

# Screen-free time

Tools and resources for educators  
and professionals in school settings



## COURSE OF ACTION, TIPS AND ADVICE TO:

- Take a break from screens and adopt good habits that will help you achieve a balanced use of the Internet.
- Better manage time spent online and make sure you unplug regularly.
- Develop a better balance between life online and offline.
- Regain control so technology is at your service and not vice versa. It's up to you to decide what deserves your attention and when you go online.
- Prioritize online and offline connections that matter and that are beneficial (information, communicating with people who are important to you, entertainment, work, etc.).

## HABITS

1. **Schedule tech-free time:** Wait 1h after waking up, turn off 1h before bed, set aside during meals (at home or at the restaurant), wait 1h after getting home, etc.
2. **Identify tech-free zones:** Not in the bedroom, the car, the bathroom, etc.
3. **Focus on 1 screen at a time:** Cell OR tablet OR television... you'll be more relaxed and will fully enjoy the online activity!
4. **Focus on 1 application at a time:** Are you switching between Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Snapchat? Try using just one app at a time... it's possible!
5. **Stop answering immediately.** By constantly responding to your various messages, you'll lose your concentration and, moreover, you're getting used to constantly checking your device.
6. **Put your phone away:** At home, leave your cell in a room and avoid carrying it on you.
7. **Reprogram your brain:** Set your timer to 15 minutes and don't touch your cell before it rings. This will train you to be near your phone without constantly checking it and reduce the fear of missing out. Then try 20 minutes, then 30 minutes, etc.
8. **Only check on the hour:** Check your messages and texts once every hour maximum to start. Then every 2 hours... then only twice a day?! Don't worry, the world won't stop turning!
9. **Take a break:** Put your phone on airplane mode, set an alarm for the duration of the break you want to take (15 min, 30 min, 45 min, etc.), and put it away in a drawer.
10. **Dare to turn off your device!** Think about the option of just completely turning off your cell or tablet for a few minutes, a few hours or even the whole day.
11. **Buy an alarm clock so your phone doesn't invade your bedroom.** Charge your cell in another room like the kitchen or living room.

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12. **Play in small doses for fun and not to be the champion of the leaderboard.** OK, you're probably competitive and like to be the best, but try putting energy into other areas of your life as well.
13. **Make the distinction between you and your avatar.** The avatar can battle all night without being tired the next day. You can't.

## RELATIONSHIPS

1. **Explain why:** When you're with other people and you pick up your cell, explain why you're doing it. Is it an automatic reflex or for an important reason? What message are you sending others?
2. **Talk to your family and friends:** Ask them what they think of your Internet use. Do they feel like you're really present when you're with them?
3. **Set screen-free challenges between friends:** At the restaurant, coffee shop, or corner bar, place your cell face down and the first person who picks up their device has to pay the bill.
4. **Give 100% of your attention:** Are you talking to someone, attending a meeting, or sharing a meal? Be fully present by turning off your screen.
5. **Be where you are irreplaceable!** If you have a set time to go on a quest with a group in a game and you don't show up, it's not super serious. Other players can easily take your place.

## MOOD

1. **Ask yourself questions before checking your cell,** tablet or computer. Is it for a specific reason? Is it because you're bored or to calm anxiety? Is it really important? Can it wait?
2. **Ask yourself questions after using your cell,** tablet or computer. How do you feel? Satisfied, relaxed, anxious or kind of depressed? Aim for connections that feel good.

## DEVICE SETTINGS

1. **Prioritize your notifications.** For example, keep notifications and alerts only for your agenda, texts and calls so you can be reached in case of an emergency. Turn off all other audio or visual notifications.
2. **Assess the time you spend on your cell every day using an app** (see the reference tool: Resource directory). Set a daily goal for a more balanced use.
3. **Put some space between you and certain applications.** Discover the Space app that imposes a 10-second delay before opening the applications you're a little too much a fan of.
4. **Avoid bingeing:** Adjust the settings of some social media so they turn off after a predetermined amount of viewing time (e.g., YouTube after 15 minutes of viewing).
5. **Clean up your home screen/101.** How? Place your apps in folders so they are kind of hidden and to slow you down when you want to check them.

6. **Clean up your home screen/201.** Do you want to go further? Delete the apps of platforms that require you to connect through your browser from your home screen.

## SCREEN-FREE MOMENTS

1. **Take advantage of lines:** Are you waiting in line at the grocery store, restaurant or bus stop? Be strong: Don't take out your cell, instead use the time to breathe, relax, observe, listen and let your imagination entertain you a bit.
2. **Appreciate the experience:** A beautiful meal? Something funny? A gorgeous rainbow? Resist the temptation to take out your cell and share it. Enjoy the moment. Your "like" is worth more than all the others!
3. **Shop in stores rather than online:** A great way to encourage the local economy, meet people and... spend less time sitting!
4. **Carry a book or a magazine in your bag** so you have an alternative to going online.
5. **Plan screen-free activities:** Go outside, spend time with a friend or take a moment free of technology. See the list below.

## LESS SCREEN TIME MEANS MORE TIME TO...

1. Hang out with friends, spend time with family, talk to neighbours, etc.
2. Be active: From biking to climbing to CrossFit and hiking, everyone has their own way to get moving.
3. Enjoy cooking at home instead of buying premade meals, which is not always the greatest option.
4. Sleep... yes please!
5. Be really "there", attentive to those around you, ready to listen and support them.
6. Be really "there", focused so you can do better in school or at work.
7. Have meaningful conversations with people... and maybe find the love of your life?
8. Read, draw, write, knit, play music... take time for yourself to relax, with no comparisons or competition.
9. Play chess, cards or even a board game... they still exist!
10. Go on short outings or plan a getaway.
11. Travel and explore while being 100% present.
12. Get involved in the community, volunteer, etc.