



# School Organizing Toolkit



# About this Toolkit

This kit is designed to help school administrators, educators, parents, PTA members, and community partners to create a successful Screen-Free Saturdays campaign within their district, school, or classroom. It is best supplemented with our additional Screen-Free Saturdays resources, fact sheets on children's screen time, and, of course, enthusiastic adults and children who want to prioritize well-being in the digital age.

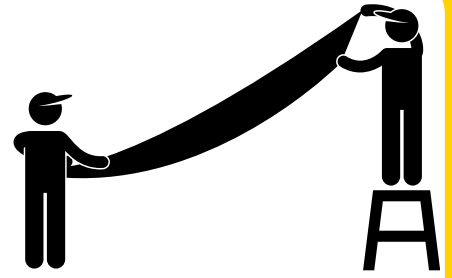
Screen-Free Saturdays is a project of Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and the Children's Screen Time Action Network.



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# HOW TO PROMOTE SCREEN-FREE SATURDAYS IN YOUR SCHOOL SETTING



## Establish Your Why

Whatever your reasons are for wanting to encourage families to do Screen-Free Saturdays, it's important for administrators, educators, families, and students to be on the same page. Make sure many different voices are at the table as you plan!

## Family Involvement

The first and most important group to reach out to is parents of children who are potential participants in Screen-Free Saturdays. You'll want to explain what Screen-Free Saturdays are and why screen-free time is so important. If you're a teacher, school librarian, or an administrator, you'll want to send out a permission slip for parents to return. We've included a sample parent letter at the end of this section.

## Newsletters

You'll definitely want to include information about Screen-Free Saturdays in your newsletter. Newsletter articles are a great way to remind parents about Screen-Free Saturdays, suggest and promote screen-free activities, and find volunteers to help you plan and execute events for school-wide success



## Spread the Word

Use our logos, sample social media language, and resources to spread the word around your community!

## Consider Student-Led Ideas

What do your students have to say about their screen time? What are their ideas for creating balance? Create space for students to contribute to school-wide or class events.

## Get People Signed On

Use our online pledge or paper pledges to have people make a commitment to try out Screen-Free Saturdays. Administrators, teachers, school leadership, and others can encourage families to sign on!

## Have a Kick Off Event!

One of the best ways to build community around Screen-Free Saturdays is to have an event to kick off the program. Try out a Friday night zoom dance party followed by a collective "sign off, turn it off" at sundown, for example. Anything that you can do to build collective energy will help students to be successful in turning off their entertainment devices.



# TALKING TO YOUR STUDENTS ABOUT SCREEN-FREE SATURDAYS

## Four Tips for Educators



### **Make it Part of Your Curriculum**

Whether you're promoting physical education, building a robust SEL program, or just using screens for subject-based work, talking regularly about screen time will help students to make healthy decisions that will set them up for lifelong success in a technology-driven world.



**Try this:** Set a routine so that every Friday students create a plan for their weekend screen time. They can do this in virtual breakout groups, through journaling, or using another type of prompt.



### **Model Screen-Free Time**

Educators need to unplug, too! Commit to taking time away from screen-based entertainment and share your experience with your students. It will benefit them to hear about your challenges and can help to deepen your relationships, even during distance learning.



### **Create a Challenge**

During one screen-free celebration, a teacher told his students that he would shave his head if they went screen-free for the week. While you don't need to go bald for Screen-Free Saturdays, consider how your students can challenge themselves (and each other).



**Try this:** Create a classroom hours tracker. How many screen-free hours can students collectively count throughout the month? Have students hold each other accountable for taking breaks!



### **Invite Your Students to Lead**

Ask your students: what are your ideas for Screen-Free Saturdays? How can you get your family to do it, too? Your friends? Invite students to take ownership over their screen time. Create a club dedicated to digital wellness. Have them create activities for the weekend. The possibilities are endless in the hands of our youth.

# Activities & Resources

Visit [www.screenfree.org/resources](http://www.screenfree.org/resources) for a full library of activity ideas and shareables!

## Resource Library

Outside of this toolkit, you'll find a number of different resources that can help families get started.

Some of our tools include:

- Getting Started with Screen-Free Saturdays Guide
- Screen-Free BINGO Card
- Hours Tracker
- Cookbook & Recipe Template
- 55 Nature-Inspired Screen-Free Activities
- No Touch, Screen-Free Summer Games
- 101 Screen-Free Activities
- Social Media Icons & Images
- Logos

...And more!

## Unplug to... Activity Guides

In addition, we also have a collection of guides that are developed from our monthly emails. You'll find them on our blog.

[www.screenfree.org/blog](http://www.screenfree.org/blog)

## Need books?

We partnered with Children's Book Council to create an Annual Screen-Free Week Booklist! Additionally, look for our great resource, 100 Awesome Ideas for Screen-Free, Reading-Related Fun, on our site.



