



Guide to Phone Use

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This package was created by Healthy U: Peer Health & Wellness at the University of Manitoba. We are a group of trained, non-judgmental, and confidential student health and wellness leaders on campus.

We provide outreach activities, workshops, and one-on-one support for our fellow students on a variety of health and well-being topics. Feel free to drop in to chat or pick up more information packages.

If you would like to request or attend one of our workshops or events, check out our website for details.



Phone Use Problems

Do you...

Get mentally **exhausted** and burned out?

Feel like you can't **focus** on anything besides your phone?

Have **trouble sleeping** because you stay up looking at your phone?

Get **headaches** from looking at your phone for so long?

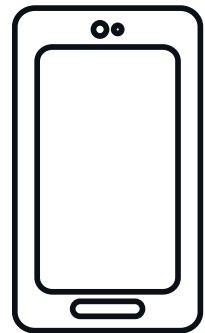
Use your phone at **inappropriate times** (i.e. while driving, studying, or while someone is talking to you)?

... you might be developing a phone use problem!

Every time we receive a text message, Instagram like, Facebook comment, or whatever else, we get a dose of dopamine - this controls the pleasure and reward centre in our brain. We get hooked on our devices, and become afraid of missing out on something.

How to use your phone in a healthier way:

- Make time limits for yourself.
- Turn your phone off when spending time with friends and family.
- No phone (or laptop, or video games) for at least 30 minutes before bed, or a full hour if you can. The blue light can disturb your circadian rhythm which regulates your sleep, and the stimulation can keep your brain awake. Try drawing, meditating, or reading a book instead.
- No phone for the first 30 minutes of your day so you can have time to settle into your day and have a healthy breakfast.
- Turn off your notifications, especially when you have work that needs to get done.
- Use timers on your phone to limit app time
- Check out apps that turn off alerts so you can focus on homework or that task at hand



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Do most of your arguments happen through texting?

There could be many reasons why you find yourself arguing with people over text way more than in person, such as:

Misunderstandings

The majority of our communication is nonverbal. Therefore, it can be easy to misjudge someone when you can't hear their tone of voice or see their facial expression. Before you dive into an argument, ask yourself if you're sure you're interpreting what they're saying correctly. Consider calling the person or asking if the conversation can wait until you see each other.

Feeling over-confident

It's often easier to express frustration or disappointment through text because you don't have to see the way your words may hurt the other person. Before sending a heated text, give yourself time to cool off, and think about whether or not you're typing something that you would be comfortable saying to their face.

Getting carried away

Something that started as a small disagreement or a slightly rude remark can quickly become a full-blown argument. If you find yourself fighting with someone, consider whether the argument is even worth it. What are you fighting about, and why is it so important that you need to be this upset, annoyed, or angry? Is there another way you could discuss this? Could you swallow your pride and tell the other person this disagreement isn't worth a fight?

What else can you do?

If your arguments are with a particular person, **discuss texting less**. Maybe you can arrange to FaceTime or go for coffee more often, in lieu of texting daily. It may seem daunting or even extreme, but if the two of you value a healthy relationship with each other, this is worth considering!

Don't hold onto it! Your phone, your storage, your bad memories. If you have an argument with someone or even if they say something you don't like over text, feel free to **delete these texts!** You don't need to keep looking back at it. If someone says something you don't like in person, do you record it or write it down? Then why save your texts?

Ask yourself if there's an **underlying reason** for why you're fighting. Do the two of you have real problems you need to discuss? Are you tired and is it putting a strain on your relationships? Sometimes when we fight with someone it can be a sign that there is something else going on that we need to address, whether it is in the relationship or just with yourself.

Apologize! Remember that nobody is above an apology, because everyone makes mistakes. **Apologizing doesn't mean you have to take the entire blame** - own up to your contributions to the problem and offer an explanation to why it happened. When apologizing, consider a realistic way you can make sure it doesn't happen again ("I'm sorry I said those things, I was stressed and I took it out on you. If this happens again, I'm going to stop texting you for five minutes so I can address my own stress first.")

Does cutting back on phone time feel ridiculous? Impossible? Unrealistic?

The more dramatic this idea seems, the more likely it is you could use some time away from your phone! Start with something small and simple, to show yourself that you can do it. If you need some ideas, here's a challenge you can try:

Week 1: Block out two hours every day where you turn your phone and all other technology OFF! Not only is this good for your phone, but it will give you a chance to do something else without interruptions (like studying). If two hours feels too long, try starting with one hour. Set a timer to hold yourself to it!

Week 2: In addition to turning your phone off for two hours, don't use your phone within an hour before bed. Tell whoever you're texting good night, and use this hour to establish your bedtime routine, read a book, or anything else you find relaxing.

Week 3: No phones for 30 minutes in the morning either! After turning off your alarm, resist opening social media or answering texts, and instead do some stretches.

If you successfully completed this challenge, consider keeping it up! **Think about how you feel now (especially in the mornings) compared to how you felt before you started cutting back on phone time.** Do you feel more refreshed or energized? Do you get less headaches? Do you have more time for other things in your life?

If you couldn't keep up with the challenge, don't sweat it! **Giving something up is difficult**, especially when it's easy to fall back into habits and patterns. Keep trying different ways to use your phone a little less!

