



Managing Screen Time

10 TOP TIPS

#1. 90 minutes before bed

The run up to bedtime should really be an opportunity for you to relax, wind down and perhaps reflect on the day. Whilst technology can be used to aid this process (by using meditation apps for example), it can also be very destructive. Social media in particular can expose the body to heightened anxiety or alertness, and this is not conducive to a good night's sleep. So we would always advise refraining from screen time 90 minutes before bedtime.

#2. Notifications

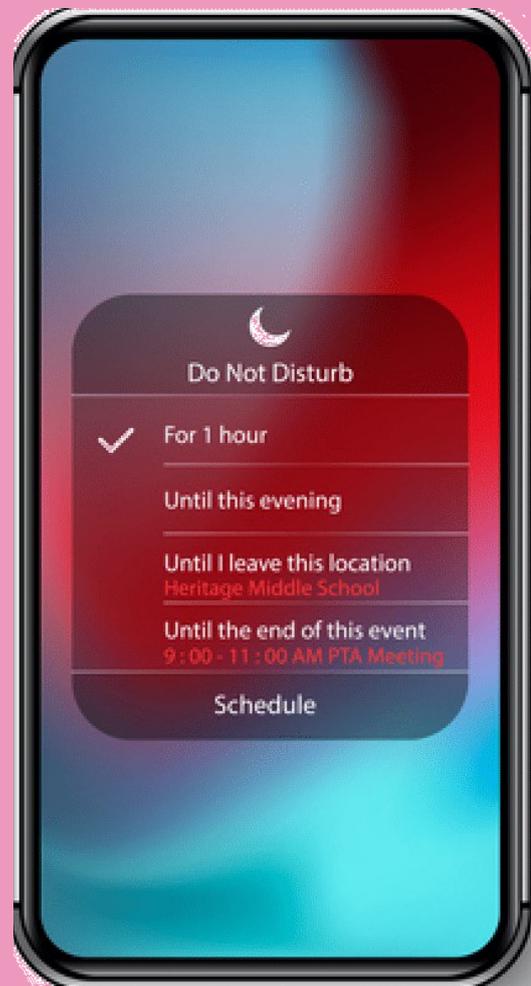
It's not easy to sleep when your mobile device is buzzing throughout the night, even if it does help you to instantly discover what you've been tagged in or who's just messaged you. To prevent restless nights, it may be helpful to turn off notifications, or activate 'do not disturb', 'aero-plane mode' or mute settings. Or just switch the device off all together if you can.

#3. Blue light exposure

A number of studies have highlighted the impact blue light (the artificial lighting emitted through electronic devices) can have on our sleep. This type of light can suppress the secretion of the hormone melatonin, which is what makes you feel sleepy. Blue light exposure can however be reduced through device settings. For example, most Apple devices now have the 'night shift mode', which changes the colour temperature of your device to reduce exposure.

#4. Unprompted checking

Sometimes without even being prompted, we will reach over for our devices to see what we're missing out on, to communicate with each other, or just to be entertained. If you're aware of this habit, do your best to break it and remember that such habits will prolong sleep deprivation.



#5. Location of device

Many of us are guilty of sleeping with our mobile devices near to our heads – even under our pillows! For obvious reasons this isn't a healthy place to have your device at night. Try to keep it in a location that prevents you from seeing, hearing or even reaching for it. For some this means leaving it on the other side of the room. Others may choose to leave the device in a different room all together.

#7. Digital Detox

If you're aware that mobile device usage is starting to have an impact on your sleep, you might want to think about taking a break from it all together at night time, or at any other time during the day. This doesn't mean you need to quit cold turkey – you may decide on week days you will switch your tablet off before going to bed, or that you will turn your smart phone off from 8pm on weekends.

#9. Think

We rarely think about the reasons why we are using mobile devices at night time, and often if we did, we would think twice. That's because our motivations reveal the reasons aren't always a necessity – often we pick up our smartphones at 2am out of intrigue or boredom. If the reason isn't that important, perhaps you should consider your sleep and general health and wellbe-

#6. Monitoring usage

It's difficult to know if you are using your mobile device too often or for too long if you don't have awareness of exactly how much it's being used. There are a number of screen time tracker apps such as RealizD and Moment that can effectively showcase the amount of time you are spending on your device – from how many times you check it in a day to how many hours you've spent on Snap-

#8. Switch up the habit

There are many things you can do as part of your night time routine instead of using mobile devices, especially in the 90 minutes running up to bedtime. This is the perfect time to get stuck into a good book, practice meditation or have a relaxing bubble bath. Switching your habit of using mobile devices for a habit like this could encourage a better night's sleep.

#10. Reward (positive reinforcement)

If you discover that mobile devices are having a negative impact on your sleep and you've decided to take control back by exercising any of the tips listed above, it's time to acknowledge that behaviour shift and give yourself a pat on the back! Make sure you treat yourself to something, whether it's a shopping spree, a bar of chocolate, or the latest mobile device (if you think you can handle it)!

