🔊 **4**

We're told that too much screen time hurts our kids. Where's the evidence?

The authors of a landmark study argue that social media use has only minor effects on wellbeing. But an entire industry says otherwise.

Anybody attending the Royal College of Psychiatrists' international congress in London last week would have emerged with the idea that social media use has major effects on wellbeing. Thus, we heard that "excess screen time has reduced our attention span to 8 seconds, one less than that of a goldfish".

This sounds scary but does not seem to be backed by scientific evidence. Indeed, the notion that digital technologies are harmful to our children has spread over the past years: smartphones, social media and video games would cause health problems. In addition, commentators often claim that Silicon Valley founders are pushing digital heroin while protecting their own children from the dangers of technology.

Unfortunately, all this hype about technology has not answered the key question: namely, do digital technologies actually harm children? And if they do, what action should be taken? There is no denying that too much time spent on digital devices is noxious or that children tend to favour app-based Snapstreaks or TikTok reactions over genuine socializing.

Although a number of studies conclude that the excessive use of social media leads to lower levels of wellbeing, there is no evidence to it even if the information originates from serious scientific circles.

Instead of speculating, what is really needed is to test the way social media and life satisfaction influence each other. That is why, in our work (published recently in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences), we focused on a sample of more than 10,000 preteens and teens, analyzing nearly a decade of data collected from British adolescents. Each year, we asked them to assess their social media use and their level of satisfaction about aspects of their lives. In other words, we tried to establish a link between their "use" and being happy or sad.

We did not find much beyond statistical noise, that is to say, data that is meaningless and that cannot be interpreted correctly.

The conclusion we can draw is that social media cannot be said to affect children's mental health. However, this should not prevent us from questioning the effect of technologies on our society. To do so, scientists would have good use of the valuable data locked behind the doors of Silicon Valley giants, Facebook, Google and others, whose servers save every click or tap and thus hold the key to these issues.

By Andrew Przybylski and Amy Orben
Adapted from *The Guardian*, July 7, 2019

Synthèse

ÉTAPE 1

Accroche : Replacer le sujet de l'article dans son contexte	→ the use of **screens** by children → a burning issue / heated debate → the general agreement has it that screens are **harmful**
Présenter l'article : Nom du magazine / date/ sujet	→ This article published in… reports on a study whose outcome is quite unexpected.

ÉTAPE 2

Commencer	The starting-point of the article→ The Royal College of Psychiatrists' international congress in which the idea that screen use could shrink our brain capacities was developed at length.

Les deux premiers paragraphes traitent du consensus général que l'on trouve dans la presse sur le sujet : les écrans nuisent à la santé mentale, mettent en danger nos capacités cognitives…

Opposer	Nevertheless, there is no scientific evidence to these statements

Rendre compte des arguments	<u>Thus</u>, the idea has set in the public's mind that **screens endange**r our **health** and that nobody who sells or creates them would give them to their own children.
Opposer	<u>Despite</u> the controversy over screens and children, we have reached no definite conclusion as to the impact of screens on kids' **wellbeing** <u>although</u> we have reasons to doubt.

Au 3e paragraphe, les auteurs en arrivent au point de vue qu'ils entendent défendre : aucune preuve scientifique n'a été établie de la nocivité des écrans et pourtant, il y a de vraies questions auxquelles il faut répondre.

Ajouter, enchaîner les idées	<u>That is why</u> the authors studied teens' and preteens' **wellbeing** and **social media** habits by asking more than 10,000 adolescents over a decade to assess their **social media** use and wellness. <u>Surprisingly</u>, the study could not reach any meaningful conclusion.

À partir de ce constat, les auteurs abordent leurs propres recherches et exposent leur protocole.

Conclure	→ <u>So,</u> nothing proves that…

Ici, nous en arrivons aux résultats du travail de recherches : rien de concluant

Opposer	<u>Be that as it may</u>, the fact that screens have not been proved **detrimental** does not mean that we should not think about the impact of technologies in our society.
Enchaîner des idées	<u>To do so</u>, the billions of data stored in Silicon Valley, though secret, would be very useful and valuable.

