GoalTodo

Digital detox weekend: an evening, then a day, then a weekend offline

Spend a weekend offline

6 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Jan 10

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

Choose your weekend and write your rules

Pick the weekend

- [ ] Choose a weekend about six weeks from now with nothing that needs you online: no work on call, no deadline, no trip that runs on phone tickets. Enter it on the plan page and put it in your calendar
  15 minutes
- [ ] Write your offline rules on paper: what's off (social media, news, browsing, messaging, email, streaming, games) and what stays (voice calls in an emergency, and anything you need for your health or safety)
  10 minutes
- [ ] Tell the people you live with the date, and ask whether anyone wants to join you for part of it
- [ ] Start a list of things you'd like to do offline: places to walk, food to cook, a book to read, people to see
  a few lines at a time

Done when: Your weekend is on the plan page and in your calendar, your rules are on paper, and the people you live with know the date

Sticking point: No weekend looks free? Pick the least busy one. If you work weekends, use two days off in a row. A date in the calendar matters more than a perfect weekend.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

An offline hour a day

Warm up

- [ ] Put your phone on silent in another room for one hour, at the same time each day, such as the hour after dinner
  1 hour
- [ ] Eat one meal a day with no phone at the table
- [ ] Each time you want to check, write down the time and what you wanted to look at. Don't look it up
  a few words

Done when: You've had five offline hours this week, and you have a short list of what you reached for

Sticking point: If you simply take the phone away, you'll probably reach for it again. Have something ready for the hour: a book, a walk, a pan on the stove.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Your first offline evening

One evening offline

- [ ] Go offline for one evening, from dinner until bed: phone switched on, in a drawer in another room, with only calls from your emergency contact allowed to ring
  about 4 hours, from 6 pm to bedtime
- [ ] Plan the evening ahead: cook something, see someone, read, play a game, go for a walk
  10 minutes
- [ ] Tell the two or three people who'd worry if they couldn't reach you that you're going offline on your weekend, and ask one of them to be your emergency contact (see the guide)
  15 minutes
- [ ] The next morning, write down how it went: the hardest moment, the best part, and what you wanted to check
  5 minutes

Done when: You've spent one evening, from dinner to bed, without checking your phone or computer, and written down how it went

Sticking point: Checked once without thinking? Put the phone back and carry on. The evening still counts: the goal is awareness, not perfection.

Dec 21–27
Week 4

An evening and the morning after

Longer stretch

- [ ] Get an alarm clock if you don't have one, and set up a charging spot for your phone outside the bedroom
- [ ] Go offline from dinner until lunchtime the next day, waking to the alarm clock, not the phone
  from 6 pm to noon
- [ ] Plan the morning: a walk, a slow breakfast, the market, time with someone
  10 minutes

Done when: You've gone from dinner to lunchtime the next day without your phone or computer, and woken up to an alarm clock

Sticking point: Mornings are often hardest, because checking in bed is the habit. Leave the phone charging in another room the night before, so it isn't the first thing you see.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

A whole day offline

One whole day offline

- [ ] Plan the day around three things: one outdoors, one meal you cook, one person you see
  15 minutes
- [ ] Spend one whole day offline, from waking until bed: phone on, in a drawer, with only calls from your emergency contact allowed to ring
- [ ] Work through the weekend checklist in the guide: paper copies and maps, your emergency plan, your messages and auto-reply written, your offline list ready
  about 1 hour

Done when: You've spent one day, from waking to bed, offline, and the weekend checklist is done apart from Friday's steps

Sticking point: If the afternoon drags, that's boredom, and boredom is usually what pulls people back. Have a walk, a visit or a book planned for it.

Jan 4–10
Week 6

A whole weekend offline

The weekend

- [ ] Before you start: send your messages to family, friends and work, set your auto-reply, check the plan with your emergency contact, then log out of social media and email
  30 minutes
- [ ] Go offline from Friday evening until Sunday evening: phone on, in a drawer, with only calls from your emergency contact allowed to ring
- [ ] Do the things on your list: something outdoors, a meal you cook, a book, time with people, and some rest
- [ ] Before you switch back on, write down what you liked, what you missed, and one thing you'll keep
  10 minutes

Done when: You've been offline from Friday evening to Sunday evening, and written down the one thing you'll keep

Sticking point: When you switch back on there may be a pile of messages. Deal with anything urgent and leave the rest for Monday, rather than scrolling to catch up.

How the plan works

A digital detox weekend is two days offline, from Friday evening to Sunday evening: no social media, news, browsing, messaging, email or streaming, on your phone or your computer. You keep a phone for voice calls in an emergency.

