

## 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*<sup>1</sup> and answer the following questions.

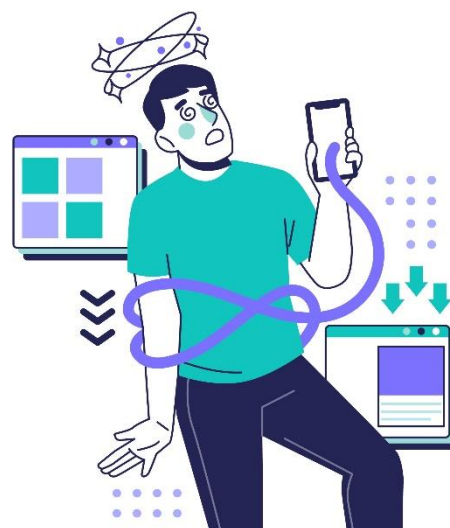
A new global study found that the average adult spends 5 hours and 48 minutes on their phone every day, almost 88 days a year. That's nearly a quarter of the entire year spent scrolling.

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.



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

<sup>1</sup> <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? *He feels mentally tired because he starts using his phone immediately in the morning, checking messages, notifications, and news before even getting out of bed.*
- b. How does his phone affect his concentration at work? *His phone affects his concentration because he keeps checking it whenever it buzzes, and even when it doesn't, he feels pressure to look at it.*
- c. What happened when he tried using his dad's old phone? *When he used his dad's old phone, he felt calmer at first, but later he couldn't order a taxi or check directions and got lost.*
- d. Why did the journey home make him realise how dependent he is on his smartphone? *The journey home made him realise his dependence because he couldn't use basic services like maps or transport apps, and he had to walk home alone at night, which felt unsafe.*
- e. What signs suggest he may be experiencing mental burnout? *Signs of mental burnout include feeling constantly exhausted, being unable to relax without checking his phone, and feeling like his brain never gets a break.*

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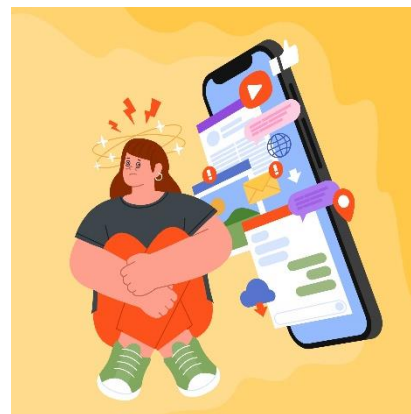
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### 5. Read the news summary and discuss the following questions.

*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?

### Audio script

“I’ve been feeling really exhausted lately, and I think my phone is a big part of the problem. It’s like I’m *always* switched on. Even before I get out of bed, I’m already checking messages, notifications, news... everything. By the time I leave the house, my mind already feels tired.

At work it’s worse. I can’t focus because my phone keeps pulling me back. The moment it buzzes, I look at it — even when I’m working on something important. And if it *doesn’t* buzz, I still feel this strange pressure to check it. It’s like my brain is constantly waiting for the next thing to react to.

I’ve tried to break the habit. Last weekend I even used my dad’s old phone, the kind that can only make calls. For a few hours I actually felt calmer, almost free. But then reality hit: I couldn’t order a taxi, couldn’t check directions, and I ended up getting a bit lost on the way home. It took ages, and in the end I had to walk alone at night. It didn’t feel safe at all, and that experience made me realise just how dependent I am on my smartphone for even the simplest things. After that, I switched straight back to my smartphone — but now I feel even more trapped by it.

The part that really worries me is how uncomfortable I feel when I’m not doing anything. If my boyfriend goes to the bathroom at a restaurant, I grab my phone immediately. I can’t just sit there with my thoughts. And that really doesn’t feel normal.

I’m starting to think this constant connection is pushing me towards burnout — not physical burnout, but mental burnout. It’s like my brain never gets a break. I know something needs to change, but I honestly don’t know where to start. What should I do?”