

Which of These 8 Hacks Decrease Screen Time? Take The Hack Challenge

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Which hacks decrease undesired screen time? This is the question to ask kids and teens this week. From that discussion, see if they, ideally along with you, will choose to adopt one of these ideas for 24 or even 72 hours. It's a *Hack Challenge*—and who doesn't like a challenge?



I say “ideally along with you” because we are all in this together. But just because we all have challenges around managing screen time does not mean that as parents we should take a hands-off approach. I hear people say about kids that “They just need to learn by themselves to manage screen time.” The *Screenagers* team is dedicated to the idea that defining sacred screen-free times in the day is key for helping youth reach their conscious goals and unconscious goals. And, finding hacks to decrease distractions fits into this 100%.

As always we would love to hear from you—what challenge did anyone in your group decide to try? Perhaps you have a different hack that you can share. Please email me directly at delaney@screenagersmove.com. You can use the tab on the left to post this TTT on Facebook, or come to our and share with us there. It's so wonderful to continue to learn from each other, and to be a supportive force when anyone does take on a challenge!

Here are 8 hacks that can help cut down on screen time and that can make for a good *Hack Challenge*.

1. Reorganize your home screen (if your child does not have a phone but uses an iPad or another device with apps they can do this on those devices)

Having all your favorite apps on your home screen can be quite tempting. **Try to remove all the tempting apps and replace with just your calendar, your clock, and your calculator.** My co-producer, Lisa, removed Facebook and Twitter from her home screen and it has significantly decreased the amount of time she spends on social media.

2. Delete certain apps

When it seems a particular app is taking too much of your time, of course the best thing to do is to delete it. Many youth have video game apps (by the way, I was amazed to see how many ads they get on Instagram for additional games). Perhaps your teen will take the challenge to remove a game app for 72 hours?

3. Use blocking software

A recent [Pew Research Center survey](#) found that 45% of teens say they are online “near constantly.” Apps like [“Freedom”](#) and [“Self Control”](#) are aimed at helping people minimizing this. They can block social media, online shopping or anything that distracts you online for whatever amount of time you designate.

4. Time Control Apps

On an iPhone, you can set Screen Time which sets a specific amount of time you can use particular apps. Android phones have something on their “Digital Wellbeing” dashboard called App Timers that allow you to set time limits per apps.

5. Turn-off autoplay on YouTube

According to YouTube, about 70% of the videos people watch on the platform are those that were suggested by the algorithm—and of course, many of these are the ones that start auto-playing (and thus we start “auto-watching”). A simple way to regain control and always stay on purpose is by turning off autoplay. This will prevent another video from automatically loading.

6. Limit notifications

One study found out that the average person receives about [63.5% notifications each day](#). This interruption is distracting and can lead you down a rabbit hole of time spent on your phone. You’ll be amazed at how much time you save by turning off notifications — limiting them to only those you need.

I have set up my phone so that the only notifications I get are the day of a flight, a car ride, and text—but even for texts I have an app that lets people know that I will not receive their message until I stop my car. People who know me well call me if it’s urgent.

7. Take ads off your page and other distractions

You might have noticed that some websites are cluttered with multitudes of distractions like autoplay videos, pop-up ads, and sidebars that make it difficult to concentrate on one thing.

There are several browser extensions that allow you to remove ads and distractions from your webpages, leaving you a clean page of just text and images. [Mercury Reader](#), a Chrome extension, is a popular one. If the ad blocker does not allow you to read an article, it usually

gives you the option to turn it off just for that page. You just look at the top of your screen for a notification.

8. Make your phone only perform in black and white

Try making your phone screen grayscale. The colors on your screen are like candy to your brain. Changing your phone to black and white is less rewarding to your cerebrum and you may then spend less time scrolling. The red notifications, i.e., you have emails waiting, messages to respond to, etc., can cause stress and are difficult to ignore.

This is a great topic to have a conversation about with youth in your life. Here are some questions to get you started.

- When you realize that you have spent too much time on your screen, what gives you the power to stop?
- Let's all pick one of the ideas above to try. But first, try to measure how much time you spend on the screen now. Then, compare that to the amount you spend when you try one of the hacks.