



How much smartphone use is too much?

Top tips from parents for having a healthier relationship with your smartphone.

How do we get the right balance with mobile phone use and how can we be good role models for our children?

[September saw the RSPH launch #ScrollFreeSeptember:](#)

“Scroll Free September offered a unique opportunity to take a break from all personal social media accounts for 30 days during September. A good relationship is one of balance, and Scroll Free September aimed to help you gain that with social media both on and offline”.

Was it too much to ask people to stop using social media for personal use for a whole month? As parents and carers, we are having to learn how to be good role models for our children, no one has taught us how to use smartphones and we are still deciding what the best practices are.

More of us than ever work from home or have online businesses, many juggling work and childcare to get everything done. Smartphones are a revolutionary tool, but how do we get the right balance?

We asked several parents and carers what their top tips were for having a healthier relationship with their smartphone.

1. **Don't take your phone to bed** - "I leave my phone downstairs when I go to bed, so I can't do late night scrolling. I've also deleted some apps. I made a conscious decision to use social media less and it's freed up so much time".

2. **Try out rules that work for your family** – "I'm trying out a new rule which is: I will decide when my kids can use screens. The only exception is if you need the device to research for homework".

3. **Turn your phone to vibrate** – "I almost always have my phone on silent with vibrate. Somehow I don't feel so compelled to look at it when it hasn't pinged".

4. **Turn your notifications off** – "Turn notifications off so you aren't constantly distracted. Check out social media at set times. This is what I do and have encouraged my daughter to do same as she's started using WhatsApp".

5. **Don't be too available (but we don't advise switching your phone off if it's required for emergencies 😊📵)** "I accidentally had my phone on DO NOT DISTURB for about 2 months! Thought my phone was playing up! It was brilliant! I must admit if my phone rings I am somewhat surprised! I hate it when someone calls me on it! I have ALL notifications off and removed apps. Pure bliss!"

6. Set rules that work for your family – “I heard someone say they hand over a tablet to their child on Friday night fully charged and when the battery is gone it's gone. Until the next Friday. I'm planning to try this out”.

7. Use your laptop instead of your mobile – “I work from home and I'm trying to do more work on my laptop instead of the phone, so they don't see me as perpetually half speaking to them and then half looking at my phone. The laptop seems far less of a barrier and I have far fewer concerns about them compared to phones”.

8. Have screen and mobile free times - [Common Sense Media recently campaigned for a #DeviceFreeDinner](#) having family time without devices. How many of us bring our phones to the dinner table or half watch a film with our kids whilst on our mobile phones?

“I spend too much time on my phone in front of my son, and he's only 2. So recently I've been trying (not always successfully!) to stop looking at social media in front of him on the 4 days a week he's at nursery, since on those days I only see him for a couple of hours in the morning and a few hours in the evening, so I should be able to survive without it for that short time. I definitely notice a difference in his behaviour when I have my phone in my hand”.

9. Turn off the Wi-Fi - this is possibly a bit extreme?! - But for some parents of teenagers, we've been hearing that some are turning it off at 10pm and that goes for the whole family.

10. Keep your phone out of sight - “I've just been chatting to a friend who says she leaves hers in the kitchen in the evening. She only looks at it if she goes to get something but otherwise leaves it alone. I never take my phone upstairs to bed, it always charges in my study overnight.

“Leave your phone in another room if you are working/doing homework/ focusing on a task, so you are not tempted to look at it. ([Rob Moore](#) leaves his mobile phone in another room until lunchtime)”.

11. **Be respectful** – “We *try* to be really strict in our house. I read a great suggestion in a parenting magazine when my little one was a toddler - imagine your child is an adult friend; would you constantly scroll through your phone in front of them? Try to offer your child the same respect”.

12. **Have a clear out of your apps** - “Or you could put your "guilty pleasure" apps like Facebook in a folder so they take longer to get to (then it's a conscious decision and action to access)”.

13. **Record how long you've been using your phone using the Moment App** –

“I downloaded the [‘Moment’ app](#) which records how long you’ve been on your phone and tells you every day. I was pretty shocked at how much time I was spending on my phone - mindless scrolling really does add up - that really helped me to cut down”.

14. **New tech can support parental controls** - “When ios12 comes out it will have inbuilt control mechanisms so you'll be able to restrict time allowed even on individual apps. I've got teens so it'll be a negotiation.

15. **Be present** - “Look up from your mobile when someone speaks to you (guilty). I started to notice my kids wouldn’t look up when I spoke to them (even if they weren’t using a device) and I realised it’s because I’m always multitasking (so I often respond to them while I’m looking at my phone). Now I look up when they speak to me and ask them to do the same. It’s massively improved how we all talk to each other and how they talk to others”.

What are your top tips for getting a better balance with your tech? Share your thoughts with us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

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