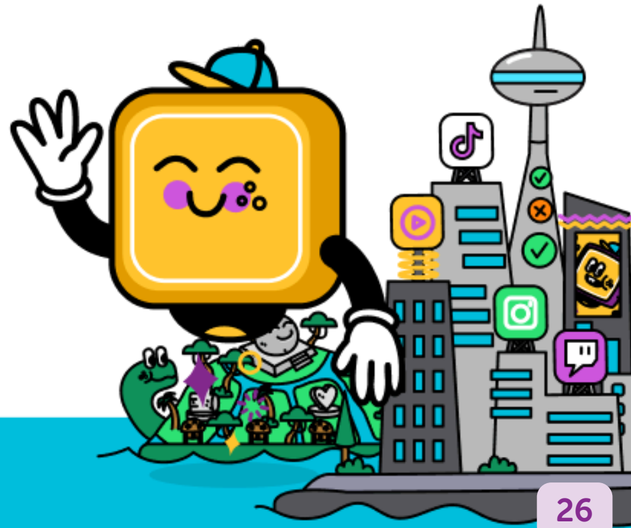




Persuasive design feature	What is it and how does it work?	Why does it make people want to keep using technology?	What can be done to manage it?	How could this feature be redesigned?
Autoplay				
Likes and reactions				
Rewards, streaks and loot boxes				

Complete the Student worksheet





Reflect and share

SHARE YOUR RESEARCH:

In your opinion which persuasive design feature is the best at keeping people hooked, and why?

CRITICAL THINKING:

Look at your ideas for managing and redesigning these persuasive design features. Which one is your favourite idea to help people pause, take a break, or log off?

IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES:

If you could invent an app, game, or device to help people balance their screen time, what would it do and who would it help?



Activity 2: Design for digital balance

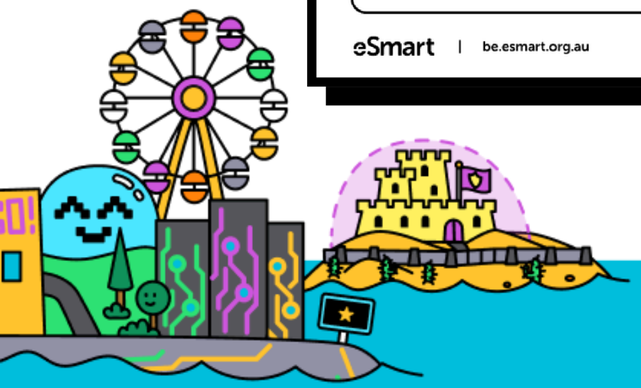
Now that you know how apps, games, and devices use clever design tricks to keep us hooked, it's your turn to become the designer!

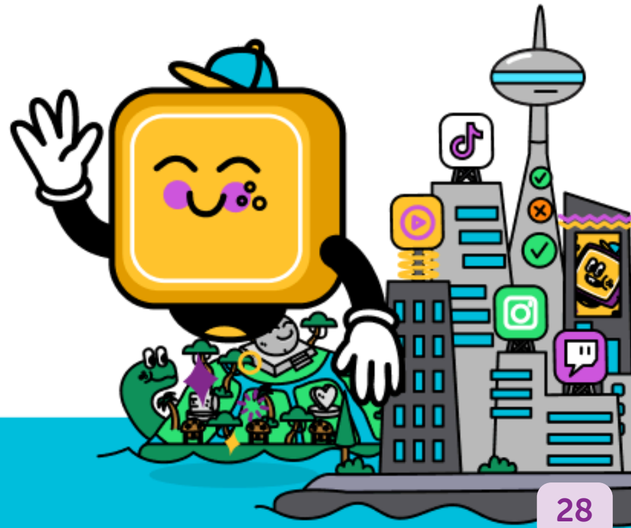
- Your challenge is to design an app, game, website, or digital device that helps people take control of their screen time.
- You can complete this activity directly on your device using a presentation tool or use the worksheet space below!

Draw and label your an app, game, website, or digital device.	Design name: What will you call it? Audience: Who is it for? Purpose: How will it help people manage screen compulsion?

Key features: Choose one feature from your design and explain how it works, why you included it, and how it supports healthy digital habits.

