

I Shut Off My Phone at 9 P.M. Every Night for a Week—Here's What Happened

<https://www.wellandgood.com/digital-phone-curfew-sleep-benefits/>

Just about everyone's fallen victim to a late-night scrolling spiral—you know, when you decide to peek at Instagram before bed, and suddenly it's after midnight and you're 32 weeks into your neighbor's boyfriend's sister's feed. (Um, nice wedding dress, Sarah.)

Yet science has proven that after-dark screen-time is seriously bad for shut-eye. “The blue light emitted from all forms of technology is a ‘violation’ of healthy sleep chemistry,” explains James Rouse, a naturopathic doctor, sleep expert, and co-founder of plant-based protein brand Healthy Skoop. “It interrupts the rise and flow of melatonin, strains your eyes, and disrupts your circadian cycles, leaving you with an unhealthy night of sleeping.”

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When you're feeling bleary-eyed in the morning, he says, your performance and productivity tend to take a dive—but that's not the worst of it. Losing sleep on the regular can eventually result in metabolic slow-down, a weakened immune system, an uptick in stress hormones, and even depression and anxiety.

As someone who often tosses and turns until the early a.m. hours (my usual bedtime is usually after midnight), this intel made me wonder whether my technology habits could be sabotaging my sound-sleep efforts—and my health in general. To find

out, I challenged myself to turn my electronics off at 9 p.m. for one week. That's right, no more Snapchat, Instagram, Netflix, or email in bed. Basically, a return to the, er, dark ages.

Here's what happened to my sleep when I spent a week going offline at 9 p.m.



Photo: Stocksy/Danil Nevsky

Weeknights are all right

For the best night of sleep possible, Rouse recommends that we treat bedtime like we did as children: shutting down devices at least an hour or two before bed, taking a bath or shower to relax, and winding down with a book. (That's [Arianna Huffington's](#) routine, so you know there's something to it.)

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I decide to ease into things by starting on a Sunday—it's my day to clean my room, meal prep for the week, and practice some self-care, so putting down the phone doesn't sound like too much of a struggle. At 9 p.m. I plug my phone into a charger (one that's intentionally on the other side of my room), set my alarm, climb into bed with a book...and by 9:30 p.m. I'm asleep. Score!

The next few days are just as successful. Every night at 9 p.m. I power down (my laptop wasn't even allowed into my bedroom). Although I wouldn't describe myself as an insomniac, I admittedly stay up later than I'd like and never get up feeling fully refreshed. But now I'm effortlessly dozing off before 11—and in the process managed to finish a book (which is something I always claim I'm "much too busy" to do).

On Thursday, I get drinks with my friends after work and missed my curfew by 20 minutes. During my trip home, I let myself listen to music, answer a few texts, and glance at the subway schedule on my phone. But the moment I walk through the door, I follow my nightly ritual...and pass out within 30 minutes.



Photo: Stocksy/Cloud Studio

A weekend to remember?

Five days down, two to go—and I've now reached what, in my opinion, is the hardest part of the challenge: the weekend.

So on Friday night, I opt out of a wild night, instead keeping things low-key with dinner and drinks at a friend's apartment. Although I get home around midnight, I put my phone out of sight starting at 9 p.m.

This means no texts, no Instagram Stories documenting my meal, and no checking Twitter during lulls in the night. But it also means I can focus on good conversation. Another thing I notice: how often everyone else looks down at their devices. I'm not judging them at all; I was right there with them five days earlier. But it really makes me realize how phones have become a crutch—and how much richer life is

when being connected isn't a constant. (My motto throughout the evening: Hang up before you hang out.)

As for my screen-free Saturday night? I guess you could say I failed. There's karaoke—and my phone is definitely involved. Ultimately, I miss my power-down time by *five* hours.

But despite this misstep, I can confidently say that putting my phone to bed at 9 p.m. for most of the week profoundly changed how I slept. I dozed off earlier, stayed asleep for longer, and found it way easier to wake up in the morning. In fact, I think weekday digital curfews should be a thing—who's in?

If you can't commit to a full week, try the ultimate single-day digital detox—bathtub required. And if being cut off from current events stresses you out, here's how to do a full technology reset while still staying informed.