You build up to it, in the four steps on your goal board: pick the weekend, then one evening offline, then one whole day offline, then the whole weekend. Enter your weekend on the plan page and the weeks count back from it, so the last week is the weekend itself. Most weeks take an hour or two of planning plus the offline time.

Why build up? Going offline is harder than it sounds. In a University of Texas at Austin study that blocked mobile internet on people's phones for two weeks, only a quarter of them went the full two weeks offline.

An evening, then a day, shows you where the urge to check comes from, and lets you fix the practical snags (an alarm, a map, a ticket) before the weekend.

What the research says, and doesn't. The studies are of breaks longer than a weekend. A University of Bath study asked people to stop using social media for one week, and found better wellbeing and less depression and anxiety a week later than in people who carried on: a short-term benefit. In the Texas study, people felt progressively better day by day while their mobile internet was blocked. No study shows that one weekend changes your mental health. What a weekend gives you is a clear taste of time offline, and a chance to choose what to keep.

This plan is the one-off weekend. For cutting down day to day, follow the Spend less time on my phone plan. The two work well together, before or after.

Which level to pick

▪ I'm online most of the day: you check your phone from waking to bed, and an evening without it sounds hard. 6 weeks, or 4 at the shortest. On the full plan, a week of daily offline hours comes before your first evening, and a longer stretch before your first whole day. A shorter plan leaves those out.

▪ I already take breaks: you already have phone-free meals, walks or evenings. 5 weeks, or 4 at the shortest.

Not sure? Pick the first. The shortest plans leave out the practice weeks (the offline hours and the longer stretch), never the picking, the evening, the day or the weekend.

What counts as offline

Write your own rules in week 1. Here's a starting point:

▪ Off: social media, news, browsing, messaging, email, streaming and online games, on every screen you own.

▪ Allowed: voice calls in an emergency. Keep your phone switched on and in a drawer, with Do Not Disturb set so calls from your emergency contact still ring, loud enough to hear from the next room. In the Texas study, the phones blocked the internet but still allowed calls and text messages, so if a text is the only way someone can reach you in an emergency, keep that too.

▪ Keep anything you need for your health or safety: a medical alert, a health monitor, a medicine reminder, or anything someone who relies on you needs.

▪ Your call: TV, music or a camera. Decide before the weekend, and write it down, so you're not deciding when the urge hits.

Safety first: don't go fully unreachable on a solo wild trip. If you'll be outdoors alone somewhere remote, the US Forest Service advises leaving your trip itinerary, including a time to expect you back, with someone you trust at home, and bringing a hard copy map. It also warns that cell phones likely won't work there because of a lack of signal, so your trip plan is your safety net. Leave your plan, carry a paper map, keep your phone charged and on for emergencies, and if you can, spend the wild parts of the weekend with someone else.

Before you start

▪ Feeling low or anxious for a while, or you've tried to cut down and can't? A weekend offline isn't a treatment. Talk to a GP or doctor: the Spend less time on my phone plan lists when.

▪ In a crisis? Don't go offline. Call your local emergency number (999 in the UK, 911 in the US) now, or a crisis line: call or text 988 in the US, or call Samaritans on 116 123 in the UK and Ireland.

▪ Caring for someone, or on call? Pick a weekend when someone else covers, or keep a voice line open for the person who relies on you.

▪ Choose a weekend that doesn't need the internet: no trip with tickets only on your phone, no deadline, no deliveries to track. If you travel, the checklist below covers it.

The checklist before the weekend

Do most of it in the week of your whole day offline, and the last few things on Friday.

The week before

- Paper copies of tickets, bookings, addresses and directions: print them or write them down.
- Maps on paper for anywhere you'll go that you don't know well.
- Numbers on paper: your emergency contact, family, your doctor, and anyone you might need to call.
- Your emergency plan: one person who knows where you'll be and when you're back, and who will call you by voice if something is urgent. Anyone else who needs you goes through them. Agree that they'll call, not message.
- Tell key people and write your work messages (templates below).
- An alarm clock, and a charging spot outside the bedroom.
- Anything due over the weekend, such as a bill or a booking, done before Friday.
- Your offline list ready: a book, the ingredients, a game, a walking route, plans with people.
- A notebook and pen, for things you want to look up later.
- Going outdoors alone? Write your trip plan: where, your route, and when to expect you back.

On Friday

- Send your messages and set your auto-reply on email and work messaging.
- Check the plan with your emergency contact, and leave your trip plan with them if you're going somewhere remote.
- Log out of social media and email on your phone and computer, so checking takes effort.
- Charge the phone, turn on Do Not Disturb with calls from your emergency contact allowed through, and put it in a drawer where you'll hear it ring.

What to tell people

Short and clear is enough. Change the names and times to fit.

Family

I'm taking a weekend offline, from Friday evening to Sunday evening. I won't see messages, but my phone's on for calls. If it's urgent, call me, or call Sam.

Friends

I'm going offline this weekend, Friday evening to Sunday evening, so I'll reply on Sunday night. Want to meet up on Saturday instead? I'll be at the park at 10.

Work (only if anyone might expect you over the weekend)

I'm offline from Friday evening until Monday morning. If something can't wait, Alex can help, or call me.

Auto-reply

Thanks for your message. I'm offline until Monday morning and will reply then. If it's urgent, please call Sam on [number].

Your emergency contact

I'm offline from Friday evening to Sunday evening. My phone's on for calls only, and your calls will ring through. If anyone needs me urgently, please call me. I'll be at home, and out walking on Saturday morning.

Planning the days

Boredom is usually what pulls people back, and if you simply take the phone away you'll probably reach for it again. So plan each part of each day, and leave gaps to rest.

- Outdoors: a long walk, a hike, a swim, a park, a market. The Spend more time outdoors plan has ideas.

▪ Cooking: a slow breakfast, a meal that takes all afternoon, baking with someone. The Cook more at home plan helps here.

▪ Reading: a paper book, started in your offline evening so it's already pulling you in. The Read 24 books plan keeps it going.

▪ Seeing people: good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing, says the NHS. Arrange a meal, a game or a visit ahead of time, since you can't message on the day.

▪ Rest: a nap, a bath, doing nothing much. The Take a real day off every week plan is about exactly this.

A simple shape for each day: something outdoors in the morning, a long lunch you cook, the afternoon with people or a book, a quiet evening.

What to expect

▪ Restlessness and the urge to check, especially in quiet moments. Reaching for your pocket out of habit is normal. Write down what you wanted to check: most of it will still be there when you come back.

▪ Boredom, often in the afternoon. That's when your list matters most.

▪ Worry about missing something. The things that really matter, the people and the opportunities, tend to reach you in more than one way, and your emergency contact can call.

▪ Slips. If you pick up the phone, put it back. One look doesn't undo the weekend: the goal is awareness, not perfection.

▪ Paying more attention. Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. Notice what you see, hear and taste when nothing is pulling you away.

Common mistakes

▪ Going straight to the weekend. The evening and the day show you the snags while they're small.

▪ No plan for the time. An empty Saturday is when the phone wins.

▪ Forgetting the paper. A ticket, a map or a number you can only find on your phone sends you back online.

▪ Telling nobody. People worry, and you'll want to check that they haven't.

▪ Going unreachable alone in the wild. Leave a trip plan and keep the phone on for emergencies.

▪ Treating a slip as failure. Put the phone back and carry on.

▪ Scrolling all Sunday night to catch up. Deal with anything urgent and leave the rest for Monday.

After the weekend: keep one thing

At the end of a digital detox, Lifeline suggests reflecting on how it went and deciding whether to make some long-term changes. Rather than a full detox, the University of Wollongong suggests clear boundaries that fit your life, and small changes have a better chance of becoming habits.

So keep one thing from the weekend, not everything. For example:

▪ One offline evening a week, on the same evening.

▪ Phone-free meals.

▪ An offline morning at the weekend, until lunch.

▪ The alarm clock, with the phone charging outside the bedroom.

For cutting your everyday screen time step by step, follow the Spend less time on my phone plan: it starts by measuring your screen time, then cuts it in two-week steps. And if you liked the weekend, put the next one in your calendar.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: Missed this week's offline evening or day? Do it this week, before you move on, and keep your weekend date. If you missed a practice week (the offline hours or the longer stretch), leave it out and carry on.

Missed 2 weeks: Make sure you've done one offline evening and one offline day before the weekend. If there isn't time for both, move your weekend back on the plan page rather than going in cold.

Missed 3 weeks: Choose a new weekend at least four weeks away and enter it on the plan page. Start again from the offline evening: you've already picked your rules and told people, so just tell them the new date.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Start again at week 1 with a new date. If going offline even for an evening feels impossible, or the phone is getting in the way of work, sleep or the people around you, start with the Spend less time on my phone plan, and talk to your doctor if it's affecting your mood.

Sources

The University of Texas at Austin, McCombs School of Business
`https://news.mccombs.utexas.edu/research/to-be-happier-take-a-vacation-from-your-smartphone/`
“The app blocked all internet access, including browsers and social media, only allowing calls and text messages.”

The University of Texas at Austin, McCombs School of Business
`https://news.mccombs.utexas.edu/research/to-be-happier-take-a-vacation-from-your-smartphone/`
“Experience-sampling data showed that people felt progressively better day by day during the intervention period.”

The University of Texas at Austin, McCombs School of Business
`https://news.mccombs.utexas.edu/research/to-be-happier-take-a-vacation-from-your-smartphone/`
“In the study, only 57% of participants followed through on installing the app, and only a quarter went the full two weeks offline.”

University of Bath
`https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/social-media-break-improves-mental-health-new-study/`
“One week later, the participants who were asked to take the one-week break had significant improvements in wellbeing, depression, and anxiety than those who continued to use social media, suggesting a short-term benefit.”

University of Bath
`https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/social-media-break-improves-mental-health-new-study/`
“This suggests that even just a small break can have an impact.”

King's College London
`https://www.kcl.ac.uk/students/log-off-focus-up-the-case-for-a-digital-sabbatical`
“Boredom is usually what pulls you back, so filling the gap deliberately matters more than you might expect.”

King's College London
`https://www.kcl.ac.uk/students/log-off-focus-up-the-case-for-a-digital-sabbatical`
“Most of it will still be there when you come back.”

King's College London
`https://www.kcl.ac.uk/students/log-off-focus-up-the-case-for-a-digital-sabbatical`
“The things that genuinely matter — the people, the opportunities — tend to reach you through more than one channel.”

Curtin University
https://www.curtin.edu.au/news/oasis-news/how-to-do-a-digital-detox-over-the-semester-break-and-not-quit-halfway-through/
“Try one evening, an hour before bed, a meal, or a walk without your phone.”

Curtin University
https://www.curtin.edu.au/news/oasis-news/how-to-do-a-digital-detox-over-the-semester-break-and-not-quit-halfway-through/
“If you simply remove your phone, you’ll probably reach for it again.”

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“The goal is awareness, not perfection.”

Lifeline Australia
https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/support-toolkit/techniques-and-guides/how-to-do-a-digital-detox
“This might require getting an alarm clock and setting up a charger in another room.”

Lifeline Australia
https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/support-toolkit/techniques-and-guides/how-to-do-a-digital-detox
“Log out of, or uninstall social media accounts for your detox period.”

Lifeline Australia
https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/support-toolkit/techniques-and-guides/how-to-do-a-digital-detox
“At the end of your digital detox, it’s important to reflect on how things went and decide if you would like to make some long-term changes.”

USDA Forest Service
https://www.fs.usda.gov/r05/wilderness/backcountry-safety
“Develop an emergency plan before you start your trip. Leave your trip itinerary, including a time to expect you back, with someone you trust at home.”

USDA Forest Service
https://www.fs.usda.gov/r05/wilderness/backcountry-safety
“Cell phones also likely will not work because of a lack of signal.”

USDA Forest Service
https://www.fs.usda.gov/r05/wilderness/backcountry-safety
“Bring a hard copy map of the area you're visiting and a compass.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/
“Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/
“Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing.”

University of Wollongong
https://www.uow.edu.au/media/2022/whats-the-difference-between-a-healthy-and-unhealthy-relationship-to-your-phone.php
“So rather than going for full digital detox, it's more worthwhile establishing clear boundaries – for example,

not using social media two hours before sleep in the evenings or only reaching for the phone an hour after waking up."

University of Wollongong
`https://www.uow.edu.au/media/2022/whats-the-difference-between-a-healthy-and-unhealthy-relationship-to-your-phone.php`
"Small changes have a higher chance of becoming healthy habits and contributing to our wellbeing."

Apple Support
`https://support.apple.com/guide/iphone/allow-or-silence-notifications-for-a-focus-iph21d43af5b/ios`
"You can allow sounds and vibrations from emergency contacts to come through even when your iPhone or notifications are silenced."

Google (Android Help)
`https://support.google.com/android/answer/9069335`
"People: Block or allow calls, messages, or conversations."

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
`https://988lifeline.org/`
"Call, text, or chat with a 988 Lifeline counselor for help during difficult moments anytime, day or night."

Samaritans
`https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/`
"When you call us on 116 123, you will be put through to a volunteer at one of more than 200 branches and locations across the UK and Ireland."

This plan online	`https://goaltodo.com/a-weekend-offline`
Reach it with others on Welang	`https://welang.com/goals/a-weekend-offline`
Reach it on your own in HourLife	`https://www.hourlife.com`

This plan is a guide, not medical advice. See a doctor before starting if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or haven't exercised in a long time.