Complete the Student worksheet





Complete the Student exit pass

Student exit pass

Year 5-6

Hooked by design

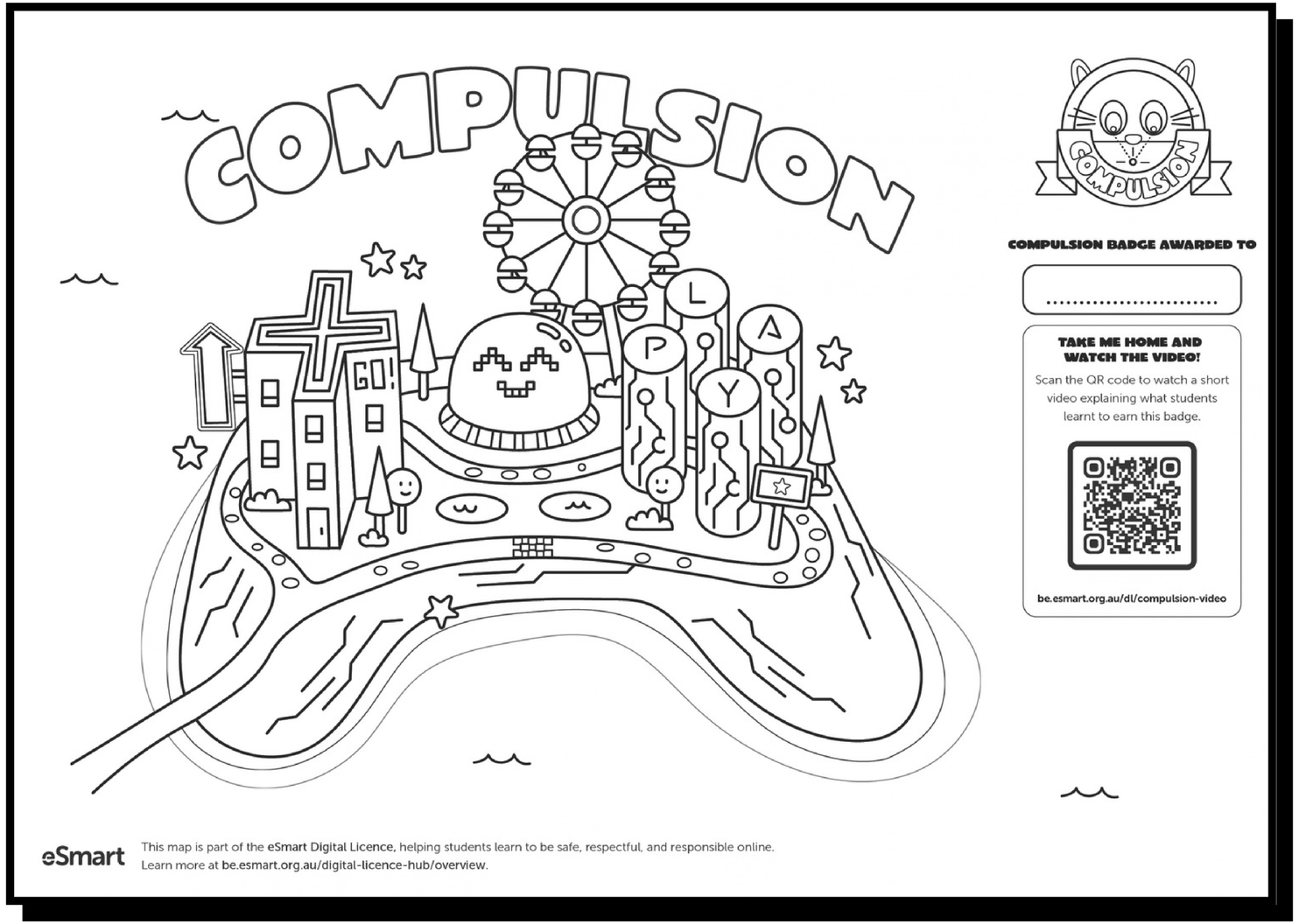
Student name: .....

Learning intention: We are learning how design features in apps, games and devices can influence our technology use, and how technology can be designed to support digital balance.

After you finish the learning activity, read each success criteria and colour what you can do.	I can do this with no help	I can do this with a little help	I need help to get better at this
I can explain how design features are used to capture attention and encourage people to keep using technology.			
I can design features that help users stay in control of their technology use and support healthy digital habits.			

Text back:
Your friend texts you asking what you learnt in this lesson. What would text back to sum it up? Keep it short and sweet!





Optional colour-in worksheet

Everyone has the right to feel safe, respected and listened to online



How might our bodies or minds let us know if something online makes us feel worried, upset or uncomfortable?



Who are the trusted adults we could talk to if something online makes us feel unsafe or worried?



What could we do if a friend told us they were feeling unsafe or worried online?



If you need support, call the numbers below.

Kids Helpline:
1800 55 1800

Headspace:
1800 650 890

