



5 QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS SCREEN BALANCE

Talking openly about screen time can help families find balance with their screens.

But starting these conversations isn't always easy. This guide offers simple prompts to help you and your tween or teen talk about your habits, identify what's working and what isn't, and set expectations together.

Kick off the conversation by both checking your screen-time data to see which apps you use most, and when you're most active.

01 How do you feel when you are on your phone?

WHY THIS MATTERS

Talking about how screen use impacts emotions helps tweens and teens understand their own habits and identify when it might be time to take a break. This helps build digital self-regulation, a key skill for long-term balance.

EXAMPLE ACTIONS

Set time limits for apps to reduce endless scrolling. Also consider keeping phones out of the bedroom when you get ready for sleep.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

When does using your phone or other screens make you feel connected, creative, or relaxed?

When does it leave you feeling stressed, distracted, or sad?

Are there certain apps or times of day that feel harder to manage?

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02

When are times and spaces where it's important to be fully present?

WHY THIS MATTERS

Having shared screen-free time as a family supports connection and gives everyone a chance to reset. Keeping devices out of bedrooms also protects sleep, one of the biggest areas where reduced screen use makes a difference. Tweens and teens are more likely to follow through when they see everyone, including parents, participating.

EXAMPLE ACTIONS

Make mealtimes phone-free zones. Charge devices in common areas overnight instead of the bedroom.
Try a "tech-free Sunday morning" to reconnect.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

How do we feel about having screens during meals, car rides, or before bed?
When would screen breaks allow us to be more present with one another?
Are there specific rooms where it would be better to keep screens out?

03

What are your school's guidelines around phones and other personal devices?

WHY THIS MATTERS

Understanding school phone policies helps tweens and teens recognize why boundaries exist and how they support focus, engagement, and learning. Evidence suggests that firmer policies, like bell-to-bell phone restrictions, that are consistently enforced, are the most effective. See the [Dais' Policy Comparison Map](#) to understand the policy in your province.

EXAMPLE ACTIONS

Ask teachers, the principal or your school's parent council about how the school phone policy works. Explore other ways to stay involved at school without your phone, like intramural sports or joining clubs.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Who at school could you ask to learn about the phone use rules?
Why do you think it's important for schools to set and enforce these rules?
How can you stay connected with friends during the school day without using your phone?

To wrap up the conversation, you can capture your shared goals and commitments in a [Family Media Plan](#).

Most importantly, remind your child that this is about openness and trust. They can always come talk to you if something goes wrong online, or if they have questions.

04 How can we make sure tech supports your goals rather than distracts from them?

WHY THIS MATTERS

Screens can be a great tool, especially for learning and staying connected. Outside of school, balancing technology use in social and extracurricular settings helps tweens and teens stay present while still enjoying the benefits of digital connection. This conversation helps teens notice when screens add value and when they pull them away from the things they enjoy. It also opens the door to talk about social media boundaries and online group dynamics.

EXAMPLE ACTIONS

Set check-in times for sport/club group chats to reduce overwhelming notifications.
Use a shared offline family calendar for practices and events to reduce reliance on devices.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

When does your device help you study, connect, create, or explore your interests?
When does screen use get in the way of those things?
Do screens help you connect with friends, or make you feel more isolated?

05 How can we set screen habits that feel fair and realistic for both of us?

WHY THIS MATTERS

By letting your tween or teen lead the conversation and share how they'd like to be supported, you allow them to take ownership of their screen habits. Tweens and teens learn most from what they see, so invite them to hold you accountable for your screen use. This models trust, transparency, and shared responsibility.

EXAMPLE ACTIONS

Hold a monthly check-in to review your shared screen balance goals and progress.
Commit to not checking your phone during the screen-free moments you've established as a family.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

How can we support each other in finding balance?
Are there moments when you notice me getting distracted by my device?
What can we do to call each other in when we notice one of us is too preoccupied with our devices?
What do we think is a fair consequence if either of us isn't following the screen habits we agreed on? And how will we celebrate when we stick to goals?