💬 Commentaire

ÉTAPE 3

Poser la problématique

Il faudra éviter quelques écueils lors de l'élaboration de la problématique:

1. On peut être tenté de poser la question : « To what extent is **screen** use harmful ? » mais dans la mesure où les auteurs nous expliquent qu'ils n'ont pas pu apporter de réponse, il serait assez présomptueux de penser y répondre, et avec quels éléments ?
2. La conclusion, qui est toujours une source intéressante, est ici ambiguë et peut nous amener sur un terrain difficile : utilisation des données collectées par les GAFAM, leur pouvoir, etc. On risque alors de s'éloigner dangereusement du sujet.

Not only does this article <u>raise the issue of</u> screen use by kids, but it also <u>emphasises</u> the fears and erroneous notions that it **triggers off**. <u>Indeed</u>, as often happens with innovation, the risks are either played down or exaggerated.

Comme le texte nous montre que l'utilisation des écrans par les enfants alimente des peurs que notre ignorance des véritables effets renforce, nous pouvons partir sur le rapport entre évolution technologique, crainte et connaissances.
Pensez aussi à revoir le vocabulaire du progrès : celui-ci peut vous donner des idées.

<u>Therefore, I will discuss</u> the way fear, ignorance, **knowledge** and technological **advances** have always combined and how they do so nowadays in a society that must face up to constant changes and speedy adaptation especially <u>as far as</u> children <u>are concerned</u>.

Annoncer le plan

On proposera un plan en 2 parties :

1. L'histoire de l'évolution technologique nous montre qu'elle s'accompagne toujours de craintes, justifiées ou non.

<u>To start with</u>, I will take various examples of technological **breakthroughs** through history to show that progress is always accompanied by dangers, fears and transformations.

2. Aujourd'hui, il y a des raisons objectives de s'inquiéter de l'usage que les enfants font des réseaux sociaux et des nouvelles technologies en général.

<u>In a second part, I would like to ponder on</u> the current situation regarding children and technologies since, beyond the doubts expressed in the text, there are still reasons to worry.

Partie 1 :

Elle consistera essentiellement d'exemples, en partant du plus éloigné (à la fois dans le temps et par rapport à notre sujet) pour traiter de l'avènement de la télévision et ses conséquences sur la société et en arriver aux premiers jeux vidéos.

Innovations <u>such as</u> the train in the 19th century aroused concerns over the impact on the passengers' **health** : the speed, it was feared, would cause nervous disorders.

Opposer

→ <u>However</u>, we can focus on a more recent invention : television
→ Television revolutionized society / the family / entertainment and was demonized because of the influence on children of TV violence.

Ajouter /Enchaîner des arguments	→ <u>Besides</u>, the development of the PC and video games (80s) proved to be a new revolution, **bringing about** new potential dangers and a new approach to information and entertainment.
Transition	<u>Of course</u>, things have evolved so quickly that some of the problems raised by these **advances** now sound pointless.
Opposer	<u>Yet</u>, when video games became online video games, new concerns emerged, which leads us to the current situation.

Partie 2 :
On tentera de faire la liste des problèmes avérés concernant l'usage des nouvelles technologies par les enfants. On abordera les réseaux sociaux mais en veillant à ne pas répéter le texte.

Ajouter des arguments / Donner des exemples	→ **addiction to online video games** / some became heavy game players → clinics were created to help them.
Ajouter / Enchaîner	→ <u>Moreover</u>, the development of **cellphones / smartphones** caused their **overuse**. → **addictive** as well : **nomophobia / umbilical attachment**. Something we have all experienced one way or other.
Enchaîner les idées	<u>To boot</u>, few people now doubt the harmful effect of the blue light of tablets or smartphones. → **sleep disturbances**

Pour ce qui est des réseaux sociaux, rappeler le texte pour bien s'en démarquer ensuite.

<u>As far</u> as social media <u>are concerned</u>, the authors of the article <u>insist on</u> the fact that the use of social media <u>is likely to</u> alter the way kids **socialize** and that such **devices** keep them indoors.
<u>Actually,</u> social media also raise other indisputable issues.→ **privacy / cyberbullying**

Donner un / des exemple (s)	→ <u>Thus</u>, the stories of kids **bullied** on **social media** and who eventually commit suicide abound. So do the news items about children deceived by psychopaths.

