Parent Cheat Sheet

Resetting Children's Algorithms

A simple guide for parents and carers who want to calm down, clean up and retrain what children see on YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram and Facebook.

Important: There is no magic button that removes every recommendation forever. A reset helps clear or reduce old signals, but the app will quickly learn again from what your child watches, pauses on, likes, saves, shares, searches for and comments on.

The 5-minute reset rule

Before you start on any platform, do these four things:

1. Unfollow, unsubscribe or remove accounts that are pushing unhelpful, upsetting, addictive or inappropriate content.
2. Clear or reset watch history, search history or suggested content where the app allows it.
3. Use "Not interested", "Hide", "Don't recommend", "See less" or similar controls every time unwanted content appears.
4. Spend 10 minutes deliberately searching for and watching better content, so the app starts receiving healthier signals.

Platform	Best reset action	Ongoing habit
YouTube	Delete or pause watch and search history; use Not interested / Don't recommend channel.	Avoid hate-watching and search for positive interests.
TikTok	Use Refresh your For You feed and Manage topics.	Press and hold videos, then choose Not interested.
Instagram	Use Reset suggested content; review followed accounts.	Use Not interested and word controls.
Snapchat	Hide Discover/Spotlight content; unfollow Stories; use Family Centre controls.	Keep hiding unwanted content and avoid repeatedly opening it.
Facebook	Use Feed/content preferences; hide, unfollow, snooze or mark Not interested.	Use Feeds/Most recent where available for less personalised viewing.

YouTube

To reset YouTube recommendations:

1. Open YouTube.
2. Tap the child's profile picture.
3. Tap Settings.
4. Tap Manage all history.
5. Delete watch history and search history.
6. Go back to the YouTube Home page.

7. On unwanted videos, tap the three dots.
8. Choose Not interested or Don't recommend channel.
9. Search for and watch positive content the child actually wants more of.

To make YouTube less personalised:

1. Go to the child's YouTube history settings.
2. Pause watch history and/or search history.
3. Explain that this may make the Home feed less personalised, but can reduce the strength of recommendations.

Parent tip: YouTube recommendations are heavily shaped by watch history. Watching a video all the way through, replaying it, or watching several similar videos can quickly rebuild the same pattern.

TikTok

To refresh the TikTok For You feed:

1. Open TikTok.
2. Tap Profile.
3. Tap the Menu button.
4. Tap Settings and privacy.
5. Tap Content preferences.
6. Tap Refresh your For You feed.
7. Follow the instructions on screen.

To teach TikTok what to show less of:

1. When an unwanted video appears, press and hold the video.
2. Tap Not interested.
3. Repeat this every time similar content appears.
4. Go to Content preferences and use Manage topics to reduce topics that are causing problems.
5. Search for and interact with healthier topics for the next few days.

Parent tip: Do not let children "watch it just to see what happens". TikTok can treat repeated viewing, pausing, rewatching and comment-reading as interest.

Instagram

To reset Instagram suggested content:

1. Open Instagram.
2. Go to the child's Profile.
3. Tap the Menu button in the top right.
4. Under What you see, tap Content preferences.
5. Tap Reset suggested content.
6. Follow the instructions on screen.

7. Review the accounts the child follows and unfollow accounts that are part of the problem.

To reduce unwanted Instagram content:

1. On a Reel, post or Explore item, tap the three dots.
2. Tap Not interested.
3. Where available, choose Don't suggest posts with certain words.
4. Add words, phrases or emojis linked to content you want to reduce.
5. Use Snooze suggested posts if the option appears and you want a temporary break from suggestions.

Parent tip: Instagram will rebuild suggestions over time. The reset is most useful when it is followed by several days of different behaviour.

Snapchat

To clean up Snapchat Discover and Spotlight:

1. Open Snapchat.
2. Go to the Stories, Discover or Spotlight area.
3. Press and hold a Story, Show or tile the child does not want.
4. Tap Hide this Content, Hide or a similar option if shown.
5. Repeat this for unwanted tiles or topics.

To unfollow accounts or Stories:

1. Go to the Stories screen.
2. Tap the three dots or manage option.
3. Tap Manage Accounts I Follow if available.
4. Remove accounts or Stories that are not helpful.
5. Use Family Centre and turn on Hide Sensitive Content for teenagers where appropriate.

Parent tip: Snapchat does not appear to have one single "reset my algorithm" button. The practical reset is hiding unwanted content, unfollowing, clearing selected data/cache where available, and using Family Centre content controls for teens.

Facebook

To clean up Facebook Feed:

1. Open Facebook.
2. When an unwanted post appears, tap the three dots.
3. Choose Hide post, Snooze, Unfollow or Not interested.
4. Repeat this whenever similar content appears.
5. Go to Menu, then Settings and privacy, then Settings.
6. Look for Feed preferences or Content preferences.

7. Manage favourites, unfollowed people/pages, snoozed people/pages/groups and suggested content preferences.

To make Facebook less algorithmic:

1. Use the Feeds tab or Most recent view where available.
2. Review pages, groups and people the child follows.
3. Leave or mute groups that repeatedly push unhelpful content.
4. Use Not interested to reduce similar suggested content.

Parent tip: Facebook is not designed as a children's platform. If a child is under the minimum age for the service, the safer conversation may be about account removal rather than feed management.

What parents can say to children

"Your apps learn from what you give attention to. Even watching something you hate can teach the app to show you more of it. So we are going to help your feed calm down. We'll remove some history, press 'not interested' on things you don't want, unfollow accounts that make you feel worse, and then deliberately search for better content so the app learns a new pattern."

The golden rule

Do not just clear settings and hand the phone back. For the next few days, encourage the child to:

- skip unwanted videos quickly;
- avoid hate-watching or doom-scrolling;
- use Not interested, Hide or See less every time;
- search for positive interests;
- follow healthier creators;
- take regular breaks from endless feeds.

A reset is not a one-off button. It is a short retraining period.

Source note

This handout is based on current official platform help guidance checked in July 2026. App menus change regularly, so some labels may vary slightly by device, app version and account type.

- YouTube Help: Manage your recommendations and search results
- YouTube Help: How YouTube recommendations work
- TikTok Help: Refresh your For You feed
- TikTok Help: Manage topics
- Instagram Help: Reset your suggested content
- Instagram Help: Hide suggested posts in your Feed
- Snapchat Help: Restrict content for your teen in Family Centre
- Facebook Help: Suggested content and Feed/content preferences
- Facebook Help: Feeds tab and recent posts