# Sample Letter to Families

Dear Families:

This year, \_\_\_\_\_[school] will be promoting Screen-Free Saturdays as a way to make sure students get a healthy dose of offline time-- especially while they learn remotely. Screen-Free Saturdays is an international program sponsored by Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and celebrated by schools, families, and other civic and community groups throughout the year. Thousands of children and adults pledge to spend one day per week without entertainment devices on Screen-Free Saturdays. Instead of watching TV or playing video games, they tend to read, play, think, create, get physically active, and spend more time with friends and family.

Studies show that children who have less screen time are more likely to read well and to be physically fit. Turning off screens also allows for more family time. Before the pandemic, each week, American children spent more time in front of a screen than they do in school. Now, with school on the screen, this time on devices has increased exponentially. Screen-Free Saturdays can hold sacred the time off screens kids need and jump start them into more family fun and active play.

Many parents choose to join their children in foregoing screen-based entertainment for Screen-Free Saturdays. This kind of support is the best thing you can do to ensure that your child will have a successful and beneficial experience. Plus, it feels so good to take a break as adults, too.

Please let us know if you would like more information about the effects of excessive screen time for children and about Screen-Free Saturdays. You can also learn more by visiting [www.screenfree.org/saturdays](http://www.screenfree.org/saturdays).

Sincerely,

# Sample Press Release

Date of Release: [date]

Contact: [name, number, email]

## School Community Goes Screen-Free on Saturdays!

[Who you are] prioritizes student wellness by taking a weekly break from digital entertainment

[city and date] — Unplug to recharge! Screen-Free Saturdays, hosted by the nonprofit Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, celebrates taking one day of the week, every week to turn off devices in favor of connection, reflection, and quality time during the pandemic.

Describe your school campaign/event here. Feel free to add a quote from a school leader about what you'll be doing and why it's important to children.

Here are some sample prompts to help get you started:

- Before the school year, our school gathered parents, teachers, and students to talk about how we wanted to celebrate. . .
- Our school community decided to encourage families to celebrate Screen-Free Saturdays because..
- During Screen-Free Saturdays, we pledge to . . .
- We have planned the following activities . . .
- Our hopes are that Screen-Free Saturdays will help us to . . .

###

# Sample Social Media

## Facebook:

We're more dependent on digital tech than ever as we work and learn online, connect with loved ones through video chat, and follow the latest news. And it's stressful! That's why our family is participating in Screen-Free Saturdays: one day of the week, every week to turn off our devices and take a break from the seemingly endless noise of quarantine life in favor of connection, reflection, and quality time! Learn more and take the pledge along with us at [screenfree.org/saturdays](http://screenfree.org/saturdays).

## Twitter/Shorter Facebook Posts:

With everything moving online during school, work, and beyond, we're going Screen-Free on Saturdays! Join our family in taking a break one day per week from digital entertainment. Take the pledge today: [www.screenfree.org/saturdays](http://www.screenfree.org/saturdays)

Juggling kids, work, and remote learning is exhausting. That's why our friends @commercialfree are introducing Screen-Free Saturdays: one day every week to take a break from the noise of quarantine life in favor of connection and reflection! Join in! [screenfree.org/saturdays](http://screenfree.org/saturdays)

Imagine a day free from breaking news alerts and endless scrolling - it's possible! Take a break from the endless noise of quarantine life to connect and reflect on Screen-Free Saturdays (or any day)! Learn more and join here! [screenfree.org/saturdays](http://screenfree.org/saturdays)

What would a day without screens do for your family? Find out by joining in on @commercialfree's Screen-Free Saturdays, a weekly break from news alerts and social media in favor of connection and reflection. Learn more at [screenfree.org/saturdays](http://screenfree.org/saturdays)



<https://www.screenfree.org/project/unplugged-saturdays-social/>



**Follow us**

**@screenfreeweek**

**Use our hashtag:**

**#screenfreesaturdays**





# Getting Ready for Screen-Free Saturdays

A checklist for making your Screen-Free Saturdays (SFS) fun and successful!

- Set expectations early and often:** At least for the first few weeks, it will be helpful to set expectations on Thursday and Friday: "Remember, in a day or two we'll be doing Screen-Free Saturday!"
  
- Plan together:** What activities will you do? Let every member of your family contribute their ideas. And keep a couple in your back pocket, in case things are weather- (or attitude-) dependent! As you're planning, think about the different types of screen-free time you'd like to have, like:
  - **Schedule whole family time:** Plan a bunch of things you'd like to do together. Revisit old traditions that may have slipped through the cracks, or start new ones. One family we know decided to try a new bread recipe each Saturday; another remembered that they used to always take a family nap!
  - **Schedule different types of together time:** Not everything needs to be done as a whole family. There can be alone time and also smaller configurations. For instance, in a family with one parent and two kids, schedule 1:1 time with each child while the other plays alone. Many families probably don't have the time to pair up like that during the week!
  - **Schedule alone time:** Independent projects are important for everyone of all ages! For very young kids who are less independent, consider making a [YES space](#) and filling it with open-ended objects like boxes, blankets, or blocks.
  - **Schedule unscheduled time:** It's totally OK to [do nothing](#) on Screen-Free Saturdays! It's also OK to have the kids help with chores, cooking, and other things that have been put off from the busy, screen-heavy week.

## Activity Highlight: READING!

"I can't imagine a single Screen-Free Saturday without reading. With older kids like mine, we all set aside time to read to ourselves. But read-alouds for all ages (younger and my kids' ages) is a special time for us too. At this moment, I'm reading to my daughter while my husband reads to our son, but there have been times when I have read books to both kids at the same time, or when we've reversed the parent-child dyad. Reading is an all-weather activity, which makes it ideal for every Saturday."

-Rinny Yourman J.D., Washington, D.C.

**Check out these resources:**

[100 Screen-Free Reading-Related Activities](#)

and our [2020 Screen-Free Week Children's Book List](#)

## Activity Highlight: KICK IT OFF!

Consider a Friday night kickoff (like a family dinner) and/or a special family activity to get the ball rolling! Maybe it's all cuddling in the same bed in the morning or it's digging out an old board game. Re-spark an old tradition or start a new one to set the tone for your screen-free day!

- Going somewhere?** If you must leave the house or you are traveling to an unfamiliar park for a family hike (while being careful to engage in social distancing), consider printing or writing down any directions you might need. Using your phone to navigate seems innocent, but think about how many notifications might pop up once you've put in your passcode!
- Print your recipes:** Yum! If you're using your device for recipes, look them up and write them down the night before, so you don't interrupt your screen-free flow. *Bonus activity idea:* Create a cookbook of all of your SFS cooking projects to look back on and repeat!
- Let your people know that you're going Screen-Free:** If there are people who might get anxious if they text or otherwise e-contact you and don't hear back from you for 24 hours, let them know ahead of time you are going unplugged. If you have a landline, text them the day before that they can reach you on the landline. Need to stay in touch? Check out the [Brick Method](#) to set up an auto-responder for iOS and [Do Not Disturb](#) for Android.
- Honestly, just turn it off:** It will be easiest if everyone involved in your family just turns off their phone for the day. Psychologist Sherry Turkle's research shows that even the presence of our phones is distracting. Plus, if you pick up your phone to check the weather, time, directions, or a recipe, you're likely to see a whole mess of notifications! Even if you don't check them, your brain will be thinking about them. *Bonus activity idea:* [Make your own Screen-Free Sleeve to create healthy separation between your brain and your device!](#)
- Plan your transition back to screens:** On Saturday night or Sunday morning, cap off the day with a special family activity, as a slow transition back to screens. Maybe it's a Saturday night family movie night (my family loves to watch home movies from when we were younger) or a Sunday breakfast where you talk about your plan for the week. Make it yours!

# Unplug to...



...the possibilities are  
endless!

Find more tools at  
[screenfree.org/resources](https://www.screenfree.org/resources)

[www.screenfree.org/saturdays](https://www.screenfree.org/saturdays)

# Pledge

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
pledge to go screen-free on Saturdays. I will not use devices except if absolutely necessary for school or work. I will not 1) watch TV, movies, or videos, 2) play games on phones, websites, tablets, or consoles, 3) surf the web, or 4) use social media.

Instead of spending time on screens, I will:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

[www.screenfree.org/saturdays](http://www.screenfree.org/saturdays)

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Instead of spending time on screens, I will:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

[www.screenfree.org/saturdays](http://www.screenfree.org/saturdays)

# Family Pledge

Our family pledges to go screen-free on Saturdays. We will not use devices except if absolutely necessary for school or work. We will not 1) watch TV, movies, or videos, 2) play games on phones, websites, tablets, or consoles, 3) surf the web, or 4) use social media.

**FAMILY MEMBER SIGNATURES:**



[www.screenfree.org/saturdays](http://www.screenfree.org/saturdays)

**MAKE A FORT. HAVE A  
DANCE PARTY. READ A  
BOOK. FIND BURIED  
TREASURE. HELP IN THE  
KITCHEN. SHOOT SOME  
HOOPS. MAKE  
TORTILLAS. FLY A KITE.  
PAINT A MASTERPIECE.  
LAY ON THE FLOOR.  
LEARN A NEW SKILL.  
MAKE MASKS. GO FOR A  
HIKE. PUT ON A PLAY.  
TALK. GO FOR A BIKE  
RIDE. PLAY PRETEND.**



**UNPLUG TO...**

How will you spend your Saturdays?

[www.screenfree.org/saturdays](http://www.screenfree.org/saturdays)



# Certificate of Participation

This certifies that

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\_\_\_\_\_ has successfully participated in Screen-Free Saturdays!

\_\_\_\_\_ Organizer

\_\_\_\_\_ Dates

Screen-Free Saturdays is a program of Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood  
[www.screenfree.org/saturdays](http://www.screenfree.org/saturdays)