



# Can Too Much Screen Time Harm You?

It's no secret that teens spend a lot of time viewing screens. In fact, the average teen spends over seven hours a day on screens for entertainment alone. But science increasingly shows that too much screen time can negatively affect teens' health. By sharing the article "Can Too Much Screen Time Harm You?" and the activity "Screen Time and Sleep Survey," you can help students understand how screen time may impact their physical and emotional well-being.

## Reading Comprehension Questions

**1** Explain why using your phone before bed might make it hard to sleep. (*The bright light from the screen can reduce the amount of melatonin your body produces, keeping you awake. Melatonin is a natural chemical that helps you fall and stay asleep.*)

**2** What evidence suggests a link between screen time and emotional health? (*Some studies have shown a link between higher amounts of screen time and increased symptoms of depression; some teens who overuse screens have anxiety when they are away from their phones, neglect responsibilities, and turn to screens to deal with stress.*)

**3** How might too much screen time affect your brain development? (*A study showed that the brains of some kids who used screens for more than seven hours a day had a thinner cortex than those of kids who used screens for less time. The cortex is the outer layer of the brain that processes information. It undergoes significant development during adolescence.*)

**4** What are some ways teens can reduce their screen time? (*Track screen time and set limits each day. Turn off screens 30 to 60 minutes before bed. Schedule time for non-screen-related*

*activities. Keep track of emotions and mood related to screen time and ask for support if needed.*)

## Critical-Thinking Writing Prompts

**Grades 6–8** How might too much screen time affect your school performance? Give an example to support your answer.

**Grades 9–10** Explain why it is important for teens to balance screen time with other activities.

**Grades 11–12** How might excessive exposure to social media negatively affect a teen's emotional health? Give one way teens can limit their social media exposure.

## Paired Reading

**"Getting Enough Sleep: The Impossible Dream?"**  
([teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/getting-enough-sleep-impossible-dream](https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/getting-enough-sleep-impossible-dream))

This paired text explains the importance of sleep and why many teens may be missing out.

**Writing Prompt** Explain why sleep is important. Then give two factors that may prevent teens from getting enough sleep. Use text evidence from "Can Too Much Screen Time Harm You?" and "Getting Enough Sleep: The Impossible Dream?" to support your answer.

### Subject Areas

- Science Literacy
- English Language Arts
- Health/Life Skills

### Standards

#### Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

**RST.9, GRS. 6–10**

- Compare and contrast the information gained from experiments with that gained from reading a text on the same topic.

**RI.1, GRS. 6–12**

- Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

#### Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Practices

- Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information
- Analyzing and interpreting data

#### Crosscutting Concept

- Patterns

#### Core Idea

**MS-LS1.D/HS-LS1.D**

- Information Processing

#### National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

- 8. Science, Technology, and Society

### Additional Lesson Resources

#### Vocabulary Support

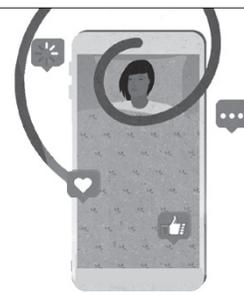
- Download terms and definitions at [scholastic.com/headsup/screentime](https://scholastic.com/headsup/screentime)

#### More Lessons on Science and Health

- [headsup.scholastic.com/teachers](https://headsup.scholastic.com/teachers)
- [teens.drugabuse.gov](https://teens.drugabuse.gov)

# Screen Time and Sleep Survey

How much time do you spend on electronic devices each day? Conduct your own investigation to find out.



**Step 1: Collect Data** » For one week, carefully track your habits using the table below.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<b>SCREEN TIME ACTIVITY</b> » Record the hours you spend on screens each day.							
Computer/ Phone/Tablet: <i>School-Related</i>							
Computer/ Phone/Tablet: <i>Entertainment</i>							
Watching TV							
Playing Games							
<b>Total Hours of Screen Time</b>							
<b>MOOD</b> » Record your mood at least twice a day. (e.g., sad, happy, excited, tired)							
Morning							
Evening							
<b>SLEEP TIMES</b> » Record your total hours of sleep the night before each day.							
<b>Total Hours of Sleep</b>							

**Step 2: Analyze Your Data** (separate paper)

Graph your daily screen time and sleep for the week. Then answer these questions:

1. What day had the highest total of screen time activity?
2. Did you observe a link between screen time and sleep totals each day?
3. The Centers for Disease Control recommends teens get at least eight hours of sleep a night. Did you? What is one thing

you could do to help yourself sleep better?

4. Did you observe a link between your mood and amount of screen time? Explain.

**Step 3: Set a Challenge** (separate paper)

Create goals to reduce your screen time. How much screen time will you allow each day? Which activities will you cut back? Which will you increase? Track your habits for another week. Compare the results.

For more information, visit [scholastic.com/headsup](http://scholastic.com/headsup).