

DD

Digital Detox

Screen addiction, how technology changes our brains, and the gerund-infinitive puzzle

B2

Reading

Grammar

40 min

★ Lesson Objectives

- ★ Read an article about screen addiction and digital detoxing
- ★ Learn vocabulary related to technology and mental health
- ★ Master gerunds vs infinitives at B2 level
- ★ Understand verbs that change meaning with gerund or infinitive
- ★ Discuss your relationship with technology
- ★ Write about screen habits using gerunds and infinitives

1 Before You Read

- ▶ How many hours a day do you spend looking at a screen?
- ▶ Have you ever tried to reduce your screen time?
- ▶ Is technology making us more connected or more isolated?

2 Reading: The Quiet Crisis Behind Our Screens

The average adult now spends over seven hours a day staring at a screen. That is nearly half of our waking lives.

When Sana Mirza, a 29-year-old marketing manager from Dubai, decided **to track** her phone usage, the results shocked her. She picked up her device 96 times a day, spending four hours **scrolling**, **checking** emails, and **watching** videos. "I didn't remember **choosing** to spend that much time on my phone."

Our devices are engineered to be addictive. Algorithms are designed **to keep** users **scrolling**. Every notification is calibrated **to trigger** dopamine. We learn **to associate** our phones with pleasure and keep **reaching** for them.

Neuroscientist Dr. Henrik Larsen found that heavy users tend **to have** shorter attention spans. Their brains get used **to receiving** rapid stimulation and struggle **to concentrate** on slower tasks. Many report **finding** it impossible **to sit** without **checking** their phone.

"Digital detox" retreats require participants **to hand over** all devices. "People resist **giving up** their phones," says organiser Yael Cohen. "But by day three, most admit **to feeling** calmer and more creative."

Technology writer Priya Nair argues the problem isn't **using** technology but **using** it mindlessly. "I enjoy **using** my phone. I love **listening** to podcasts. I avoid **doing is scrolling** without purpose." She suggests **keeping** a screen diary. "Most people expect **to find** productive use. Instead, they discover most time involves **doing** nothing meaningful."

Stop **pretending** you are in control and start **paying** attention to what your screen is doing to you.

3 Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Example
marketing	promoting/selling products	<i>Digital marketing.</i>
device	electronic tool (phone etc)	<i>Put devices away.</i>
engineered	designed for specific purpose	<i>Engineered to be addictive.</i>
addictive	causing hard-to-stop habit	<i>Highly addictive.</i>
algorithm	rules a computer follows	<i>Algorithm decides what you see.</i>
calibrated	adjusted for specific effect	<i>Calibrated to grab attention.</i>
dopamine	brain chemical for pleasure	<i>Likes release dopamine.</i>
chronic	lasting a long time	<i>Chronic screen use.</i>
alarming	causing worry	<i>Alarming statistics.</i>
attention span	how long you concentrate	<i>Shorter attention spans.</i>
stimulation	excites/activates the brain	<i>Craves constant stimulation.</i>
detox	avoiding something harmful	<i>A digital detox.</i>
retreat	quiet place for reflection	<i>A mindfulness retreat.</i>
reluctant	unwilling; hesitant	<i>Reluctant to hand over phone.</i>
intentional	done on purpose	<i>Be intentional about screen time.</i>
mindful	conscious and aware	<i>Be more mindful.</i>

Collocations: screen time • digital detox • social media • scroll through • pay attention • attention span • log off • unplug from

4 Grammar: Gerunds vs Infinitives

In the Text, You Saw...

- Verb + Gerund: "She didn't remember **choosing**..." / "I enjoy **using**..."
- Verb + Infinitive: "She decided **to track**..." / "They struggle **to concentrate**."
- Both (same): "She started **looking / to look**."
- Both (DIFFERENT): "I stopped **checking**" (quit) vs "I stopped **to check**" (paused)

Category	Verbs	Example
+ Gerund only	enjoy, avoid, mind, keep, finish, suggest, admit, consider, risk, imagine	I enjoy reading.
+ Infinitive only	decide, want, need, hope, expect, agree, refuse, offer, promise, learn	She decided to leave.
+ Both (same)	start, begin, continue, like, love, hate, prefer	I started working / to work.
+ Both (DIFF)	stop, remember, forget, try, regret	See examples below.

