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Library Extension Project

# “Media Use: How Do You Compare?”

Description: An active or passive activity in which users learn how to check their media use, compare it with peers’ usage, and consider what benefits or harms come from their media consumption.

## Target audience: Youth ages 11 and older. This is a particularly effective activity for families.

## Objectives: For participants to consider how much time they spend with media, compare their usage figures with average use, and consider how they can have more control and intentionality about their media consumption by using technical tools and considering daily habits.

## Skill to Teach: Show participants how to use their smartphones to check the amount of time they spend on various media.

* iPhone: Settings > Screen Time. Click on the “See all app and website activity” to get more details.
* Android: Settings > Digital Wellbeing & parent controls. Tap “manage your data” for more details.

Encourage participants to look at what apps they use the most and for how long each day. Look at the number of times they have unlocked their device and opened certain apps. Look at how many notifications they have received and from which apps. Look at the time of their first pick-up of their phone and their total number of pickups that day.

If time: Take this smartphone compulsion test: https://bit.ly/2QtW4uE. It’s one small indicator of whether or not you need to change your habits. By the way, this quiz is on the website of the Center for Internet and Technology Addiction. It’s an informative and reputable site, with other interesting quizzes too, but it’s also a business. The quizzes are one way to attract us to this resource.

Use the “How to Break a Media Habit” sheet from *Everyday Media Literacy* (Christian, 2024) to brainstorm ideas. Have participants fill in their comments or ideas as well.

Some tips to discuss:

Participants can limit the amount of time you spend on an app by clicking the timer icon next to it.

Talk about a bedtime routine that doesn’t involve one’s phone. Put on “**Do Not Disturb” for Bedtime mode. Also, to wind down and make it easier to put down the phone, try these tips to make the screen less bright and energizing:**

* **Grayscale:** Changes your screen to black and white.
* **Keep the screen dark:** Turns off the always-on display at bedtime.
* **Dim the wallpaper:** Dims your wallpaper and lock screen at bedtime.
* **Dark theme:** Makes your screen background black at bedtime. If you choose this option, "Dark theme," is used only when Bedtime mode is on

## Discuss bedtime routines, morning routines and how participants manage awkward moments. All of these instances involve phones for many people – going to sleep with a phone playing music, waking up with a phone alarm (and then immediately starting the day scrolling) and reaching for a phone to fill awkward silences.

Brainstorm how participants might change habits that rely on phone use, such as waking up with an alarm clock or setting a phone across the room to wake up.

## Materials needed: A quiet area for discussion. A board to write on and track ideas as participants brainstorm. Optional: A computer and wi-fi access to project the “The Media Use: How Do You Compare?” matching game at [www.wondermedialibrary.com](http://www.wondermedialibrary.com) that shares current facts and statistics about media use in the U.S. and globally.

## Suggested runtime: 45 minutes. Play the game as a group, guessing the correct answers of media usage, and then invite participants to look at their own screen use. Finally, discuss approaches to minimizing media use and changing media use practices that have become automatic.

## Unique Space or Personnel Needs: None.

Resources: [Take Control of Your Social Media Use](https://www.humanetech.com/youth/take-control-of-your-social-media-use) article; [Constant Companion](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/constant-companion-a-week-in-the-life-of-a-young-persons-smartphone-use) article on typical teen’s week with social media; [RX for an Infodemic](https://www.projectlooksharp.org/Articles/Rx%20for%20an%20Infodemic.pdf) article with intentional use tips; [Media Multitasking Disrupts Memory](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/media-multitasking-disrupts-memory-even-in-young-adults/) article

## Printables: “How to Break a Media Habit.”

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**To learn more:** [**www.wondermedialibrary.com**](http://www.wondermedialibrary.com/)

How to Change a Media Use Habit

***Review these ideas on how to change media habits and write your goal or adaptations below each.***

**Identify the bad habit you want to change**. Knowing that a habit is having negative effects helps give motivation to change it. Be clear about what you want to change, then set an alarm on your phone to remind you throughout the day, or write it on a sticky note and put it on your bathroom mirror. Start with a small, realistic goal: If your ultimate plan is to use your smartphone a total of only two hours each day, a good place to start is with not checking your phone for 15 minutes. You can add ﬁve-minute increments as you get better at your new “habit” of phone intermissions.

**Notice what triggers your use**. If you check your phone when nervous or in socially awkward situations, replace that tendency with a realistic alternative. Practice deep-breathing exercises while waiting in a fast food line. Work on your memory by trying to recall all the kinds of shoes people around you are wearing without looking at their feet.

Look for others not on their phones and strike up a conversation— about not being on your phones. Learn to tolerate being bored.

**Change your routine**. This may help reset those automatic movements. Tips include: Don’t use your phone as an alarm clock. Put your phone in the next room. Turn off notiﬁcations. Unfollow people who constantly virtually tap you on the shoulder for attention. Get an app to help you resist the temptation to go online. Get another to track your online time.

**Tell others**. Sharing your goal allows friends and colleagues to support you *and* keep you accountable. In the case of the goal of reduced smartphone use, tell your support team to reign in the mindless texts and bored memes they send you.

**Expect setbacks but not failure**. You’ll slip into the old “bad” habit because it’s a habit. That’s expected. But don’t give up. Motivation is essential to changing a routine.

**Replacement**. Replace the media use with something *equally engaging* that isn’t related to your habit. If you like to binge-watch streaming video after a long day, then anticipate this temptation to stream away the evening online and instead plan to go for a walk, play sports, connect with friends or try a new recipe. You could shock your BFF and read a book.

**Reward yourself**. After reaching your ﬁrst small goal, treat yourself to a short-term reward. Download a new song as your ringtone. Get a snack with friends. Blow off your least-favorite chore.

Sources: Christian, 2024; Devine et al., 2012; Jager, 2003; Greenﬁeld, 2017

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