

STEP 2: BRAINSTORM

It's time to start reflecting. Below, take notes about how technology affects your life. Use the questions you wrote in Step 1 to guide you, and include anything else that helps answer the question of whether YOU are a screen addict. You can include single words or even simple sketches—the idea is to get all of your thoughts and emotions onto the page. Cluster your notes around the three category headings provided.

Personal Experiences

stories, memories . . . specific experiences
(bad or good) with technology

Facts

facts about me and screens: how
much time I spend staring at them, which
screens I stare at, etc.

Emotions

my feelings about the
technology in my life

STEP 3: CRAFT YOUR THESIS

It's time to decide: Are you a screen addict? You don't have to have a yes or no answer; whatever you conclude, your thesis should be a clear, strong statement of that conclusion—your central idea. The thesis is where you tell the reader what your essay is going to be about.

Your thesis: _____

STEP 4: WRITE YOUR HOOK

The very beginning of your essay is called the hook because it "hooks" your readers' attention. The hook should relate to the topic of your essay, but it can take many forms. It can be an anecdote (a very short story), a fact, a quote, or a rhetorical question (a question to which you don't expect an answer). Here are three ideas for hooks that could work for this topic. **Choose one of the ideas below or use your own idea and write a hook on the lines provided (1-3 sentences).**

- 1. ANECDOTE:** Choose one of the experiences you thought of during Step 2. Describe that experience briefly, using sensory details to help the reader imagine himself or herself in your place.
- 2. SURPRISING FACT:** Find a fact that will raise your readers' eyebrows. Many surprising facts are included in the article. You can also do some research to find a surprising fact that is not included in the article.
- 3. QUOTE:** Quote a statement from "Are You a Screen Addict?" or another magazine or newspaper article, about the effect of technology on kids' lives. Then explain whether that statement applies to you.

Your hook: _____

STEP 5: START WRITING

Now that you have the key ingredients for your essay, you are ready to start writing. On the next page, you'll find guidelines for how to organize your ingredients, as well as hints about what else you'll need to add.

Directions: Follow the guidelines below to write a strong reflective essay on the effect of technology on your life. You will use what you wrote on the first three pages of this activity.

INTRODUCTION

Open with your hook from Step 4.



Write a transition sentence that relates your hook to your thesis. (See *Scope's* handout "Great Transitions" for some ways to link your ideas.)



Finish with your thesis from Step 3.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

Here's where you write out the information you brainstormed in Step 2. You don't need to include every single thing you wrote down; rather, review your notes and decide what your reader will find most interesting and what most strongly supports your central idea. Then think about the best way to arrange your information—how you can group your ideas in a way that makes sense. For example, if you have two experiences of getting in trouble for using your phone (or two experiences when you happily turned *off* your phone to focus your attention on a friend) it probably makes sense to put them in the same paragraph. It is helpful to create an outline before you write these paragraphs out.

CONCLUSION

Use 2-3 sentences to remind your readers of your main points.



Finish with a strong final sentence. Looking for an idea? Try referring to your hook, finding a quote, or sharing your plans for using technology in the future—are you going to change your habits?

READ AND REVISE

Use *Scope's* "Reflective-Essay Checklist" to evaluate and edit what you have written. Make any necessary changes and write a second draft.

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Great Transitions

Transitions are like bridges between your ideas—they help your readers move from one idea to the next. Here are some transition words and phrases you may wish to use in your essay. Keep in mind that they can be used at the beginning of a sentence or within a sentence.

If you are adding information or showing similarity between ideas:

- additionally
- besides
- so too
- first of all/secondly/thirdly
- in addition
- also
- likewise
- to begin with
- as well as
- another
- furthermore
- finally

If you are showing that one idea is different from another:

- however
- even though
- in contrast
- on the one hand/on the other hand
- yet
- despite
- still
- some people say/other people say
- but
- although
- in spite of
- regardless

If you are showing that something is an example of what you just stated:

- for example
- to illustrate
- this can be seen
- for instance
- namely
- specifically

If you want to show cause and effect:

- as a result
- consequently
- so
- it follows that
- therefore
- eventually

If you want to add emphasis:

- in fact
- of course
- truly
- even
- indeed

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Reflective-Essay Checklist

Directions: Use this guide to check your own essay, or exchange papers with a classmate and use the list to check each other's essays. In the margins of the essay you are checking, make notes about anything that needs to be revised.

Introduction

- ✓ Does the first sentence grab readers' attention?
- ✓ Does the first paragraph provide a general overview of the essay's topic?
- ✓ Does the first paragraph include a thesis statement that strongly and clearly states your central idea? Does the thesis clue readers in as to what the essay is going to be about?

Body Paragraphs

- ✓ Do they contain personal experiences that relate to your thesis?
- ✓ Do they describe your emotions related to the topic?
- ✓ Do they contain facts that support your thesis?
- ✓ Is the information arranged in a way that makes sense, with similar experiences or ideas grouped together?

Conclusion

- ✓ Does the last paragraph remind readers of the main points of the essay, without going into *too* much detail and repeating everything readers just read?
- ✓ Is the conclusion free of new information (such as another experience)?
- ✓ Does the last sentence leave readers with a strong final impression?

General

- ✓ Does one idea flow smoothly into the next?
- ✓ Do the sentence structures and lengths vary?
- ✓ Does every sentence relate to the thesis?
- ✓ Does everything make sense?
- ✓ Is the essay honest? Does it truly reflect you?
- ✓ Are the grammar, punctuation, and spelling correct?