At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

A GUIDE ON HOW NOT TO BE A 'SCREEN ZOMBIE'

It's not always easy to tell if you've been spending too much time on your device. Mobiles phones, tablets, games consoles, TVs; the list of devices you might have access to seems never-ending and switching between them can be seamless. However, too much time on your device could lead to certain problems and could be an indicator of an addictive habit. It's important therefore that you try and manage your screen time as much as possible and avoid becoming a 'screen zombie.'

TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRAIN

Spending too much time on social media, watching YouTube or playing games online can result in you becoming a screen zombie. This can affect your mood, how much sleep you get, how you perform at school and how you behave around others. Limiting your screen time will keep you alert, Limiting your screen time will keep you alert, keep your mind focused and help to look after your own mental health and wellbeing.



BE PRESENT, NOT A ZOMBIE

Screen zombies often find that they spend a lot of time alone in front of their tablet or their mobile phone and reduce the time they spend with their friends or talk with their family. Zombies often lack communication skills. Always try to limit your screen time as much as possible – there's so much fun you can have with others!



SCREEN-FREE BEDROOMS

Keeping your phone in your bedroom means that it can be tempting to check every notification you get. Your phone could be the last thing you see at night and the first thing you see in the morning. This can contribute towards poor sleep and a lack of focus the next day. Try to keep your phone out of your bedroom or turn off all notifications before bedtime. This will mean you'll get a good night's rest and be ready for the next day.



DON'T GET TRAPPED INSIDE

Screen zombies usually find that they spend a lot of time inside as they lose interest in other things that don't include their device.
It might seem obvious, but meeting your friends outside or doing outdoor activities like playing sports, trampolining, camping or just going for a walk are all healthy replacements for screen time and can help keep your mind fresh and active.



ZOMBIE-FREE MEALTIMES

Mealtimes can be seen as a good time to sit down, relax and switch on your tablet or phone as you eat your food. But it can also mean that you're not interacting with others, sharing jokes at the dinner table or just talking about your day. Keep mealtimes for family time.
Eating your food and staring at a screen means you're turning into a zombie.



BEWARE OF OTHER DANGERS

Spending too much time on your device and online can increase your chances of potentially encountering other online dangers. This could range from viewing inappropriate or harmful content to online bullying, grooming or fake news. Controlling how much time you spend online will reduce your risk of exposure.
If you do see anything that makes you upset or if you're concerned about contact with others, always report it to a trusted adult.



BEWARE OF SNEAKY TRICKS

A lot of apps and games use certain ways of keeping you online and using their platform for long periods of time. This can include simple things like unlimited scrolling on a newsfeed, 'streaks' or uncovering hidden levels. Be mindful of how much time you're online and try to remember you're in control. You decide when you've had enough, not your device.



SAVE YOUR PARENTS!

Even though your parents will often be the ones telling you to limit your screen time, turn off your tablet or switch off your phone, sometimes they will forget to take their own advice. So it's up to you to make sure you remind them of the dangers of becoming a screen zombie!



UN-ZOMBIFY YOURSELF

If you think that you've already become a screen zombie, then don't worry, it's never too late to get help and support from your friends and family. Talk to your parents if you feel you've become addicted to your device, try to understand why and work with them to help you limit your screen time so that you can leave your zombie character behind.



Meet our expert

Pete Badh is content specialist with over 10+ years in research and analysis. He has written various expert pieces around online safety for children and parents and previously worked in a specialist role for the police, contributing work which was pivotal in successfully winning high profile court cases and writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.



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