

Digital detox: Going cold turkey with no wi-fi in the Lake District

Level: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Place a cross on the lines to show how often you use your phone for these things.

take photos	never _____ every day
listen to audiobooks or podcasts	never _____ every day
stream music	never _____ every day
watch videos	never _____ every day
look up information	never _____ every day
make phone calls	never _____ every day
go on social media	never _____ every day
read the news	never _____ every day
messaging	never _____ every day
find directions or use as a navigation tool	never _____ every day

b. Draw a line from top to bottom that goes through each cross. Compare your lines and answers with other students and talk about anything else you use your phone for every day.

2 Key words

a. Find words in the article that match the definitions below. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

- unable to understand something or think clearly about it _____ (paragraph 2)
- natural things such as trees, hills, and lakes that you can see in a particular place _____ (paragraph 3)
- completely necessary _____ (paragraph 4)
- needing or wanting something very much _____ (paragraph 5)
- not connected to the phone or internet _____ (paragraph 6)

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6. make someone believe that something is true _____ (paragraph 10)
7. opposed to something _____ (paragraph 10)
8. completely accepted something new _____ (paragraph 10)
9. a word to describe an attitude, belief, or habit that has existed for a long time and cannot easily be changed _____ (paragraph 11)
10. make someone do something that they do not want to do _____ (paragraph 11)

b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences.

1. Although they had only met once, he was _____ to see her again.
2. Light and water are both _____ if you want to grow healthy plants.
3. You can't _____ an animal to like you; you have to earn their trust.
4. Despite what people say, elderly people are not always _____ to change.
5. She no longer knew what was happening and was starting to feel a bit _____.

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- 1 “Where’s the TV?” my children ask almost as soon as we step inside the remote cottage in the Lake District: The door of the holiday cottage opens straight into the tiny lounge. There’s no TV, only a simple fireplace, a wooden bookcase with maps and nature books, and a couple of armchairs.
- 2 “Well, can we go on the iPad then?” is the next question. Then, when we tell them that no, we didn’t bring it, they say, “Can I go on your phone?” There is a look of confused disbelief on my children’s faces when I explain that there’s no internet, no computer, not even a phone signal, and that we’re not going to be looking at screens this week.
- 3 Doing a digital detox wasn’t my main motivation for coming to this remote cottage – the thrilling scenery and sense of isolation are the main reasons – but no wi-fi is a huge bonus.
- 4 My children are only six and eight, and they do not yet have their own mobiles or tablets, but the shows they like are online. They want to go on on YouTube and love “doing funny faces” – creating long strings of emojis on my phone to text to their friends (or rather their friends’ parents, who get messages of 200 watermelons). Most of their homework is done online. The digital world is everywhere. Putting a complete stop to it for a while feels essential.
- 5 I’m not the only one with this feeling. Holiday companies offer more and more digital detoxes. Zooming, digital home-schooling and streaming TV shows makes it seem like our whole lives are lived online. Many of us feel screen-sick, desperate to disconnect.
- 6 In recent years, my family has escaped to off-grid holiday cottages. This is our second stay at this one, which is on a quiet lane. It is basic. There’s no bathroom, only an outside toilet and a shower bag that you fill from the kitchen tap (there is hot water and electricity).
- 7 All of this creates a sense of adventure, and with no other building in sight, it feels like you have this wonderful valley to yourself.
- 8 After their first shock, the kids find it surprisingly easy to live without videos. We hang out next to a small stream in the wild garden with novels and colouring books, and we eat on a picnic bench under the tree. We go hiking, and my daughter discovers wild swimming. At night we watch for bats.
- 9 As the week goes on, the children stop complaining about the lack of screens and instead they play imaginative games in the surrounding fields, or we play card games and take a walk to get ice-cream.
- 10 It may be harder to convince older children and teenagers that a week with no wi-fi is a good thing, but growing awareness of the mental-health benefits of switching off may make them less resistant than you might expect. Many have embraced mindfulness, yoga and veganism – why not this?
- 11 When our tech habits are so deeply ingrained, we need to do more than just promise to use our phones less. Going somewhere like our remote cottage means there’s no choice. Perhaps we must force these experiences on ourselves. No one can disagree with a digital detox, especially when it can be so much fun.

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3 Understanding the article

a. Are these sentences True or False according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. The author has two teenage children.
2. Their main reason for going to the Lake District was that there is no wi-fi in the holiday cottage.
3. Her children do not yet have their own mobiles or tablets, but they do regularly use other people's devices.
4. The author says that her children need computer access to do their homework.
5. The author and her family try to stay at off-grid holiday homes each year, but this is the first time they have been to the Lake District.
6. Her children immediately love being in the countryside without internet access.
7. The author realizes that it would probably be more difficult to convince teenagers to enjoy a week without internet access.
8. She believes that, because many young people are interested in healthy eating and living, they will also start to understand the benefits of a week offline.

4 Key language

a. Match the words to make word pairs from the article. Then find and highlight them in the article.

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. confused | a. scenery |
| 2. digital | b. sight |
| 3. thrilling | c. awareness |
| 4. in | d. habits |
| 5. growing | e. off |
| 6. switching | f. ingrained |
| 7. tech | g. disbelief |
| 8. deeply | h. detox |

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b. Match the word pairs with their meanings.

1. beautiful and exciting natural features in the countryside
2. things that you do often or regularly related to computers and phones
3. not using technology and digital devices for a while
4. when more and more people realize that something is true
5. a period of time when someone deliberately stops using electronic devices such as computers, mobile phones, or tablets
6. in any place that you can see from where you are
7. an important part of your everyday life
8. when you can't believe something or why it is happening

c. Choose four word pairs that you would like to be able to use well, and write sentences of your own for each one.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss with a partner.

- How do you feel when you cannot use or find your phone?
- What would be the best and worst things about a holiday where there is no internet connection or phone connection?
- At what age should children get their own phone, iPad, or netbook?
- At what age should they be allowed to use someone else's phone?
- Where would you recommend that someone go for a digital detox?

6 In your own words

a. Six months ago, you opened a new digital-detox retreat centre. Everything is going well, but you don't have many bookings for the next six months. Write an advert to encourage new guests to book a retreat at your centre. The advert should include the following information:

- where it is
- what type of accommodation you offer (e.g., single/double rooms, tents, cottages)
- what facilities there are (e.g., pool, garden)
- the scenery around the centre
- the meals and type of food

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- workshops and activities (e.g., guided walks, yoga)
 - special programmes (e.g., a silent weekend, family days)
 - any other interesting information.
- b. **Read all the ads. Decide which centre you would like to stay at. Imagine you stayed there for a long weekend. What did you like best? What tips do you have for future guests? Write a short positive review for a travel website.**