

FINDING YOUR DIGITAL BALANCE

SUBJECT Digital well-being and critical thinking

TOPIC Balanced use of screens and social media

DURATION 45 min

AGE 13+

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the lesson, students are expected to:

-  Reflect on their own screen and social media habits.
-  Recognise the benefits and challenges of screen use.
-  Identify practical strategies for maintaining a healthy digital balance.
-  Develop the ability to set realistic and personal screen-time goals.

MATERIALS

- A big sheet of paper or a whiteboard with markers
- Impact vs effort matrix (to print x3) and cards
- Glue

METHODS

- Brainstorming
- Guided class discussion
- The impact-effort matrix
- Small group work

PREPARATION/OPENING

Before the lesson, the teacher researches the topic of screen time, i.e., gathers statistics on average screen time, tests screen-time tracking apps (such as Forest, Screen Time), and prepares the materials.

The elements of the impact-effort matrix need to be cut out before the lesson.

The teacher could begin the lesson by asking students: "Could you spend one whole day without your phone? Why or why not?" and invite them to share their answers.

LESSON STRUCTURE/DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION (15 min):

The teacher introduces the topic of screen time and why people might want to reduce it, presenting a few statistics about adolescents' screen use and discussing both the benefits and the challenges of digital technologies.

The teacher needs to make it as clear as possible that the purpose of the lesson is not to shame students for spending too much time on their phones, but to equip them with tools to reduce screen time if they want to.

The teacher leads a brainstorming session by noting down the students' responses to the questions:

- What are the benefits of using screens and social media?
- Why do so many people want to reduce screen time?
- Why is it difficult to reduce screen time?
- How can you recognise when screen time is becoming excessive?
- What effects can excessive screen use have on physical and mental well-being?

Summarise students' ideas, highlighting that the goal is balanced screen use, not avoiding technology altogether.

IMPLEMENTATION (30 minutes):

The activity, 15 min

The students get divided into 3 groups. Each group gets a printed copy of the impact-effort matrix.

Explain the matrix:

- **Impact** refers to how much a strategy could help reduce unnecessary screen time.
- **Effort** refers to how difficult it may be to apply that strategy consistently.

The students categorise the methods of reducing screen time by putting them in the field that feels right for them, and sticking them on with glue.

There are no single correct answers. The purpose is to encourage discussion and help students identify strategies that could work for them personally.

The discussion, 15 min

The students present the charts that they created and share their reflections on the task.

The teacher provides them with the closing remarks and answers questions, if needed. Conclude by asking students to formulate one realistic personal screen-time goal, reminding them that small, realistic changes are often more effective than trying to change many habits at once.

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

- Impact vs effort matrix (below) & cards

REFERENCES

- Digital Citizen: How to Reduce Screen Time
- Padiatric Journal: Effects of intervention programs in schools to reduce screen time
- What's the Big Data - Average Screen Time for Teens (2026).
- Martin, A. - "How to actually reduce your screen time: 12 simple, realistic tips to stop doomscrolling", in The Guardian
- Choi, S. - "8 Tips for Reducing Screen Time", in Healthline
- American Academy of Pediatrics - "Screen Time Guidelines"

CONCLUSION/ASSESSMENT

Monitor students' engagement and assess their readiness to use the proposed methods and their ability to identify realistic strategies, justify their choices and reflect on their own habits. Ask yourself:

- Did your students think about reducing screen time before?
- Were they able to propose any methods of their own?
- Did they seem ready to consider the proposed methods?

HOMEWORK

The students are encouraged to measure their screen time for a week, with an app and share their reflections on the following questions:

- Was the screen time more or less than you expected?
- How do you feel about that knowledge?
- Do you feel in control of how much time you spend in front of a screen?

IMPACT VS EFFORT MATRIX

Impact



Effort

CARDS

Download a tracking app.	Use your phone's screen-time tracker.
Turn off non-essential notifications.	Set daily time limits for social media apps.
Keep your phone out of your bedroom at night.	Have phone-free meals.
Put your phone away while studying.	Turn off autoplay on video platforms.
Replace 30 minutes of screen time with a hobby or physical activity.	Leave your phone in another room while doing homework.
Take a 5-minute screen break every hour.	Remove distracting apps from your home screen.
Your own method:	Your own method:

