



Establish "Screen-Free Zones" *Not Just Times*

Creating physical boundaries can be easier for children to understand than abstract time limits. When a child knows that certain spaces are sanctuaries for connection, the constant negotiation for screens in those areas naturally decreases over time.

This helps you act as the calm center of your home, setting a structural boundary so you don't have to make a new decision every single day.

- **The "Why":** Children thrive on predictability. If the dinner table or the bedroom is sometimes a screen zone and sometimes not, they will naturally test that boundary to see what the rule is today.
- **The Strategy:** Designate key relational areas specifically the dining table and the bedroom as sacred, screen-free spaces. This applies to *everyone*, including adults.
- **Try this script:**
 - *"We are making a new family plan. The kitchen table is for eating and talking, so phones and tablets stay in the basket by the door. This way, when we are eating, I can hear all about your day without getting distracted by my work emails, too."*
- **Why it works:** It frames the rule as a family value ("we do this to connect") rather than a punishment ("you can't have this"). It also prevents the dynamic where kids retreat to their rooms with devices, looking to their online world for validation rather than their family.

Breaking the screen time cycle doesn't happen overnight. It's messy. But if you lead with empathy, stay calm when the feelings get big, and prioritize your bond over the battle, you'll find your way through. You've got this.

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