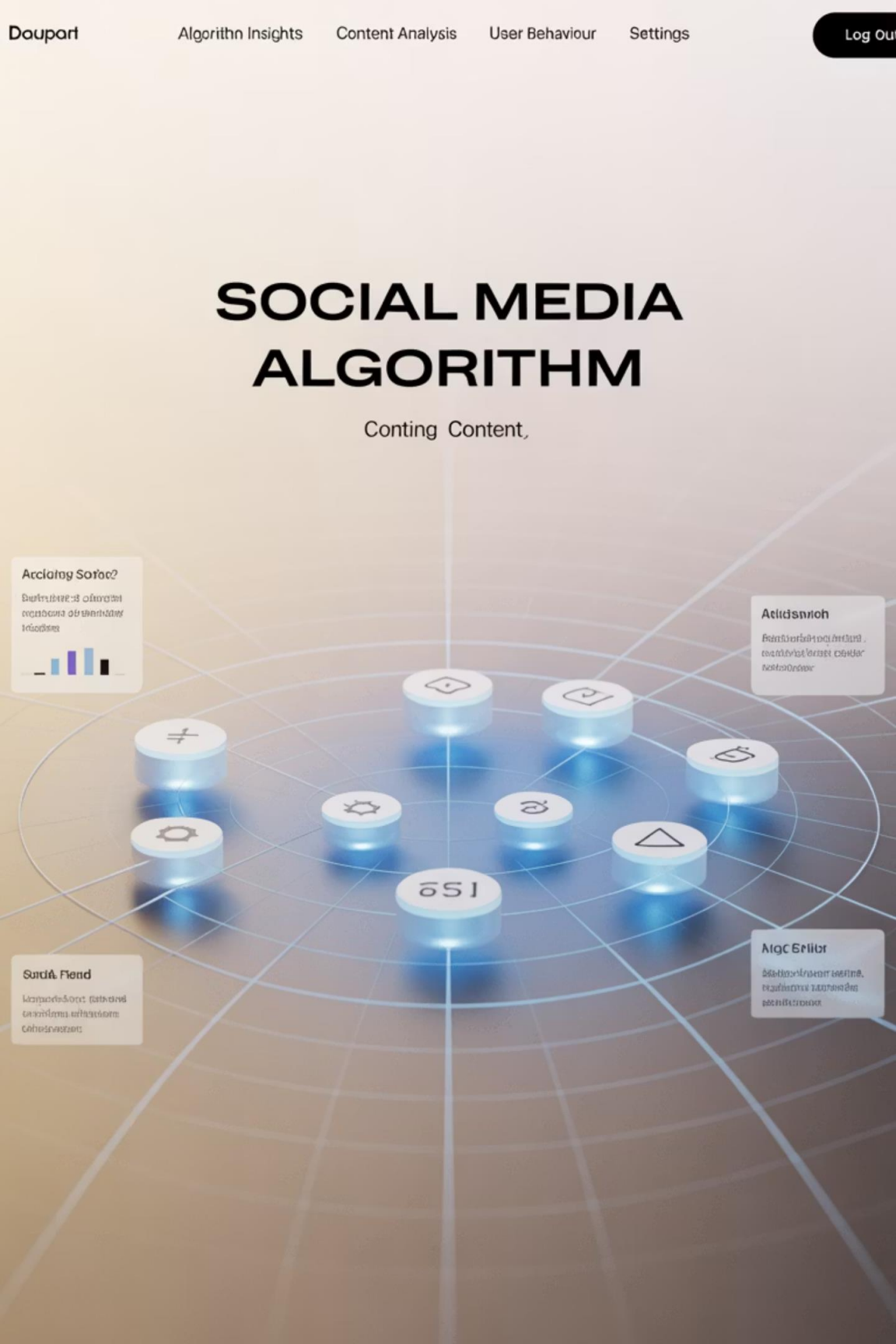# What Is an Algorithm? What Every Parent Should Know

Even innocent exercise videos can take a dark turn for your children online.
Learn how algorithms work and how to protect your kids.

Watch the video below

So, What Is an Algorithm?

At its simplest, an algorithm is a set of instructions a computer follows to make decisions.

Watches Content

Algorithms track what videos your child watches and for how long.

Monitors Engagement

Serves Similar Content

Then they offer more of the same. Helpful, until it's not.

The Innocent Start: "Exercise Videos"

Initial Search

Your child searches for "fun workouts" and finds positive, age-appropriate content.

Algorithm Shift

Soon they're seeing "What I eat in a day" videos and weight loss journeys.

Dangerous Territory

Eventually, content shifts to unrealistic body standards and potentially disordered eating.

This is how an innocent interest becomes a risky rabbit hole—without your child ever searching for it.

Why This Happens

Engagement Over Safety

Algorithms are built to maximise engagement, not protect users.

They don't distinguish between healthy or harmful content.

UK teens say algorithms showed them harmful content they never searched for

Parents unaware of how quickly content recommendations can escalate

What Can Parents Do?

Talk About Algorithms

Explain simply: "Apps show you more of what you click on, even if it becomes unhealthy."

Co-View Content

Watch with your child occasionally. Notice what's being recommended to them.

Ask Critical Questions

"Why do you think this video appeared?" "Is this advice helpful or harmful?"

Teach Digital Literacy

Help them spot red flags like "too good to be true" claims and unhealthy obsessions.

Use App Controls

Reset recommendations and restrict topics using platform safety features.

Final Thought

Algorithms aren't evil—they're just doing what they're programmed to do. It's up to us to teach our children digital literacy.

In today's world, understanding how content is selected for your child is essential.

Teaching them to question what they see online isn't just good advice—it's a critical life skill.

Help your child spot patterns, question content, and stay aware of what they're consuming digitally.