

Should mobile phones be banned at school?

Mobile devices are such a big part of everyday life now, but should they be used at school? There are arguments for and against. See what YOU think, then vote in our online poll!

YES 

I'm always checking my phone and looking to see what my friends are saying. I can't help it! I sometimes wish I could delete everything or just not have a phone at all ... but I can't!

Sarah (15)

In a survey at Stroud High School near Gloucester, 75% of students said they 'check social media constantly', and more than half wanted to control their use of social networking sites and fitness apps. That's why four students organized a 'digital detox' week, when 400 students, teachers and parents didn't use any mobile devices at home or at school – no phones, Fitbits, tablets or laptops. Jess Hourston (16), one of the organizers, said her school work improved during the experiment and she slept better. 'It wasn't as hard as I expected,' she said. Hannah Cox (14) agreed. She didn't mind giving up instant messaging, saying it was better 'to talk to your friends in real life!' Most participants felt less stressed and realized they had more free time while they weren't using mobile devices. The students' experience **corresponds** with a recent survey. It found that 12% of children who spend no time using social media during the school day have **symptoms** of mental illness, including stress. This compares with 27% of students who spend three or more hours a day using social networking sites.

Stroud High School have now banned mobiles all day for 11- to 13-year-olds and 14- to 16-year-olds can only use them at lunchtime. The ban hit **headlines** in the media, with many people saying it was too strict. But people now think that the school is leading the way in addressing problems caused by mobile phones, and many other schools in the UK are also introducing restrictions on mobile phone use. In fact, in France the government have recently introduced a complete ban on mobile phones at primary, junior and middle schools!

NO 

It's not the technology that's bad; it's the way people use it.

Katsumi (15)

People worry that mobiles are a big distraction at school, but I disagree – they can be really creative in the classroom. While I was studying English in London last summer, we used our mobiles a lot in class. For example, we could use dictionary apps whenever we wanted and we could ask Siri questions. That was a great way to improve our pronunciation because Siri didn't understand if we said things incorrectly! We also did internet research for collaborative projects and students shared documents on the cloud. And we didn't take notes while the teacher was writing – we just took pictures of the board. On Monday morning, when the teacher asked 'What did you do at the weekend?', we showed pictures and videos and recorded our answers. It's important to remember that students today have grown up with digital devices – it's **second nature** to them. We are **digital natives** and use technology in all areas of our lives. This should include in education! Also, by using technology in the classroom, students develop valuable skills for the modern world, like using the internet to find information and communicating effectively. These skills are essential in the workplace, too. Obviously students shouldn't use mobiles to call friends in class or cheat in tests, but otherwise I think mobiles are a great educational tool.

What do you think? **VOTE NOW!**

Should mobile phones be banned at school?

Yes, including during breaks

Only in class

No, never

1 Read the article. Choose the correct answers.

1 Students who don't use mobile phones

during the school day

- a) enjoyed their free time more.
- b) use social networking sites during other times of the day.
- c) are less stressed than students who use mobile phones.

2 When the school announced the ban

- a) teachers said it was too strict.
- b) it was criticized.
- c) most students thought it was a good idea.

3 Schools in France

- a) want to teach students about social media.
- b) are banning mobile phones.
- c) have problems with social media.

4 Students today...

- a) don't need to learn new digital skills.
- b) know how to use the internet to find information.
- c) can learn digital skills by using their mobiles at school.

2 Match the underlined words in the text with definitions 1–5. Write your answers.

a) a sign that someone has an illness _____

b) a person who has grown up using the internet and mobile phones _____

c) the title of a news story _____

d) matches or is the same as _____

e) actions that you do automatically because they are normal or natural _____