



# Screen Free Week

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## Establishing Family Rules with Electronics

Telling your child to turn off his video games while you're sitting in front of the TV won't do anyone any good. It's important for you to set healthy limits on your electronics use for your own sake, as well as your child's sake.

Here are a few household rules you might want to establish to curb screen time:

- No digital devices during family meals.
- No electronics use during family fun nights.
- No screen time in the car.
- No screens allowed in bedrooms.



In addition, consider an occasional **digital detox** for the whole family. Create a screen-free night once a week or commit to unplugging one weekend a month. It could be good for everyone's physical and emotional health, as well as your family's relationships.



## How to Limit Your Child's Screen Time



### Model Healthy Electronic Use

Parents need to be role models of screen use for their kids. Before you binge-watch your favourite Netflix series, remember that you are setting an example for your kids with your own time spent in front of a screen.

### Create "Technology-Free Zones"

Establish zones in your house where electronics simply are not allowed—whether it's mobile phones, handheld video games, or laptops. One example is your home's dining room or kitchen, which you could keep reserved for having meals and family conversations.

### Ask for Your Child's Passwords

You might want to consider asking your kids for the passwords to their online and social media accounts. Kids don't always have the maturity necessary to handle online interactions and can be vulnerable to cyberbullying. You'll need to discuss the option as a family, but it will be up to you as the parent to figure out the best way to help protect your child while still allowing them to have some privacy and autonomy.

### Explain Why You're Limiting Screen Time

If your kids understand that you're limiting your family's screen time because too much time spent on screens has downsides, they're much more likely to follow the rules you set. If your kids just think you're "being mean," they might be more likely to resist or break the rules you are trying to enforce. Based on what's appropriate for your child's age, explain why violent videogames, TV shows, and movies can be harmful. If your kids use the Internet, make sure you have a conversation with them about the dangers of online predators.

### Use Parental Controls

There are tools you can use to protect your kids from accessing explicit content on the Internet and on TV. Most routers, web browsers, and TVs have parental controls that you can set up to filter or block unwanted content. If your kids have smartphones, there are also built-in settings or apps you can download that allow you to create content filters. Many also allow you to block specific websites, web searches, or even keywords.

### Encourage Other Activities

With a wealth of apps, games, devices, and content, it's easy for kids to become reliant on electronics for entertainment. Encourage your child to seek out and get involved in activities that don't need a screen. Playing outside, reading a book, or even digging out an old boardgame are just a few ideas.

### Educate Yourself on Electronics

Today's kids are tech-savvy. Most of them know more about electronics than adults do. Parents need to stay up-to-date on the latest apps, games, and social media platforms, and trends. For example, you can't teach your child about the risks of social media unless you understand the dangers yourself.

### Set Aside Times to Unplug

Set aside times for your whole family to unplug from their technological devices. Dinnertime or an hour before bedtime are two examples. When you all agree to set aside your devices, it gives your family the opportunity to spend thoughtful, quality time together.

### Make Screen Time a Privilege

You might decide to make screen time a privilege rather than a right. If you use a form of discipline that involves taking away privileges (negative consequences), a child's phone, laptop, or video game might be one such privilege. However, once you've set a limit on how much screen time is allowed, don't allow kids to earn extra time as a reward. Instead, stick to the daily limit and offer other free or low-cost rewards to reinforce positive behaviour.

### Keep Your Child's Bedroom Screen-Free

You won't be able to monitor your child's screen use if they are able to use devices out of your sight. For this reason, you might want to make it a rule that TVs, video game systems, and computers are not allowed in your child's bedroom. This also includes handheld devices that your kids might be tempted to use late at night, which could interfere with their sleep.

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What you will need:

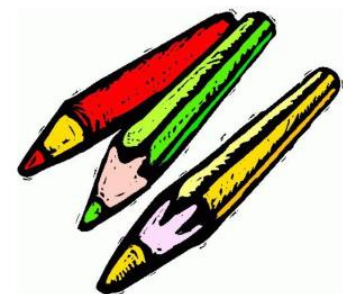
- Paper
- Pencils
- Something to draw



## Life drawing observations

Life drawing observations are when you simply draw what you see. It could be a person, a landscape, a view from your window it can be anything. Going out or taking half an hour away from the screen to draw is a great way to relax. Below are some ideas you could use:

- Take a walk to the park (draw the park or find a nice, wooded area to draw)
- Draw a person it could be a family member
- Try drawing the scene you can see out your window
- Flowers can be good to draw



