

Digital Distractions

“The average attention span isn’t shrinking. It’s being sold.”

Warm up

- How long could you go without your phone before it became uncomfortable?
- Do you have any phone rules for yourself (e.g., no phone after 10pm)? Do they actually work?
- Do you concentrate better at home, at work, or nowhere at all?
- What’s one digital habit you’re secretly embarrassed about?
- Do you think digital distractions are a personal failure or a design feature?
- Do you think Gen Z is more distracted than older generations? Or do they just spend more time online?



1. Mini Debate: *Should schools ban smartphones?* Read the opinions and discuss.



“Phones destroy attention. Even when they’re switched off in a pocket or bag, students are still *thinking* about them, waiting for messages, imagining notifications, wondering what they’re missing. Real concentration becomes impossible. A clear rule of no phones during school hours protects students from digital overload and gives their brains the quiet space they need to focus. Sometimes the healthiest choice is removing the temptation completely.” – Emily



“Phones are tools and powerful ones. Students use them for research, translation, schedules, and creative projects. In the real world, technology is everywhere, so school should teach digital self-control, not avoid it. Banning phones punishes everyone because of a few who misuse them, and it ignores a bigger question: how will students learn responsible habits if they never get the chance to practise them? Instead of banning, we should teach healthy digital routines.” – Thomas

- Who do you agree with, and why?
- Which argument seems more realistic in your experience?
- Would a *partial* ban (e.g., no phones in class but allowed during breaks) work better?



2. Read the text based on a recent article from *Dazed Digital*¹ and answer the following questions.

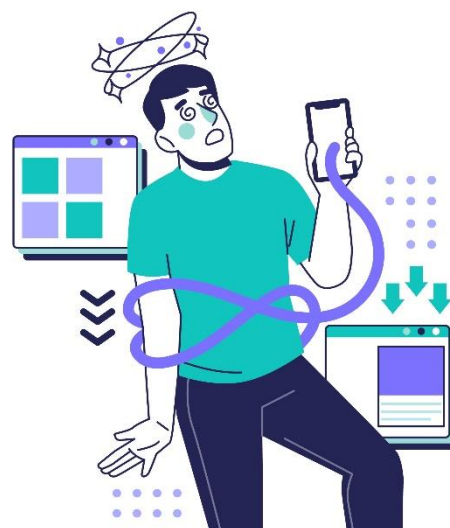
A new global study found that the average adult spends 5 hours and 48 minutes on their phone every day, almost 88 days a year. That's nearly a quarter of the entire year spent scrolling.

Gen Z spends even more time: over six and a half hours daily, and 1 in 10 young adults use their phones 12 hours a day. Many people report “notification overload,” feeling constantly interrupted and pressured to stay updated online.

More than half of adults say they feel overwhelmed by social media, while 47% describe themselves as “always online.” At the same time, 64% say they feel nostalgic for the 90s, a time when people met friends without phones and conversations were distraction-free.

The study also shows that despite having more ways to connect, people now feel lonelier. Socialising has decreased by 35% since the early 2000s, while phone use has doubled. Many people even postpone meeting friends because they feel mentally overloaded.

Researchers say the message is clear: the more time we spend online, the more disconnected we often feel offline.



- a. Which statistic surprised you the most?
- b. Do you believe phone use causes loneliness, or is it more complicated?
- c. Are you nostalgic for “pre-smartphone life”? Why or why not?
- d. Would reducing your screen time actually improve your mood?
- e. Is digital overwhelm a problem in your school/workplace?
- f. Should governments regulate screen time for minors?

¹ <https://www.dazeddigital.com/life-culture/article/66669/1/we-spend-88-days-a-year-on-our-phones-addiction-mental-health-loneliness>



3. Listen to Sam talking about his phone addiction and answer the questions below.

Comprehension

- a. Why does he already feel mentally tired at the start of the day?
- b. How does his phone affect his concentration at work?
- c. What happened when he tried using his dad's old phone?
- d. Why did the journey home make him realise how dependent he is on his smartphone?
- e. What signs suggest he may be experiencing mental burnout?

Reflection

- a. Which part of his story do you find most relatable, and why?
- b. Do you think smartphone dependence is a personal problem or a modern society problem?



4. Write 6-8 sentences to Sam giving him practical advice.

You should... / Try to... / It might help to... / One idea is to... / If I were you...

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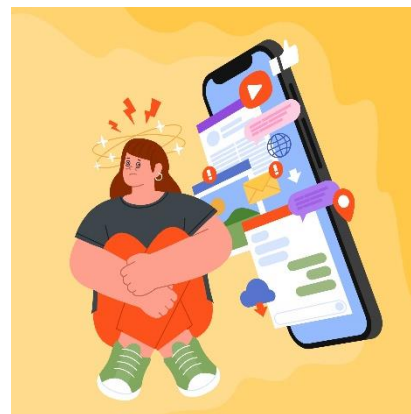
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5. Read the news summary and discuss the following questions.

Australia has introduced a world-first law banning social media for all users under 16. From 10 December 2025, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, Reddit and X must deactivate under-16 accounts and stop young people from creating new ones. Supporters say this protects children from online pressure, bullying and harmful content. Opponents argue that it may push teens to unsafe, unregulated corners of the internet and that verifying ages will be difficult.



Questions:

- Do you think this ban will actually protect young people? Why / why not?
- How would you have felt at age 13–15 if your social media accounts were suddenly blocked?
- Should other countries copy Australia, or is this too extreme?
- What's one alternative solution that might work better than a complete ban?



6. Work in pairs or small groups and discuss the points below.

Which app is the hardest for you to delete? Why?

Which app would actually make your life better if you deleted it?

If you could design your own app, what would it do?

How much time do you think you spend on your phone per day?

Which app helps you the most in your daily life?

For 1 million euros, would you give up your smartphone forever? If yes, how would your life change? If no, why not?