

A guide to digital dieting

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What is a digital diet?

Adopting a healthy digital diet involves spending time away from connected electronic devices, like your smartphone.

It doesn't mean avoiding these devices altogether – we want you to benefit from all that your phone and the digital world has to offer. But it might be useful to set boundaries for when and how you use devices, so you can balance their use with other aspects of your life.

Why is it important?

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What can you do?



Control the amount of time you spend on your smartphone - Excessive use can cause repetitive strain injury (RSI), 'text neck' and eyestrain. If you need to be connected, try to use your laptop, ideally at a proper workstation



Use a cabled headset to make long calls - The call quality will be better, it avoids maintaining an uncomfortable posture, and it removes any concerns about having your phone pressed against your head¹



Enable 'Do Not Disturb' mode - The 'Do Not Disturb' mode limits interruptions, helping you to take control of your time, and can be configured and scheduled to suit your needs ('Settings' > 'Do Not Disturb'²)



Use 'Night Shift' mode in the evening - Phone light can disrupt your ability to fall asleep and make you feel hungry. 'Night Shift' mode softens the screen colour at specified times of day ('Settings' > 'Display & Brightness' > 'Night Shift'²)



Make use of 'Airplane Mode' - 'Airplane Mode' blocks all communication so you get an undisturbed sleep ('Settings' > 'Airplane Mode'²)



Go 'off the grid' during your time off - Disconnecting helps you focus on your personal life. If you need access to personal emails, then you can temporarily hide your work inbox ('Mail' > click back button to 'Mailboxes' > 'Edit' > deselect your work inbox). Remember to unhide it once back at work.

1. The World Health Organisation currently classifies smartphone use as "possibly carcinogenic" due to inconclusive evidence about their impacts
2. You can also switch this on or off quickly from the 'Control Centre' by swiping up from the bottom of your phone's screen

Digital dieting options

There's a range of benefits to managing your time on technological devices - it can bring a sense of calm, help you sleep better and give you the time to build and invest in relationships. If it's something you'd like to implement here's some options for testing out a digital diet:

1. Total detox

Some people decide to go cold turkey, and completely switch off their devices over their holidays and non-work time. This gives you a break from the eyestrain, pinging interruptions and 'lost time' that are often associated with being 'always on'. You could do this for all the days you've chosen to take leave, or just on specific celebratory days when you want to focus on family, friends or time for yourself. **Our top tip is...** to let colleagues, friends and family know what you're doing and give them an alternative way to get hold of you, if necessary. Then, put your phone away, out of sight, and enjoy!

2. Work-life balance dieting

For many people, smartphones are where they conduct way more than work. Devices now help us do our banking, shopping, navigation, fitness tracking and more. You may want to detox from work emails and documents, but keep a digital connection to your personal life through the holiday period. **Our top tip is...** to have two phones, if possible, and switch off your work phone. Or, hide your work inbox for the period of your 'diet'.

3. Weekend dieting

If a detox feels too much and you just want to firm up the boundaries between work and personal time, a '5-2' weekend diet could work for you.. **Our top tip is...** to jot down anything that needs checking on your work phone or laptop, and allow half an hour to deal with it first thing on Monday morning - so you can focus on weekend fun.

4. Family challenge

We know that devices are both a blessing and a bane to anyone with parent or caring responsibilities. How and when to get the family off them is a subject that is much debated. **Our top tip is...** to make a game of it. Get everyone to agree to forego their phones for a set period of time, and stack them in a bowl. The first person to break the pact washes the dishes, walks the dog, or buys the drinks etc.

5. Daily dieting

If you find yourself on emails late at night, or first thing in the morning and want to break the habit, why not practice daily dieting. Set aside time for the first and last hour of the working day to deal with emails, and then put your device away. **Our top tip is...** write your typical working hours in your footer and politely let people know you will reply to them as soon as you are able. And, once you've left the office, keep your phone out of sight..

Digital dieting support

There are an increasing number of articles, books and reports about the social and wellbeing effects of our digitally-connected world. Below are a few of our favourite resources:

Books

- 'Digital Addiction' by Jessica Forrest looks at how the design of apps can make them more addictive, and offers tips on how to manage your devices in a way that works for you.
- 'Digitox' by Mark Ellis tells the story of one parent's attempt to instigate 'tech free Sundays' for his family, offering a step-by-step guide to helping families disconnect.

Apps

- [SPACE - break phone addiction](#): Free from all app stores. Helps you adopt new behaviours, consciously connect, and find a better phone-life balance.
- [OurPact](#): Free from all app stores. Allows parents to remotely locate and manage their children's devices. Can use it to limit screen time, and disable apps at certain times of the day.

Useful links for more information:

Our corporate sustainability agenda: www.pwc.co.uk/corporatesustainability

Our responsible technology approach: www.pwc.co.uk/responsibletech

Our Intelligent Digital offerings: www.pwc.co.uk/intelligentdigital

We'd love to hear from you on these resources, or others you've found helpful. Please contact the [Wellbeing team](#) to share your experience.

Thank you

pwc.co.uk/responsibletech

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