



## Are You Phone-Snubbing Your Friends? There's an Easy Way to Stop

Hide your screen when your phone is on the table -- it's better for you and your phone.

Jason Chun July 6, 2025 2:45 a.m. PT



There are several reasons why I keep my phone face down when it's on the table. Nelson Aguilar/CNET

I'd have a hard time staying in touch with most of my friends if I didn't have my [smartphone](#). But when we actually do spend time together, I often wish we didn't have phones at all -- especially if my friend can't stop looking at theirs.

At some point, we've all been [phone-snubbed](#). That's what happens when the person you're spending time with seems more interested in their phone than you. You might be sitting right across from someone, but when they're laughing at a

video or meme only they can see, it feels like they're a million miles away.

I've been guilty of paying more attention to my screen than my companion and felt bad about it afterward. There's nothing wrong with replying to an urgent Slack message or pulling up a funny TikTok to share. But I know I probably spend [too much time](#) staring at screens, and a lot of that time is unhealthy [doomscrolling](#). These days, when I'm not using my phone, I try to be more deliberate about keeping it out of sight and out of mind. If I do need to keep my phone at hand, I always have it face down.

### It can protect your phone screen

I have a few reasons for making sure my phone screen is turned away. The first one is practical: When my phone isn't in my pocket, it's probably sitting on a desk or table -- which means it's probably not far from a glass of water or mug of coffee.

As a somewhat clumsy person, I've spilled beverages on my phone plenty of times. And even though most modern phones are [water-resistant](#), why take chances? With my screen hidden, I can keep the most important part of my phone protected from splashes and other mishaps.

For extra protection, I have a [phone case](#) with raised edges. This helps prevent the screen from coming in direct contact with crumbs and debris that might be left on the table.

My colleague David Carnoy told me about an incident where he was charging his phone on his kitchen counter with the screen face up. Someone dropped a mug on top of it and cracked the screen. Unfortunately, he didn't have a [screen protector](#) on this device (he knows better now).

### **It could help save your phone battery**

Another good reason to keep my phone face down is that it won't turn on each time I get a notification. That means I can save a little bit of [battery charge](#).

A single notification won't mean the difference between my phone lasting the whole day or dying in the afternoon but notifications [can add up](#), especially if I've enabled them across all of my apps. If I'm in a lot of group chats, my screen might end up turning on dozens of times throughout the day (and that's on the low side -- many teenagers [have hundreds](#) of notifications a day).

### **It also shows that you pay attention**

Keeping my phone face down is also a [good rule of social etiquette](#): If I'm hanging out with someone, I keep my screen hidden from view as a subtle way of showing that I won't be distracted by it. I don't want incoming notifications to light up my screen every few seconds, especially if I'm in a bar or other [dimly lit setting](#). I want to keep my eyes on the person I'm talking to.

"Eye contact is one of the most powerful forms of human connection. Neuroscience research indicates that when two people make direct eye contact, their brain activity begins to synchronize, supporting more effective [communication](#) and increasing empathy. This synchrony can be disrupted when attention shifts to a phone, even briefly," says Michelle Davis, clinical psychologist at Headspace.

When I'm with the people I've chosen to spend time with, I want to be fully present with them. A sudden notification will tempt me to glance at, or worse, pick up my phone in the middle of a conversation.

### **It minimizes your phone's presence**

I also have a more personal reason for keeping my phone face down and I suspect that other people have had this same thought: My phone takes up too much space in my life.

I mean that quite literally. My phone is [bigger than it needs to be](#). That's been especially true since I upgraded from my iPhone Mini to a "normal-sized" [iPhone](#). Yes, I got a much needed boost in [battery life](#) but I also got a screen with more pixels to lure me into the next news headline or autoplaying Instagram reel.

A [small smartphone](#) isn't something that really exists anymore. My phone is bigger and better at grabbing my attention. It competes against my friends and family, books

and movies, the entire world outside of its 6-inch screen. It often wins. But there's still one small thing I can do to minimize its presence: I can keep the screen turned away from me whenever possible.

It can sometimes feel like there's [no escaping](#) from my phone. Whether that ever changes, or phones evolve into some [new form factor](#), I can't say. I can't control everything about my phone but I can control whether the screen stares at me when I'm not staring at it.