THE TECH TRANCE MAP

1. TECH SMARTS: BADGES VS KEYS



2. BREAK THE SPELL: PHYSICAL, MENTAL, CREATIVE, SOCIAL, SENSORY



3. THE HELP-FIRST DEAL



The Tech Trance Map A Parent Guide to Digital Safety

Tech companies have designed the internet to function like a giant digital amusement park. They use bright colors and notifications like cotton candy to grab attention, and fast-paced videos like adrenaline-pumping roller coasters to keep kids hooked. When an algorithm is feeding them endless content, it is easy for kids to fall into a tech trance.

To help families navigate this terrain, I put together The Tech Trance Map. You can download the two-page printable guide at the bottom of this page to put on your fridge. Before you print it out, here is a breakdown of the three main concepts so you and your kids are on the same page.

Tech Smarts Badges Versus Keys The first step in digital safety is knowing the difference between what to share and what to protect. We divide information into two categories. Badges are things you wear on the outside. This includes a gaming username, a high score, or a digital avatar. Badges are safe to show the public. Keys unlock your actual life. This includes your real name, your home address, the name of your school, or your passwords. Kids need to know that while badges are fun to show off, keys must always stay hidden in their pockets.

Breaking the Spell Five Ways to Snap Out of It Algorithms are designed to manipulate attention. The only way to break that digital spell is to engage the physical world. The apps only know how to control screens. When a kid feels trapped in a scrolling loop or an intense game, they can use one of these five methods to break out.

- **Physical** Get up and do ten jumping jacks to get blood moving and reset the body.
- **Mental** Focus the brain on a real-world puzzle, like stacking red solo cups into a pyramid.
- **Creative** Make something with your hands, like folding and testing a paper airplane.
- **Social** Go find a real human in the same room and ask them a question.
- **Sensory** Change the environment by stepping outside for fresh air or getting a glass of cold water.

The Help First Deal and the Family Password The internet is designed to trick people, and eventually, everyone steps in digital mud. Clicking a bad link, sending a regretful message, or accidentally sharing a Key happens. When hikers step in deep mud in the canyons, trying to hide it because they are embarrassed only makes them sink deeper. They need to yell for a guide to throw a rope.

Sit down with your kids and agree on a Family Password. This could be a specific word or an emoji, like a cactus. If they are in a group chat or an online game and a stranger starts asking for Keys, they can text you the Family Password. You then become the bad guy, calling them to say it is time to log off immediately, giving them a safe exit without losing face with their friends.

To make this work, parents must agree to the Help First Deal. When your child asks for the rope, the first reaction is fixing the problem together, rather than immediately taking the device away.

Download the two-page Tech Trance Map on the first page, put it on your fridge, and use it to start this conversation tonight.

Take the Next Step at Home If you want to turn these concepts into practice, EdTech Blueprint offers complete digital citizenship curriculum packets. LearnSafe Tech covers grades 4 through 9, and Own Your Digital World covers high school. Good news for Utah families—these packets are fully approved vendors and can be purchased using your Utah Fits All scholarship funds! Visit edtechblueprint.com to learn more.