

Is your phone getting a bit too bossy?

A fun family guide to noticing when our phones start taking over.

Adults and children: start with your own habits. Then ask, "Can I share something I noticed?" Keep it kind. These are conversation prompts, not an addiction test.



1. The Phantom Reach

I pick up my phone, then wonder what I picked it up for.



2. Just One More

One more video, game or message keeps turning into another.



3. The Conversation Thief

My eyes drift to a screen while someone is talking to me.



4. The Pocket Twitch

I feel uneasy when my phone is not close by.



5. The Boredom Buster

The moment nothing is happening, I reach for a screen.



6. The Mood Mover

I feel grumpy, anxious or restless when it is time to stop.



7. The Sleep Sneak

My phone creeps into bedtime or keeps me awake longer.



8. The Experience Stealer

I am busy checking or filming and miss what is around me.



9. The Time Traveller

I think a few minutes have passed. Where did the hour go?



10. The Real-Life Squeezer

Screens leave less room for play, people, hobbies or getting outside.

For each habit, say: Hardly ever / Sometimes / Quite a lot.

No points, no winner. Notice what it affects, not just minutes on a screen.

Our aim: notice together what our phones might be taking us away from.

Take back the boss's chair

Pick one small experiment together. Try it for a week, then notice what helped. Make room for sleep, play, movement, creativity, nature and each other.

1. Pause before you pick up

Ask, "What am I opening it for?" If you have no reason, leave it for a moment.

2. Choose the finish line

Agree an ending before you begin. Switch off autoplay and pause at that point.

3. Give someone your ears

Try a meal or a conversation with phones parked away. Adults join in too.

4. Give your phone a holiday

Try a short break with it in another room. Start small and keep needed contact available.

5. Let boredom hatch

Try five minutes with no screen. Doodle, look out of the window, or see what idea arrives.

6. Make a gentle landing

Agree a warning before stopping. Stretch, breathe or have a drink together afterwards.

7. Tuck the phones in first

Agree an evening parking place outside bedrooms, with arrangements for any essential access.

8. Look first, snap later

On a walk, notice three things before taking a photo. Choose a little time just to enjoy it.

9. Check the clock together

Guess how long you used your phone, then check. Be curious, and choose a reminder next time.

10. Make room for real life

Choose one thing you miss: a game, a hobby, a friend or a walk. Put it in this week.

Our one-week experiment

We want more room for: _____

Together we will try: _____

We will chat again on: _____

Keep it fair. Adults model the change too. Agree a friendly reminder, not teasing or catching each other out. Adapt for school, work, accessibility and safety needs.

When a chat needs more support. If screen use keeps disrupting sleep, school, relationships or wellbeing, or stopping feels very difficult, speak with your GP or a trusted professional. Listen to what may be underneath.

Further guidance: American Academy of Pediatrics, Family Media Plan.
healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan | Creative prompts, not a validated screening tool.