



CANADA'S CENTRE  
FOR DIGITAL AND  
MEDIA LITERACY



## LESSON PLAN

**Level:** Grades 7 to 9  
**Duration:** This lesson takes place over two weeks, with roughly three hours class time mandatory and an additional two to six hours for the optional media production activity.

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# Digital Media Experiences are Shaped by the Tools We Use: The Disconnection Challenge



This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*:  
<http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

## Overview

In this lesson, students consider the role of technology and media in their lives and then spend a week either tracking or limiting their media use. They then share their experiences and discuss how the ways that digital media tools are made may cause us to use them differently (or simply more often). Finally, students draw on those insights to create a mindful media use plan. In an optional extension activity, they interview other students for a video exploring their experiences and reflections over the course of the project.

## Learning Outcomes

### Big Ideas

Students will:

Understand:

- Understand that digital media experiences are shaped by the tools we use
- Reflect on their media use
- Understand that media have social and political implications
- Analyze the ways in which society and technology influence behaviour

### Learning Goals

Know:

- Learn how digital technology influences health and wellbeing



- Analyze how the affordances and defaults of digital tools influence how we use them and their impact on us

Do:

- Create an action plan to manage the role of digital technology in their lives
- Create a collaborative media product (*extension activity*)

## Preparation and Materials

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Photocopy the following handouts:

- *Media Diary*
- *Week One Mood Diary*
- *Disconnection Challenge – Week Two Mood Diary*

Photocopy the following assignment sheets:

- *Post-Challenge Media Plan: Four Steps to Using Tech Mindfully*
- *Disconnection Challenge Video* (if completing the optional media production activity)

Prepare to show the following videos:

- Social Media Fast – Disconnection Challenge: <https://vimeo.com/222690829>
- Digital Literacy 101: Digital Media are Shaped by the Tools We Use <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AXiTZ6LQfs>
- Media Literacy 101: What is Media Anyway? (optional) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBP\\_kswrtw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBP_kswrtw)

## Procedure

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### Day One

*Optional: What is Media Anyway?* (10 minutes)

If you think your students need a better grounding in what's meant by "media" and the role it plays in their lives, begin by showing the video "Media Literacy 101: What is Media Anyway?" and have them discuss the closing prompt: What different kinds of media do you encounter in a typical day? Which of those do you choose to use (like sending a text or playing a video game) and which do you not choose (like getting a text someone else sent you, or seeing a billboard when you're walking or in the car)?

*What Role do Media Play in Our Lives?* (30 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of three to four students and have each group make a list of all of the different ways they use or consume media. Tell them to consider:

- Different devices (phones, TVs, computers, etc.)
- Different platforms (different social media, games, streaming services, etc.)



- Different contexts (listening to music at home vs. hearing it at the mall, etc.)

In the same groups, have students think about what they *do* with media:

- Encourage them to think beyond just the obvious purposes of media (e.g. watching a TV show) to the different *reasons why* they do that (e.g. watching because you're bored; watching because you want to know what happens in the story; watching because everyone else watches and you want to be part of the conversation, etc.)

Have the groups share their discussion with the class and create two master lists based on the shared feedback: a list of all of the different *ways* they use or consume media **and** the different *reasons* for doing it.

Distribute the handouts *Media Diary and Week One Mood Diary*. Go through the assignment sheet with them and explain that over the next week they will be keeping the *Media Diary and Week One Mood Diary*.

## Day Two (one week later)

### Reflection

Share the questions below with the class. Give them at least ten minutes to write a reflection on them and then discuss them in class.

- What were the ways that you chose to use media?
- What were some of the ways you used media without choosing to?
- Try to remember how you felt on different days in the last week. How did that connect to your media use?
- Which activities made you feel closer to other people?
- Which made you feel more isolated?

Show students the *Disconnection Challenge* video.

Distribute the handout *Disconnection Challenge—Week Two Mood Diary*. Tell students that over the next week, they have the choice of either participating in the Disconnection Challenge (to the best of their ability) or leading their normal media lives; either way, they should complete the *Disconnection Challenge - Week Two Mood Diary*.

## Day Three (one week later)

Ask those students who participated in the Disconnection Challenge to consider the following questions:

- What did you do (if anything) to prepare for the Challenge?
- What did you find you had been using technology to do?
- What things in your offline life were made easier? Which were more difficult?
- What did you miss the most? What didn't you miss?
- What did you do during the diet that you wouldn't have done if you were using technology that week?
- How did it impact your relationships with family or friends?



### *The Tools We Use*

Highlight this quote from one of the participants in the *Disconnection Challenge* video:

“I think technology does affect how you think and how you socialize with people.”

Ask the whole class:

- Do you agree? Why or why not?
- What are some ways that technology affects how we act?

Now show the video *Digital Media Experiences are Shaped by the Tools We Use* and have students discuss:

- What are the different parts of your life (parents, friends, school, etc.) doing to make you use technology more?
- What is the technology itself doing to make you use it more?
- What features of different apps/platforms/tools make it harder to resist using them, or make you use them more often?

Make sure to point out that just because an app gives you what you *want* doesn't mean what it gives is *good for you*.

### **Evaluation: Post-Challenge Media Plan**

Distribute the assignment sheet *Post-Challenge Media Plan: Four Steps to Using Tech Mindfully* and explain to students that based on their experience with the *Media Diary* or *Media Diet* and the class discussion, they will be creating a plan to use media and technology more mindfully in the future. Tell students that making their plan will have four steps:

- 1) Thinking about how and why they do different tech activities;
- 2) Thinking about how those different activities affect them;
- 3) Identifying the changes they want to make; and
- 4) Listing and committing the steps they need to take to get there.

