

## WHAT HAPPENED WHEN 10 TEENS GAVE UP THEIR SMARTPHONES?

As part of a five-day digital detox, 10 teenagers will swap their devices for basic phones that can only make calls and send texts. The detox is part of a project looking at young people's smartphone habits. Almost every aspect of the students' lives will be affected — they've grown up with smartphones and use the internet for everything. For instance, Will, one of the participants, regularly spends more than eight hours a day staring at his smartphone. When he was younger, he used to love riding his bike — he's 15 now and spends most of his free time after college scrolling through TikTok videos. For the next five days, he will have no access to social media. "I'm worried how I'll cope," he says. 5

Midway through the experiment, I visit Ruby, another participant. She spends way too much time on her phone and often ignores her parents while scrolling through TikTok. When I arrive, Ruby is putting the finishing touches on her make-up before she heads to college. Her father checks if she has her work uniform in her bag, and then Ruby's mother drives us to the tram stop. Ruby explains that having a break from her smartphone "has opened up more conversation" with her parents — and her mum, Emma, agrees the detox is having a positive impact on her daughter's behavior. "She's talking more, doing her homework without complaints, and going to bed earlier. It's a nice break," says Emma. 10

For some of the teens, giving up their smartphones has been really tough. After just 27 hours, 14-year-old Charlie dropped out and asked for his device back. Not knowing if someone was trying to get in touch with him, not being able to go online, and worrying that something interesting might be happening online was really stressful. Like Charlie, other students taking part in the experiment acknowledge a fear of missing out, but most say they are surprised at how liberating they find the experience. Some are getting better sleep, they say, while others feel they have been more productive without their phones. 20

After five days, it's time for the students to be reunited with their smartphones. As soon as they've turned their phones back on, the teenagers are glued to their screens — scrolling and catching up on group chats. But most say that after taking part in the detox, they would like to find ways to limit their screen time. Will admits that even though it's been difficult and he's particularly missed listening to music, spending time away from his phone has allowed him to reignite his passion for cycling. 25

**Answer these questions about the text. Use your own words wherever possible (3 points, 1.5 each).**

- How did Ruby's behaviour change during the experiment?
- What happened to Charlie? Why?

**2. Read the following statements, decide whether they are true or false and justify your answer by quoting evidence from the text (1 point, 0.50 each).**

- Will was confident that he would do well without his smartphone.
- Most teenagers felt relieved during the experiment.

**3. Find words or expressions in the text that mean the following (1 point, 0.25 each).**

- Exchange (paragraph 1).
- Moving text from right to left or up and down on a screen (paragraph 2).
- Recognize, admit (paragraph 3).
- Spark, awaken (paragraph 4).

**4. Rephrase the following sentences beginning as shown (1 point, 0.25 each).**

- Some adolescents regret not finishing the project.  
They wish .....
- It is quite possible that he will succeed.  
He is likely.....
- They think that teenagers are addicted to their phones. (PASSIVE)  
Teenagers.....
- The teenager who dropped out first is the one that has a very expensive smartphone.  
The teenager whose.....

**5. Write a composition of around 150-200 words on ONE of the following topics (4 points).**

- Write a narrative about five days without your smartphone. Tell the story of your experience describing your emotional journey, the challenges you faced, and how you found new ways to spend your time. Begin with the moment you handed over your phone and end with getting it back.
- Write a "for and against" essay discussing the effects of spending too much time on smartphones.