How social media algorithms create echo chambers:

Student Handout – Lesson 6

Is there an echo in here?! Are you only seeing posts on your social media feeds that you agree with? You might be stuck in an echo chamber. This lesson will teach students about algorithms, confirmation bias and how to avoid getting stuck in an echo chamber.

KEY VOCABULARY

1. **Echo chamber** – *an environment where a person only encounters information or opinions that reflect and reinforce their own*
2. **Algorithm** – a *set of rules used to rank, filter and organize the content to feed to users on a social media platform.*
3. **Confirmation Bias** – *the tendency to seek out or give greater weight to information that supports our pre-existing beliefs and expectations.*

BEFORE YOU WATCH

Warm-up question: Why do you think it is often important to listen to more than one side of an issue?

WHILE YOU WATCH

Preview the questions. Then answer them while you watch the MediaWise Teen-Fact Checking Network (TFCN) video. According to the video…
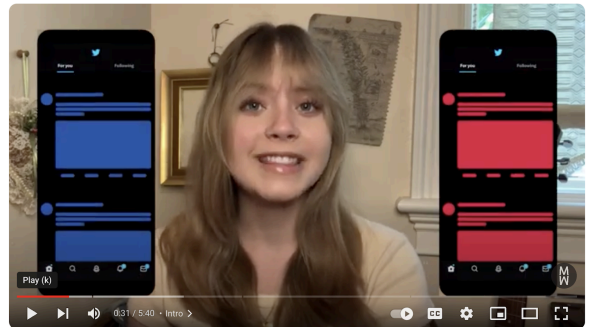
1. The main goals of social media algorithms are to keep you _____ so you stay on the platform for as long as possible, _____ with the content by sharing or commenting and come _____ to it later.
2. What are the positive aspects of social media echo chambers?
3. What are some negative aspects of echo chambers that can lead to bad consequences?
4. How can you avoid echo chambers on social media?
   - Follow left and right-leaning information sources to _____ your news sources.
   - _____ interacting with controversial posts—the algorithm will stop feeding them to you
   - _____ political, scientific or conspiratorial posts
   - _____ everything to confuse the algorithm

OVER: THERE'S MORE —>

MediaWise
TEEN FACT-CHECKING NETWORK

PBS NewsHour
STUDENT REPORTING LABS

OVER

AFTER YOU WATCH

Watch this teen CBC reporter explain how algorithms work. Use the words below to fill in the blanks as you watch.

day	hate	recommendations	order	longer	search
don't	see	sorting	extreme	engage	

1. *(:25)* On social media, algorithms decide what you're going to _____ and in what _____.
2. *(:30)* Mathew Johnson lists three goals of social media algorithms:
   - Keep you on the particular site _____
   - Make sure you come back every _____
   - Make sure you _____ with the content
3. *(1:00)* The algorithm may serve up content you love or _____ to provoke a reaction.
4. *(1:13)* This results in more and more _____ content being served when you engage with posts that create a reaction and people get angry.
5. *(1:32)* The algorithm decides what you see and what you _____ see.
6. List three tips for breaking out of a social media echo chamber:
   - Tip 1: Change _____
   - Tip 2: Turn off _____
   - Tip 3: Don't click. _____ instead.

EXIT TICKET

What are two things you can do to try to avoid an echo chamber on your social media feeds?