

# Finding balance: Understanding digital well-being and screen time.



Young people use digital devices throughout the day for learning, entertainment and social connection. While technology offers many benefits, students may not always recognize how their screen use affects their mood, focus, sleep and relationships.

Many conversations about screen time focus only on how much time is spent online, rather than how that time is used. Some digital activities can help students feel connected and engaged, while others may leave them feeling distracted, tired or overwhelmed.

This lesson introduces students to the concept of digital well-being, helping them reflect on how different types of screen use impact them. Students will explore the idea of balance, evaluate their own habits, and develop strategies to build healthier, more intentional screen routines.

## Grades: 6 to 9

### Learning objectives:

- Reflect on personal screen use and habits
- Understand how screen time can impact mood, focus and sleep
- Distinguish between different types of screen use (active vs. passive)
- Identify signs of balanced and unbalanced digital habits
- Develop strategies to improve digital well-being
- Recognize the importance of balance between online and offline activities

### Essential materials:

- Prepare the discussion prompts
- Prepare the handout: “A day in my digital life”
- Prepare the assignment: “My digital well-being plan”
- Prepare whiteboard or chart paper

## Introduction – 5 minutes

1. Begin by asking students:

- How much time do you think you spend on screens in a typical day?
- Do you think all screen time is the same?

2. Allow student to briefly discuss.

3. Explain:

- Screen time isn't just about how much time is spent, it's also about how it makes you feel and how it fits into your day
- The key concept that digital well-being = balance
- Using screens in a way that supports your health, focus and relationships

### Class discussion: Types of screen time – 10 to 15 minutes

1. Create two columns on the board:

- Helps me feel good
- Doesn't feel good

2. Ask students to suggest examples of types of screen time. Some ideas to help guide the discussion:

- Messaging friends
- Watching videos
- Playing video games
- Learning something new online
- Filming a video

3. Ask students: Can an activity fit in both columns? Why?

Guide them to understand that time and intention matter, and that not all screen time is the same.

## Activity: A day in my digital life – 15 minutes

1. Students will:

- Reflect on a typical day
- Identify when they use screens
- Consider how each activity makes them feel

2. After the activity, follow with a guided discussion. Ask students:

- When do you use screens the most?
- Which activities feel positive or helpful?
- Which feels draining or distracting?

### Class discussion: What affects digital balance? – 5 to 10 minutes

Once students complete the activity, discuss the ways technology is designed to keep our attention, and how being aware helps them make better choices.

Ask students:

1. What makes it hard to balance screen time? Some ideas to introduce:

- Notifications
- Autoplay
- Habit
- Boredom

2. What helps you take a break?

## Wrap-up discussion – 5 to 10 minutes

Ask students:

- What is one thing you learned about your digital habits today?
- What is one change you could try to improve balance?

Reinforce that digital well-being is about awareness and balance, not about avoiding screens completely.

### Assignment: My digital well-being plan

1. Ask students to choose two digital habits and write for each:

- What is the habit?
- How does it affect me?
- What change could improve balance?
- What strategy will I try?

2. Ask students to write down:

- One digital habit I want to change
- One strategy I will try
- Why this matters

# A day in my digital life

Screens are part of your everyday life. You use them to learn, connect, and have fun. But not all screen time feels the same. This activity will help you think about how you use screens and how they make you feel.

## Part one: My day

Think about a typical day. Write down when you use screens and how you use them.

Morning (6 a.m. to 12 p.m.):

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Afternoon (12 to 5 p.m.):

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Evening (5 to 9 p.m.):

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## Part two: How does it feel?

Think about your screen use. How do these activities make you feel?

Activities that make me feel **good**:

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Activities that make me feel **tired or distracted**:

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## Part three: Patterns

When do I use screens the most?

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Do I feel balanced? Why or why not?

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