



Guide to managing time online



This guide provides advice on how to manage time online, including how to balance work, research, study and social life.

Being online can support social connections, work and study. It might be easy to find ourselves spending most of the day in front of a screen – studying, working, streaming content, on social media or online gaming.

To avoid the negative impacts of too much time online, it's important to balance time online and off.

How much is too much?



The amount of time spent online that could be considered 'too much' will vary from person to person. When assessing your screen time, think about the length of time online, as well as how it affects your friendships, family, health, work or study. Also consider the quality of any content or activities you engage with online.

If the amount of time you spend online is negatively impacting your wellbeing, relationships or responsibilities, it is likely that you need to cut back.

Symptoms of spending too much time online

The following signs may indicate that you are spending too much time online.

- Ongoing headaches, eye strain and sleep disturbance.
- Neck, back or hand pain.
- Online activities interfering with your health, wellbeing or relationships.
- Regularly checking your device while trying to complete other tasks.
- Constantly talking about what you've seen on social media.
- Withdrawing from offline friends and activities.
- Attributing more importance to your online activities and contacts than anything else.
- A decline in performance in your work or study.



Ways to improve online habits

Sometimes a little information is all you need to kickstart a change in your online habits. Here are some strategies to try:

- **Turn off notifications** for social media or messaging apps on Apple and Android devices. You can also set 'do not disturb' periods to pause notifications.
- **Monitor or limit your phone use** if you are constantly distracted. Many phones have settings that allow you to track time spent on apps and allow you to set daily usage limits. Activate these and look out for other apps that help you become more aware of how you use screen time.
- **Set routine breaks.** If you are online for an hour or more, make sure you take a short break. This could include stretching or a short walk.
- **Make a plan.** Set daily tasks you would like to achieve at work or while studying. This may help you to maintain focus and prevent the distraction of looking at your phone/ browsing social media. Reward yourself with screen time once you meet your goals.
- **Have a 'no device' policy** when eating or exercising. Try to have lunch with a colleague/ friend.
- **Implement strategies** to minimise work-related stressors. For example, don't send or check emails outside of regular business hours.
- **Make sure you spend time offline** with friends or engaging in your favourite sports and other activities you enjoy.
- **Check your gaming.** If you spend too much time playing online games, read eSafety's gaming advice for tips on how to balance your time online.
- **Turn your devices off** or put them on airplane/sleep mode at least an hour before bedtime to ensure you have the best quality sleep.
- **Have a device-free zone** within your home.

Support

If you think you need help managing the amount of time you spend online and its impact on your wellbeing, there are a range of supports available:

- your institution's wellbeing and support services
- general [counselling and support services](#).