

# 9 Ways to Use Your Phone More Mindfully

If you have major FOMO when you're not scrolling through your phone, you might be using it too much. A 2017 report noted that people spend around five hours a day engaged with their smartphones, which makes a good case for exploring [how to be more mindful of how you're using your phone](#). While phones were originally invented in old-timey days so people could talk to one another without having to travel thousands of miles to hang out in person, it's likely that very little of the [time you spend on your phone](#) these days involves talking.

In fact, data from Flurry Analytics, an app for developers to track user data, found that 50% of all [phone time is spent on social media](#), messaging, and entertainment. Overall, the number of hours you're glued to your phone each day has risen by 20% in just two years, this data shows. It can also be absolutely mind-boggling to think about — and I mean *really* think about — how much time we spend watching videos of dogs. In addition, a 2018 study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* found that excessive use of smartphones can negatively influence neural pathways and contribute to [mental health problems](#).

[Dr. Nicole Taylor](#) is an associate professor at Texas State University's Anthropology Department who researches social media trends. She told Bustle for a previous article on [social media use and mental health](#) that social media use can help people connect "with a more diverse, global community than is possible through face-to-face engagement," but that "those connections lack the depth of face-to-face interactions," which can result in feeling lonely — which not great for your mental health.

If passively scrolling through your phone is hurting your mental health, taking time to use your phone more mindfully can help you reset how you interact with it. (Because unfortunately, it's not like phones are going away anytime soon.) It might be time to put your digital BFF on do not disturb and seek out some tools that can help you have a healthier relationship with your phone.

Here are nine ways to be more mindful of how you're using your phone.

## 1

### Set Limits on Your Screen Time

If you're having a hard time putting down your phone, you're not alone, and there's no shame in admitting that you might need help to slow your scroll. It's likely that you aren't even aware of how much time you're really spending scrolling on your device. This is where apps can help. In 2018, Apple released a new technology called Digital Health as part of iOS 12 to help you [manage your iPhone use](#). Google also [offers similar tools](#) for Android.

In addition, [Moment is an app](#) that can track your screen time the same way you track your 10,000 steps, and it allows you to set a daily limit for yourself. Once you reach that limit, you'll hear a buzzing noise prompting you to calmly step away from the phone. Moment is currently only available for iPhone users, but [Zenscreen](#), which is available for both iPhone and Android, works similarly. It can set you up with things like smart mornings, which allows you 10 minutes of wake-up scrolling, daily limits, calm nights, which restricts the use of certain apps after a designated time, and quiet time, which is basically a digital time out.

## 2

### Set an Intention to Have Phone-Free Meals

If you actually *want* to have a dinner date with your phone, then make sure you don't invite anyone else along because there is nothing more annoying than eating a meal with someone who has their nose buried in their phone. If you need an incentive to stay off your device during mealtimes, in her book [Talking as Fast as I Can: From Gilmore Girls To Gilmore Girls \(Everything In Between\)](#), Lauren Graham shares that her sister Shade uses money as an incentive to stop scrolling and eating.

Graham explains that when Shade and her friends go out for a meal they all put their phones in the middle of the table. Whoever reaches for their phone first pays the entire bill. If you can't afford to take a financial risk like this, you can also download an app called [DinnerTime Plus](#), which is used a lot by parents who want to keep their kids off their phones during meals. However, you can use it on yourself too. Just set it up to lock your phone while you're eating.

## 3

### Ask Yourself Some Hard Questions

People turn to their phones when they feel awkward or uncomfortable at social gatherings, when they're bored, and when they want to appear unavailable to others. Before you reach for your device, stop and ask yourself why you're doing it.

Do you really *need* to look at Twitter eleven-million times to see if Timothée Chalamet finally liked your tweet? The website Left Brain Buddha suggests that if you don't actually [need to use your phone](#) for something like making a call or getting directions, maybe resist the urge to pick it up and do a quick mindfulness meditation instead.

## 4

### Hide Your Email Accounts

IMO, email is one of the most anxiety-inducing inventions of our lifetime. Watching the number of messages increase on your phone all the live long day can be overwhelming.

However, it's important to remember that you are the boss of your phone, not the other way around, and you are totally empowered to pause the scary movie, also known as your inbox. Consider [turning off your email notifications](#), put your accounts in a folder, and move it to your second screen so you're not looking at it every time you use your device. This is how I keep it cool when it comes to my email.

If you're worried about missing an important message, remember that people can also call you or text you if there is an emergency, like if you're needed to perform brain surgery right this minute. You can also turn on notifications for specific senders only, like if you're waiting for an important email from your mom.

But seriously, whatever's in your inbox probably isn't a matter of life and death, and you don't need to respond to every single message ASAP.

## 5

### Take A Day Off

If you're worried the world will come to an end if you don't check and update your social-media accounts every day, give it a try and see what happens. Consider

designating one day a week as a social-media-free day. It's fine if you spend the day reading, watching TV, or other "unproductive" activities — just make sure you plan them with intention. If you don't trust yourself to stick to your commitment, there are plenty of apps that can [lock your social media accounts](#). You'll just have to resist the urge to log on from your computer.

## 6

### **Get an Old-Timey Alarm Clock**

Before smartphones took over every aspect of human life, people used paper maps for directions, old-school phones to order pizzas, cameras to take pictures, and clocks with alarms made specifically for the purpose of getting up in the morning. If the temptation to wake and scroll is more than you can take, invest in an old-school alarm clock and keep your phone out of reach while you're in bed. That way, you'll have to specifically seek out your device once you're ready to start your day.

## 7

### **Create Tech-Free Zones**

Can we all agree that you don't need to take your phone to the bathroom with you? Aside from being super gross, because germs, you risk dropping a very expensive device into a bowl of contaminated water. If you don't trust yourself to have phone-free bathroom time, see step three.

## 8

### **Commit to Being Present**

If you've never attended a concert or an event without snapping and 'gramming the entire thing, try not taking your phone out at all. Think that sounds totally bananas? Being fully present for a concert, wedding, or any other event is a completely different, and much more fulfilling, experience when you're not worried about posting the perfect Instagram story. God bless the few musicians who actually ban cell phones at their concerts. While it might feel like these people are playing the role of mean mommy, they really are doing you a favor.

## 9

### Manage Expectations with Others About Your Phone Time

If you have a habit of answering every text, email, and Instagram DM that comes across your screen ASAP, it's not too late to change that. Turn off your notifications so that you're prompted to check your phone only when you're ready too, and not when someone else is commanding your attention. While your friends and family might be used to your prompt responses, have an honest conversation with them about your attempts to reduce your screen time, and let them know that if you don't respond right away, it doesn't mean you're ghosting them — you're simply away from your phone.

## 10

While technology has changed the world in wonderful ways, it's also ushered in a culture where everyone expects everything right freakin' now. Basically, it's turned us all into toddlers. Taking more than two seconds to respond to someone can create misunderstandings and foster hurt feelings. However, it doesn't have to. You can change your relationship with your phone. And while the virtual world is a great escape, that real live three-dimensional world is pretty boss too.

*Studies referenced:*

*Višnjić A, Veličković V, Sokolović D, et al. Relationship between the Manner of Mobile Phone Use and Depression, Anxiety, and Stress in University Students. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2018;15(4):697. Published 2018 Apr 8. doi:10.3390/ijerph15040697*

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