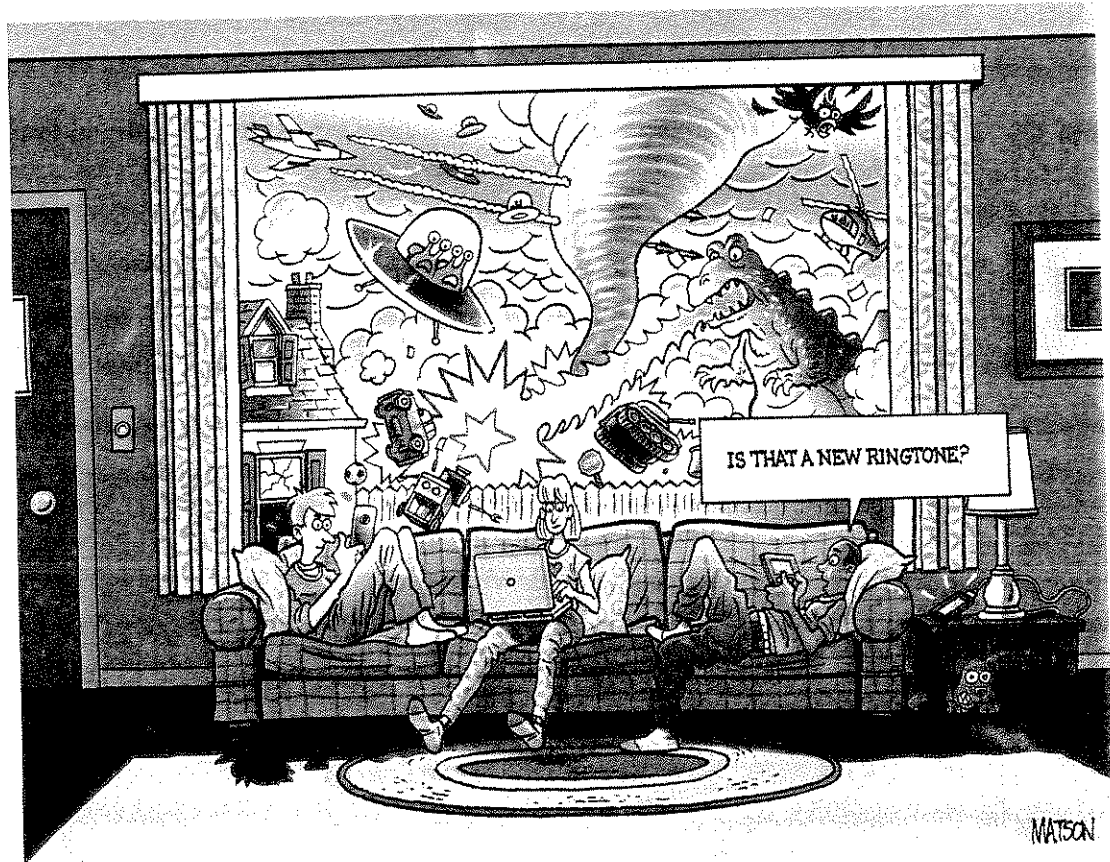


Are You a Screen Addict?

G-CHAT. FACEBOOK. YOUTUBE. TV. GAMING. IS ALL THAT SCREEN TIME TAKING OVER YOUR LIFE? BY KRISTIN LEWIS



I imagine this: You wake up one beautiful sunny morning and your cell phone is broken.

You can't text. You can't make a call. Horror of horrors, it is **TOTALLY** busted.

Do you:

a. demand that your little sister give you **HER** phone until you

get a replacement?

b. break out into hives worrying about all the text messages you're missing?

c. bawl your eyes out? It's like you've lost your right arm.

d. feel so lonely that you start trying to text with your pillow?

If you answered yes to any

(or all) of those options, there's a good chance that technology is taking over your life.

You're not alone.

A Normal Part of Life

The average teenager spends more than 53 hours a week in front of a screen—nearly eight hours *every day*. That's more time than

MEDIA BY THE NUMBERS

21% of kids consume more than 16 hours of media a day

22 minutes average amount of time kids spend each day on social networking sites like Facebook

95 minutes average amount of time kids spend texting each day

269 minutes average amount of time kids spend watching TV every day

make you a good multitasker. Certain types of video games can build your reflexes and even improve your vision.

But there is a dark side. Studies also show that teens who spend excessive time—more than 16 hours a day—in front of a screen are much more likely to get lower grades. They are also more likely to feel depressed and become obese. Part of the problem is that devices have a way of gaining power over kids. Some kids can't seem to turn them off, even when

When does

spending endless hours watching TV or playing *World of Warcraft* stop being fun and normal—and become dangerous?

they have other things to do. Does that describe you? Consider this: Does it take you three hours to do three math problems because you are video chatting, playing *Angry Birds*, and downloading new Drake songs at

How about your chores? Do you forget to feed the dog because you just *have* to watch one more return of *The Office*? And what about the people you care about?



you spend at school—maybe even more time than you sleep. Teenagers today consume monumental amounts of information. It's now a normal part of life. You have Facebook for chatting and sharing photos. You have your cell phone for games and texts. You have your computer and your iPod for browsing, streaming movies, and listening to music. Maybe you have an Xbox or a PS3.

And don't forget your TV. If you happen to miss an episode of *Family Guy* because you're mesmerized by cat videos on YouTube, no problem. You can catch it later on Hulu.

What Does It All Mean? The things technology enables you to do—stay busy, be informed, connect with friends—these are good things. Right? Hundreds of researchers in America's top universities are hard at work trying to answer that question. Some are even devoting their careers to studying what all of this means.

One of the biggest questions they are asking is, When does spending hours and hours watching TV or playing *World of Warcraft* stop being fun and normal—and become dangerous? And what does the answer mean for you?

A Delicate Balance Studies show that screen time does have its advantages. It can

Technology allows you to stay in constant touch with friends and family—even those who live far away. On the other hand, you might be missing out on the relationships in your own home. Maybe your parents are always begging you not to use your cell phone at the dinner table. Or perhaps you've stopped shooting hoops with your little brother because you are spending every

15
minutes
average amount of
time kids spend on
YouTube each
day

waking minute playing *Call of Duty*.

If any of this sounds familiar,

you might have a problem.

Instead of enhancing your life, technology might be getting in the way. It's a delicate balance, and ultimately, it's up to you to achieve it.

Here's one way to prove that YOU are in charge of your technology: The next time your phone buzzes, turn it off.

Then go for a nice stroll in the sunshine. ☀

What Do You Think?

Do you think the amount of time kids spend in front of a screen is a problem? Go back to the article and find evidence to support each side of this debate. Write the information on the lines below.

YES

IT'S OUT OF CONTROL!

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

NO

EH, IT'S PART OF LIFE.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

EXAMINE POINTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE—AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BELIEFS—and decide whether *you* are a screen addict. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become a thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

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