PRECISION
EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICS

PHONES, FOCUS & LEARNING

Practical Strategies for a Successful School Year



Learning starts with attention. Before information can be remembered, students need to notice it, focus on it, and encode it into memory. Phones can pull attention away—through notifications, the urge to check, or simply knowing something might be waiting. When attention shifts, less gets encoded and retained.

HOW LEARNING WORKS

ATTENTION
We notice information

→

ENCODING
We process and store it

→

MEMORY
We retain and retrieve it

→

LEARNING
We understand and apply it

Out of sight is better than in hand.

Research on the mere presence of a phone is mixed, but active use, notifications, and multitasking consistently interfere with learning and performance.

WHAT RESEARCH SHOWS

Off-task smartphone use is linked to lower academic performance.
(Systematic Review, 2025)[1]

Multitasking with phones during class is associated with poorer learning and recall.
(Meta-analysis, 2025)[2]

Excessive smartphone use is associated with higher rates of anxiety, depression, and poor sleep in adolescents.
(Meta-analysis, 2024)[3]

THE GOAL: CREATE THE BEST CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS
Silence notifications and limit non-essential apps.

PROTECT FOCUS TIME
Use downtime and limits during school hours and study time.

BUILD SELF-REGULATION
Set boundaries now so kids can build healthy habits for life.

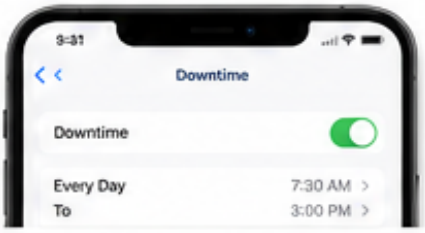
PARTNER AS A FAMILY
Set expectations together and revisit often.

These settings aren't about restriction—they're about creating the best conditions for focus, confidence, and learning.

iPHONE SCHOOL-DAY SETUP: 5-MINUTE CHECKLIST

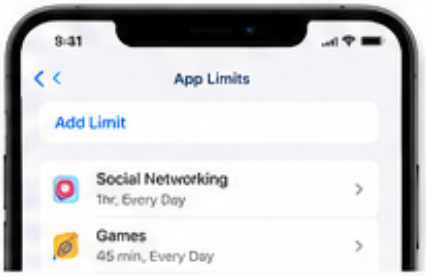
1 Downtime (School Hours)

Settings > Screen Time > Downtime
Turn on and set school hours (e.g., 7:30 AM – 3:00 PM).
Choose "Every Day" and block All Apps or choose specific apps to allow.



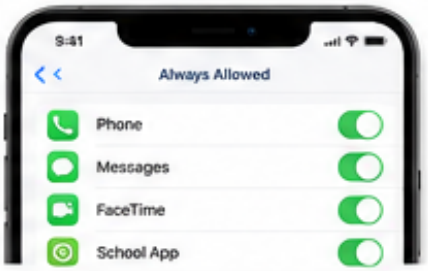
2 App Limits

Settings > Screen Time > App Limits
Add Limit and select categories or specific apps (e.g., Social Networking, Games). Set time limit and "Every Day".



3 Always Allowed

Settings > Screen Time > Always Allowed
Allow only essential apps: Phone, Messages, FaceTime, School apps, etc.



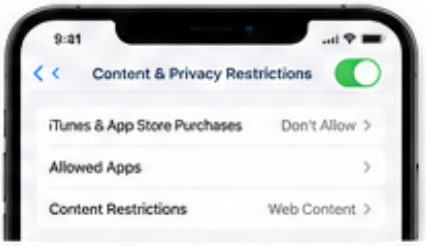
4 Communication Limits

Settings > Screen Time > Communication Limits
Limit communication to Contacts only during school hours.



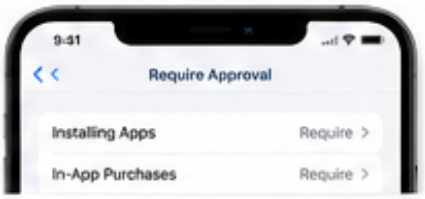
5 Content & Privacy Restrictions

Settings > Screen Time > Content & Privacy Restrictions
Turn on and restrict:
- iTunes & App Store Purchases
- Allowed Apps (choose what's needed)
- Web Content (limit adult sites)



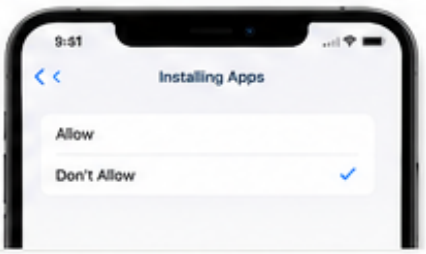
6 Ask to Buy

Settings > Screen Time > Content & Privacy Restrictions > iTunes & App Store Purchases > Require Approval
You approve all new app downloads and in-app purchases.



7 Prevent App Installs & Deletions

Settings > Screen Time > Content & Privacy Restrictions > Installing Apps > Don't Allow
Also turn on **"Deleting Apps" > Don't Allow.**



8 Check In

Review Screen Time weekly with your child.
Adjust limits as needed and celebrate wins!

HOME STRATEGIES THAT HELP

Charge outside bedrooms.
Better sleep = better focus and mood.

Device-free meals and homework time.
Protect attention when it matters most.

Plan phone-free blocks.
Evenings, weekends, and family time.

Model the habit.
Kids notice what we do more than what we say.

EVERY CHILD IS UNIQUE

Some students need technology for accessibility, communication, health, or learning supports. Tailor these settings to your child's individual needs.

REFERENCES

1. Acta Psychologica. (2025). Off-task smartphone and social media use and academic achievement: A systematic review.
2. Computers & Education. (2025). The impact of mobile phone distraction on immediate learning: A meta-analysis.
3. Computers in Human Behavior. (2024). Does excessive smartphone use affect adolescent mental health? A meta-analysis.