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## Mindfulness

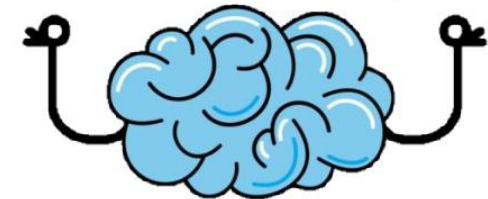
Mindfulness or being mindful means taking it slow, thinking things through properly in a relaxed way. Taking some time from the screen practicing mindfulness can be a great way for you to relax and help focus. Below are some ways you can practice mindfulness:

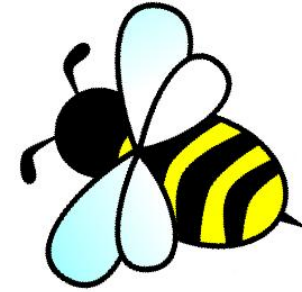
- Observe your breathing- Take a moment to stop and acknowledge your breathing, take a couple deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth.
- Senses- what can you see/smell/touch/taste/hear
- Try some meditation or yoga
- Go outside for some fresh air- take a moment to look at the clouds
- Colouring



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## Nature walk

A great way to get up and get away from the screen is to go for a nature walk, it can be to your local park or even somewhere new. Below are some tips and things you can do on your nature walk:

- Create a nature scavenger hunt to take with you on your walk. Find the things on your list while your out and check them of
  - Hydration- don't forget to take a dink with you on your walk
- Nature watching- create a list of birds and animals you may find on your nature walk, bring it with you and mark all the ones you find.
- Listen- While out on your nature walk take a moment to listen to everything around you, what do you hear?
  - Play some games such as I spy.
- Start your own nature collection- On each of your nature walks collect some things while you are out such as leaves, twigs, berries, and anything else you find. Bring them back with you and you can look back on all your different walks



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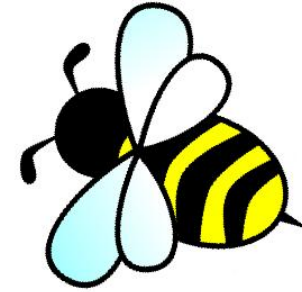
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## Screen Free Activity Ideas

Below are some ideas of screen-free things you could do with your kids, during this time. Staying indoors to keep safe and healthy is imperative but it doesn't have to be boring or detrimental.

**1. Homemade gifts.** Encourage your child to make a gift for someone or a greeting card. There are many ideas and instructions online, start searching!



**3. Reminisce.** Sort through old photographs, make a scrapbook of memories. It might sound a bit old fashioned but it's so therapeutic and you get to spend quality time with your kids.

**4. Organise.** Get your child to sort through their belongings and throw out what they don't need. Ask them to organise their room.

**2. Get baking.** Bake some cakes or biscuits. Have them help you in the kitchen! Who doesn't need a great helper?

**5. Draw or create a family tree.** Why don't you even make an art gallery at home and show of your child's artwork?

**6. Chat.** Let your child spend time with their friends on Skype or phone. Teenagers especially, truly feel isolated if their aren't in contact with their friends.

**8. Get gardening.** Show your child how to take care of plants and let them garden, too. If you live in apartment, go to your balcony plant some flowers in pots.

**7. Treasure hunt.** If you are lucky enough to have a garden create an exciting treasure hunt with clues and home-made treasures for your kids to find.



## Screen Free Week Activities

Here are a variety of activities and games you can enjoy during screen free week!

Playing Hopscotch

Have a garden picnic

Cloud watching

Going on a walk

Read a book



## The Negative Effects of too much Screen Time

Whether you keep the TV on all the time or the whole family sits around staring at their smartphones, too much screen time could be harmful. Here's what some of the research says:



**Behaviour problems:** Elementary school-age children who watch TV or use a computer more than 2 hours per day are more likely to have emotional, social, and attention problems.

**Educational problems:** Elementary school-age children who have televisions in their bedrooms do worse on academic testing.

**Obesity:** Too much time engaging in sedentary activity, such as watching TV and playing video games, can be a risk factor for becoming overweight.

**Sleep problems:** Although many parents use TV to wind down before bed, screen time before bed can backfire. The light emitted from screens interferes with the sleep cycle in the brain and can lead to insomnia.

**Violence:** Exposure to violent TV shows, movies, music, and video games can cause children to become desensitized to it. Eventually, they may use violence to solve problems and may imitate what they see on TV.