Si vous le pouvez, utilisez un exemple de faits divers pris dans la presse : ils sont nombreux.

Transition	All these examples show that, <u>even if</u> it is difficult to establish a link between **wellbeing** and screen use by kids, there are elements which prove that new technologies <u>may</u> affect children, sometimes critically.

Conclure

Reprendre la démonstration pour que sa logique soit claire.
Nous proposons d'ouvrir sur une note plutôt optimiste.

All things considered, technological **advances** have always sparked off distrust, sometimes for good reasons. On the whole, **mankind** always manages to adapt to its own inventions. Maybe, in the case of today's kids and their **screens**, our brain will learn to function in a different way and be more efficient in new tasks while becoming feckless in others.

🔊 5

Global preferences for who to save in self-driving car crashes revealed

If self-driving cars become widespread, society will have to grapple with a new burden: the ability to program vehicles with preferences about which lives to prioritize in the event of a crash. Human drivers make these choices instinctively, but algorithms could make them in advance. So, will car companies and governments choose to save the old or the young? The many or the few?

An MIT study collected data from 233 countries on an online quiz in 2016 named the Moral Machine, probing the public's ethical decisions regarding fictional car crashes. These decisions tested an individual's preferences for crashing into women or men, killing the young or the elderly, pedestrians or jaywalkers and even low-status or high-status individuals. From this data, amounting to 40 million decisions, certain consistent global preferences appeared: sparing humans over animals, more lives rather than fewer, and children instead of adults. Therefore, this could be a basis for policymakers when establishing laws for self-driving cars.

The data also showed significant variations in different countries. In Asia and the Middle East, like China, Japan, and Saudi Arabia, the preference to spare younger rather than older characters was "much less pronounced" because of the respect that is due to older members of the community. People from these countries also cared relatively less about sparing high net-worth individuals compared to Europe and North America which have more individualist cultures.

The authors stress the results from the Moral Machine are by no means definitive. For a start, the quiz is self-selecting, only likely to be taken by relatively tech-savvy individuals. It also removes nuance. Users only have two options: kill *these* people or *those* people. In real life, these decisions are not so clear-cut.

So, when are companies going to start programming ethical decisions into self-driving vehicles? Well, they already have and they are not keen on talking about the ethical choices. In 2014, Google announced its prototype would choose to hit the smaller of two objects in the event of a crash. 2 years later, Google claimed its cars would 'try hardest to avoid hitting unprotected road users: cyclists and pedestrians". Mercedes, however, prioritized the lives of passengers before later denying it. Therefore, it's understandable that firms aren't willing to be open about these decisions. That's why these are ethical *dilemmas*: there's no easy answer.

In Europe, the EU is working on ethical guidelines and will likely enforce them through command and control legislation, or certification and co-regulation. In the US, Congress has published bipartisan principles for potential regulation, but federal oversight could be slow, and it's not clear whether lawmakers even want to dive into the quagmire of ethical preferences. Only one country has official guidelines on the subject, Germany, where the problems are already looming.

German lawmakers decided that human life should be valued equally. Yet, if no distinction is made, then it would counter the public's strong preference for sparing the young over the elderly. How will it handle the backlash that will occur the day an autonomous vehicle sacrifices children in a dilemma situation?

By James Vincent
Adapted from *The Verge*, updated Oct 24, 2018

Synthèse

ÉTAPE 1

Accroche	The world's governments and industries have been engaged in a battle for **AI** supremacy for some decades now but the legal and ethical aspects have been somewhat **overlooked**.
Présenter l'article : **nom du magazine/date/sujet**	According to James Vincent's article, published in the Verge and dated October 2018, the particular **AI** domain of **self-driving cars** lacks urgent, legal **guidelines**.

ÉTAPE 2

Commencer	The dilemma evoked is the following: self-driving cars are **programmed** by algorithms to prioritize who or what will be hit in the event of a car crash, thereby replacing instinctive human reactions with **algorithmic** preferences.