VERBS THAT CHANGE MEANING

- STOP: stop doing = quit the habit | stop to do = pause in order to
- REMEMBER: remember doing = recall past action | remember to do = don't forget
- FORGET: forget doing = forget you did it | forget to do = fail to do
- TRY: try doing = experiment | try to do = make an effort
- REGRET: regret doing = sorry about past | regret to do = formal bad news

★ Memory Trick

Gerund = looking BACK (past/present). Infinitive = looking FORWARD (future/planned).
 "I remember locking the door." (I did it — back) vs "Remember to lock." (Haven't done it — forward)

▲ Common Mistakes

- X "I enjoy to read." → ✓ "I enjoy reading." (enjoy + gerund only)
- X "She decided going." → ✓ "She decided to go." (decide + infinitive)
- X "I stopped to smoke last year." → ✓ "I stopped smoking." (quit = gerund)

5 Game: Gerund or Infinitive?

1. I enjoy ___ podcasts. (listen) → listening (enjoy + gerund)
2. She decided ___ all apps. (delete) → to delete (decide + infinitive)
3. He keeps ___ his phone. (check) → checking (keep + gerund)
4. We agreed ___ screen time. (limit) → to limit (agree + infinitive)
5. I can't imagine ___ without internet. (live) → living (imagine + gerund)
6. She avoided ___ at her phone. (look) → looking (avoid + gerund)
7. I stopped ___ coffee. (= quit habit) → drinking (stop + gerund = quit)
8. He stopped ___ a message. (= paused) → to send (stop + infinitive = paused to)

9. I remember ___ my first phone. (= recall) → getting (remember + gerund = recall)

10. Remember ___ the door. (= don't forget) → to lock (remember + infinitive = future task)

6 Comprehension Quiz

1. How many times did Sana pick up her phone?

Answer: 96 times a day

2. What happens to heavy smartphone users' brains?

Answer: Their attention spans get shorter

3. What do detox retreats require?

Answer: Handing over all devices

4. What does Priya Nair suggest?

Answer: Keep a screen diary for a week

5. 'I enjoy ___.' Correct form?

Answer: reading (enjoy + gerund)

6. 'She decided ___.' Correct form?

Answer: to leave (decide + infinitive)

7. 'I stopped smoking' means?

Answer: I quit the habit

8. 'Remember to lock the door' means?

Answer: Don't forget to do it (future)

7 Fill in the Blanks

Words: taking • to put • looking • to hand over • spending • to reduce • damaging • posting

1. She suggested ___ a break from social media.

2. He promised ___ his phone away during meals.

3. I can't help ___ at my notifications.

4. They refused ___ their devices.

5. She admitted ___ too much time online.

6. We hope ___ our screen time this month.

7. He risked ___ his eyesight.

8. I regret ___ that rude comment.

● **Answers:** 1. taking • 2. to put • 3. looking • 4. to hand over • 5. spending • 6. to reduce • 7. damaging • 8. posting

8 Speaking & Writing

◆ Discussion Questions

1. Do you enjoy using social media, or is it a waste of time?
2. Have you tried doing a digital detox?
3. Should children be allowed to have smartphones?
4. What activities do you miss doing because of screen time?
5. Is technology making our attention spans shorter?

◆ Example Dialogue

A: I've decided to delete all social media for a month.

B: I can't imagine living without it!

A: I kept wasting hours. I want to spend more time reading.

B: I tried reducing my time but couldn't stop checking my phone.

A: Try putting your phone in another room.

B: I might consider doing that. I need to be more intentional.

◆ Writing Task

Write 80–120 words about your relationship with technology:

- What do you enjoy doing on your phone?
- What do you avoid doing or want to change?
- Would you consider trying a digital detox?

Use at least 3 gerunds and 3 infinitives.

9 Review Checklist

I can now...

- ✓ understand an article about screen addiction
- ✓ use vocabulary related to technology and mental health
- ✓ use verbs followed by gerund only (enjoy, avoid, keep...)
- ✓ use verbs followed by infinitive only (decide, want, hope...)
- ✓ understand verbs that change meaning (stop, remember, forget, try, regret)
- ✓ discuss and write about screen habits using gerunds and infinitives



Congratulations!

You have completed Lesson 12: Digital Detox.