



Removing Persuasive Design From Technology

This is one of the best ways to help kids to get the benefits of technology while avoiding the pitfalls of overuse. It's also a great way for parents to be less distracted by their own screen use.

Phones:

1. Landlines are a the perfect tool for grade school kids to stay in touch with family and friends. Land lines have zero Persuasive Design and there are now new internet landlines designed just for kids. (TinCan and Ooma).
2. Take the Persuasive Design out of an iPhone and turn it into a safe kid phone that will grow with your child by using a setting called Assistive Access (on iOS 17+). You can make it as bare bones as you want and add more features as they get older. Kids can't get around Assistive Access the way they can with other parental controls. (See handout "Parental Controls That Actually Work")
3. There are a good selection of "Starter Phones" (that look like smart phones) available for kids from Gabb, Troomi, Pinwheel and Bark. (See handout "Comparing Starter Phones and Watches For Kids")
4. Watches that call and text can be a good option for younger kids, (though be aware that these can also have games on them and be very distracting).
5. "Notifications" are a form of Persuasive Design. Remove all notifications that aren't related to texting and calling.
6. Use a device called Brick to turn a smartphone into a simple phone - getbrick.com
7. Turning a smartphone black and white (Greyscale) takes away some of the Persuasive Design.
8. For the folks who text you the most, it helps to give them their own unique text/ringtone. (You can do this in "contacts"). Knowing who's texting you before you even pick up your phone takes away one aspect of Persuasive Design.

Video Games:

1. You can play video games from the 80's and 90's, which are still lots of fun, but don't have Persuasive Design. A great way to do this is to buy a NES Classic or SNES Classic, which each contain about 30 classic games and nothing else.
2. Or play video games from before 2005 (Nintendo 64, Super Nintendo, GameCube, PlayStation 1) which are not connected to the internet, and have a lot less Persuasive Design.
3. Minecraft in "Creative Mode" has less Persuasive Design than Minecraft in "Survival Mode".
4. Most games can be used in Greyscale, and this makes for a lower rise in dopamine.
5. Some games can be played with the sound off, which also lowers dopamine reward.



social media:

1. “Teen Accounts” on Instagram and TikTok have more options to remove Persuasive Design than regular accounts.
2. Turning off all social media notifications removes one of the ways Persuasive Design triggers us to look at our devices.
3. Keeping social media apps off phones and using these apps only on a computer makes them less convenient and lowers usage.
4. Looking at social media only in black and white (greyscale) lowers the dopamine reward.
5. You don’t need social media to make videos and send them to friends. In fact, research is showing that waiting until age 16 to start using social media is much better for kids’ mental health. The research is so clear that many countries (Australia, UK, France, Denmark, Malaysia) are passing laws to make 16 the minimum age for social media use. Younger kids who want to make and send videos to friends can use iMovie and Vimeo. The Marco Polo app is another great option. No Persuasive Design, no beauty filters, no AI.
6. OneSec is an app designed to create a pause or “waiting period” before you can open certain apps, which short circuits the “quick dopamine” of Persuasive Design. Installing OneSec has been shown to lower social media usage by 57%.

streaming platforms:

(While there’s not much Persuasive Design in a movie or show, streaming platforms are using lots of it in other ways.)

1. Turn off Auto-Play on all streaming platforms. This means the next episode won’t play immediately after the previous one finishes.
2. Don’t skip the beginning song and credits. Watching the song and credits at the start of each episode creates about 60 seconds of “effort and inconvenience” which gives you a pause to consider if you really, truly want to watch another episode. This cuts down on binge watching.
3. Watch movies and shows on a stationary screen from across the room (like a TV) rather than on interactive devices like laptops, tablets or phones.

youtube:

1. Turn off Auto-Play on Youtube.
2. Watching Youtube videos on DuckDuckGo through their Duck Player means no ads and way less Persuasive Design. DuckDuckGo doesn’t collect data and therefore doesn’t “recommend” videos based on your viewing interests, which eliminates a huge aspect of Youtube’s Persuasive Design.
3. Watch Youtube in black and white

laptops, tablets, and ipads:

1. Use blocking apps to help kids and teens stay on task while they’re doing homework. (The Freedom App works great for this and you can set it to “locked mode” to use it as a parental control). Freedom helps parents stay off their devices too!
2. Use Assistive Access or Guided Access to make iPads only allow the apps you want.

