

WEEK 4: SUBTRACT

Time with Electronic Devices

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Digital devices are everywhere. While these devices are great tools for learning and a fun way to engage and build community, there is increasing concern regarding the detrimental effects of excessive screen time. According to recent research, the average U.S. adult will spend the equivalent of 44 years of their life staring at screens (382,652 hours).¹ It's no surprise that the amount of time adults spend on devices has significantly increased since the start of the pandemic. It's important to be aware of symptoms and heed warning signs that manifest in mental and physical ways such as:

Sleep: Screen time before bed is the problem. Devices emit blue light, which can reduce or delay your melatonin production and disrupt your body's natural circadian rhythm.

Vision: Excessive screen time can cause both long-term and short-term effects. Did you know that people blink 66% less when they are staring at screens? This can lead to dryness, redness, eyestrain, blurred vision, headaches etc.

WHAT ARE HEALTHY DEVICE PARAMETERS?

Although there is not a clear-cut answer to this question, experts suggest:

1. **Limit social media to 30-60 minutes per day.**
2. **Spend 3-4 hours daily without any screens.**
3. **Stop using screens 1 hour before bed.**
4. **Take breaks every 20 minutes for eye health.**



STRATEGIES TO REDUCE USE:

- **Disconnect from screens as part of your bedtime routine.** Slightly adjust the bedtime routine created during Week 3 to include turning off all devices (phones, tablets and TV) an hour before bed. If your phone is too much of a temptation, try leaving it in another room.
- **Try the 20-20-20 rule.** Mini vision breaks is a great way to preserve your eye health and prevent eye fatigue and strain. Set an alarm or use an app to remind you to step away from your screen. For every 20 minutes of screen time, take a 20 second break and look at something 20 feet away. This allows your eyes to relax.
- **Turn off notifications.** When unwinding at home, turn off all phone notifications. These alerts trigger you to look at your phone and more often than not, spend additional time on your phone beyond checking the notification.
- **Enjoy regular sit-down family meals.** Put down devices, slow down and be present with your loved ones.
- **Bored? Play cards, dominoes or a board game for entertainment.** There are countless benefits of playing games including stress reduction, improved cognitive function, better memory and stronger relationships.

1. <https://www.time.com/6174510/how-much-screen-time-is-too-much/>

UNSTOPPABLE