

A DICTIONARY OF DIGITAL DANGERS

What your pupils see online – what you need to know as a teacher

Talk to your pupils about these phenomena. Many of them already know what they are – but they do not know they are dangerous.

Term	What it is and why it is dangerous
Blue Whale / Momo	So-called suicide games: a series of tasks culminating in an attempted suicide. Although the scale is sometimes exaggerated by the media, the underlying mechanism of coercion is real and dangerous.
Sad TikTok / Sad Content	Content that glorifies sadness, loneliness, and self-harm. Recommendation algorithms may amplify exposure to increasingly distressing material, keeping the user on screen.
Thinspo / Meanspo	Content promoting anorexia (thinspo) or enforcing weight loss through verbal aggression (meanspo). Frequently linked to depression and self-harm.
Cutting Community	Closed online groups in which the number of scars commands respect. Self-harm becomes an element of group identity and a 'trend.'
FOMO	Fear Of Missing Out – the anxiety of being left out. An addiction to notifications that leads to insomnia and chronic stress.
JOMO	Joy Of Missing Out – the pleasure of being offline. The goal of prevention: teaching the pupil that being without a phone is not a punishment.
Sad-fishing	Posting distressing content online to gain social validation. It may be a signal of genuine suffering, not simply 'attention-seeking.'
Doom-scrolling	Compulsively scrolling through negative content (disasters, violence, death). It fuels the dopamine loop and worsens mood.
The Dopamine Loop	The algorithm feeds short bursts of pleasure (likes, notifications) that create dependency. Once the brain adapts, it requires ever-stronger stimuli.
The Rabbit Hole Effect	Algorithms infer preferences from engagement: a pupil watches one sad video – the system may then recommend similar content. Over time, this can create a spiral towards increasingly distressing material.