

Digital Wellbeing: Is a Digital Detox Realistic?

Advanced (C1-C2)



WARM UP

Part 1. Read the quote below and then discuss the questions.

“Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master.”

— Christian Lous Lange

1. Do you agree with Lange? Why/why not?
2. Have you ever tried a digital detox? What happened?
3. Who carries more responsibility for digital wellbeing — individuals or tech companies?
4. Is it realistic to live without social media today?



READING TEXT

Part 1. Read the following text.

Digital Wellbeing: A Realistic Goal or a Privileged Ideal?

Calls for “digital detox” surge every January, yet most of us remain tethered to our screens. Advocates argue that stepping away restores focus, sleep, and mood; critics counter that complete disconnection is impractical in a world where work, banking, healthcare, and social life run through apps. Beyond convenience, persuasive design and endless feeds actively compete for our attention, nudging behaviour in ways many users barely perceive.

The ethical question is not simply whether we can switch off, but whether the attention economy should be allowed to make switching off so hard. A temporary detox may relieve cognitive overload, but without structural changes — fewer notifications by default, humane design standards, and transparent algorithms — the same habits tend to re-emerge. For some, especially freelancers and carers, constant connectivity feels less like a choice and more like a condition of participation. If digital wellbeing requires time, money, or job security, then “detox” risks becoming a privilege rather than a universal remedy.

Part 2. Discuss the questions below based on the text.

1. Identify two benefits of a digital detox the author acknowledges and two reasons it may be unrealistic.
2. What role does “persuasive design” play in the author’s argument?
3. The text contrasts temporary detox with structural change. Explain this distinction in your own words.
4. What implicit assumption about “privilege” does the author make? Do you agree?
5. What stance does the author take overall — prescriptive, descriptive, or evaluative? Support your answer.



DEBATE

Part 1. Match the terms to their meanings.

Set boundaries

Limit screen time

Digital distraction

Constant connectivity

Attention span

Switch off notifications

Information overload

Seek balance

1. _____ Reduce alert settings to prevent frequent interruptions.
2. _____ Establish clear rules for when/where devices will or won't be used.
3. _____ Attempt to maintain a healthy middle ground between online and offline life.
4. _____ The state of being reachable and online nearly all the time.
5. _____ Reduce the total minutes/hours you use devices each day.
6. _____ Competing stimuli from devices that pull focus away from the task at hand.
7. _____ The length of time someone can concentrate effectively.
8. _____ Stress and confusion caused by too much incoming data or content.

Part 2. Complete the sentences with the correct terms.

1. Many people now _____ during deep-work hours to protect their focus.
2. Without clear rules, _____ becomes the default and recovery suffers.
3. A practical first step is to _____ to 90 minutes after waking and 90 minutes before bed.
4. Short-form video can fragment your _____, making extended reading harder.
5. When emails, chats, and feeds pile up, _____ increases and decision-making slows.
6. If social media triggers comparison or anxiety, _____ around when and why you use it.
7. Pop-ups, badges, and news alerts are classic _____ that derail tasks.
8. Rather than quitting the internet, try to _____ through routines that include offline time.

Part 3. Look at the useful expressions. Rewrite the simple sentences using these expressions to make them sound more formal and persuasive for a debate.

Agreeing cautiously: I can see the logic in that, but... / That may be true to some extent, although...

Softening disagreement: I'm not entirely convinced that... / I see your point, but doesn't that overlook...?

Speculating: What might happen if...? / Suppose technology advanced to the point where...

Weighing trade-offs: We have to balance X against Y... / The benefits are clear, but we must also consider...

Conceding then refuting: That's a fair point; however... / I agree up to a point, but I'd argue that...

1. I disagree with that idea. ->
2. Screens are bad for people. ->
3. Companies should fix this problem. ->
4. Quitting social media is the only answer. ->

Part 4. Take part in a structured debate with your teacher/partner. Use the vocabulary and debate expressions from this lesson. Speak fluently, challenge ideas politely, and support your opinions with clear reasons and examples.

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Round 1: Defend the idea of a digital detox. Your teacher challenges you.

Round 2: Argue against a digital detox. Your teacher defends it.



REFLECTION

Part 1. Discuss the following questions.

1. Would a digital detox improve your wellbeing? Why/why not?
2. In what areas of your life might you need to set boundaries? Give examples."
3. Name two realistic strategies you could adopt this week to seek balance.

WRAP-UP TASK (OPTIONAL HOMEWORK)

Part 1. Write a letter to the editor (180–220 words) on:

"Why a digital detox is (or isn't) realistic today."

- Include at least four of today's vocabulary items (e.g., constant connectivity, information overload).
- Use at least two debate expressions (e.g., I'm not entirely convinced that..., We have to balance X against Y...).
- Present one counterargument and refute it briefly.