### **Extension Activity: Disconnection Challenge Video**

As an extension activity, you may choose to have students make their own disconnection challenge video. Distribute the *Disconnection Challenge Video* handout. Divide students into groups of four to six and have them interview each other about their experiences, then edit the interviews into a video no more than three minutes long. (Recommended video tools are included in the handout sheet.)



## Media Diary

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For this exercise you will be tracking when and how you use media for one week. Use the *Media Diary* checklist below to help you keep track of your media use and the *Week One Mood Diary* to track your feelings at different times and days (fill it out once per day for the week).

**Phase 1:** Keep a diary of your *regular* media use for one week.

Use the checklist below for each day of this week.

Day:

What I did using screen media:

- 1. Entertainment (watching TV or online videos)
- 2. Organizational communication (texting parents to pick you up; inviting friends to plans)
- 3. Communication with friends or family
- 4. Job, school or activity communication (getting an email from a teacher; scheduling a job interview)
- 5. Keeping in touch with family or friends who live far away
- 6. Seeing what people are doing (checking out friends' or celebrity posts)
- 7. Posting or browsing photos
- 8. Getting news or weather information
- 9. Background music (listening to music while doing homework, reading, etc.)
- 10. Online learning (using screens for school or personal learning)



## Week One Mood Diary

Day:

This is how I experienced my different relationships and connections today:

	Not at all	A little	Medium	A lot	It was a very big part of my day
Connection with my friends					
Connection with my family					
Connection with myself					
Connections at school					
Connections outside school					
Other					

### How I felt today

Find the phrase that best describes how you felt today and check the circle under it.

Very poor



Not bad



OK



Pretty good



Excellent



Now use the comment box to describe your day, including how you felt at different points in the day.

### COMMENTS

## Disconnection Challenge – Week Two Mood Diary

If you choose to participate in the Disconnection Challenge, limit your media use as much as possible for the second week. (Some examples of uses you might not be able to avoid would be replying to an urgent text from a parent, or using technology in class for school work.)

Whether you are participating in the challenge or not, use the *Week Two Mood Diary* checklist below to help you keep track (fill it out once per day for the week).

### Week Two Mood Diary

Day:

**This is how I experienced my different relationships and connections today:**

	Not at all	A little	Medium	A lot	It was a very big part of my day
Connection with my friends					
Connection with my family					
Connection with myself					
Connections at school					
Connections outside school					
Other					



**How I felt today**

Find the phrase that best describes how you felt today and check the circle under it.

Very poor

Not bad

OK

Pretty good

Excellent

Now use the comment box to describe your day, including how you felt at different points in the day.

**COMMENTS**





## Post-Challenge Media Plan: Four Steps to Using Tech Mindfully

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For this assignment you will be making a mindful media plan to help make tech and media part of a balanced life.

Take a look at your completed *Media Diary* and *Mood Diary* handouts. Do you see any patterns? Which tech or media activities had the biggest impact on your life? Which had the biggest impact on how you felt?

Now create a **mindful media plan**. Dr. Neha Chaudhary, a child and adolescent psychiatrist who deals with issues relating to unhealthy media use, suggests **these** four steps to using tech more mindfully. Include **at least three points** for each step:

1. **Think about how and why you do different tech activities.** Do you scroll through Instagram to avoid things you don't want to do, like homework? Do you tend to turn on your phone when you're bored, or when you're feeling sad?
2. **Think about how those different activities affect you.** Screen use expert Dr. Lucía Magis-Weinberg says that "that how you spend your time on screens, and not how much time you spend online, is the best predictor of loneliness and well-being. Using social media to actively connect with friends and family and find support – instead of just scrolling endlessly through Instagram and comparing oneself to others and feeling excluded – can have a positive impact on well-being "

Think back to your media and mood diaries and ask yourself:

- Which activities make you feel better and which make you feel worse?
  - Which make you lose track of time?
  - How would you feel if you stopped doing some of them, or did them less often?
  - Do some have different effects at different times or in different situations?
3. **Identify the changes you want to make.** Now that you've identified which things have more positive and more negative effects on you, think about what changes you want to make.
  4. **List the steps you need to get there.** Come up with specific steps and strategies for getting to that end goal, and commit to doing them.



## Disconnection Challenge Video

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For this project, you will be creating a video or podcast in which you interview your fellow group members about their experiences doing the *Disconnection Challenge*.

### *Interviewing tips:*

Interviews are an excellent way to learn from someone who has knowledge or an opinion about a given topic. Interviews are typically held with both interviewer and interviewee sitting in chairs across from each other in a staged discussion-like setting, though there are any number of other ways to conduct an interview. Get creative! (For example, walking interviews are more challenging to film, but can certainly provide a more interesting product.)

Each interviewer should have at least 3-4 questions prepared to have as a starting point when beginning the interview.

### *Recommended video editing tools:*

- Filmora  
Online video editor  
<https://filmora.wondershare.com/>  
Also available as an app for iOS and Android
- iMovie  
iOS video editor  
<https://www.apple.com/ca/imovie/>
- WeVideo  
Online video editor  
<https://www.wevideo.com/>
- Shotcut  
Windows video editor  
<https://www.shotcut.org/>
- KDenLive  
Windows video editor  
<https://kdenlive.org/en/>

For additional video editing tools, visit <https://alternativeto.net/category/video/video-editing/>

