

Technology Use and Free Time

In this session, students reflect on how they use technology in their free time and consider the benefits and drawbacks. Through a playful “Would You Rather?” activity and guided discussion, students explore healthy digital habits and why some limits around technology use are important. This session supports responsible decision-making and self-awareness, aligning with TimeWise2 goals and helping students understand the role of balance and boundaries in using tech.

The topic of technology can be integrated into most topics throughout the TW2 program.

Student Goals:

- Think about how they use technology (like tablets, phones, TVs, or computers) during their free time—both at school and at home.
- Learn about the good things and not-so-good things that can come from screen time.
- Understand what it means to have a balance between screen time and other activities.
- Talk about why adults might set screen time rules and what kinds of rules feel fair and helpful.

Introduction

“We use technology for so many things—games, shows, learning, music, and more. Today we’re going to think about how technology is a part of our free time. What do we use it for? How do we feel when we use it? And how do we make sure we’re using it in a way that’s fun, healthy, and balanced?”

Would You Rather?

1. Lead a short round of “Would You Rather?” questions using a mix of digital and non-digital options.
 - Would you rather play a video game or go sledding with friends?
 - Would you rather watch a movie or make a play with your friends?
 - Would you rather text a friend or talk to them in person?
 - Would you rather watch YouTube or go on a nature walk?

2. After each question, ask students to share why they made their choice.
3. Optional: Add questions related to: “You have already been using a screen for more than an hour.....” and try “Would you rather...” again.
4. Chart answers if desired (tally results or list favorite activities).

Conversation Starters:

“Why did you choose that option?”

“Do you always choose that, or does it depend on your mood?”

“What makes one activity feel more fun or satisfying?”

Tech Talk & Limit Setting

Example Conversation Starter and Instructions:

1. Ask students: “What are some ways you use technology during your free time?”
 - Write down or draw a few common answers on the board.
2. Then ask: “What are some rules at your house about technology?” (time limits, no screens before bed, certain types of games or apps)
3. Facilitate a group conversation about why those limits might exist. Connect back to LYW themes and physical, mental, and emotional wellness, etc.
4. Optional: Introduce the idea of Zones of Regulation to help students notice how they feel before/after screen time.

Discussion Questions:

“What do your caregivers say about how and when you use screens?”

“Do you agree with those rules? Why or why not?”

“How do you feel after using screens for a long time?”

“Are there times when technology helps you connect with people? Learn something new?”

“What does a good balance look like?”

Think about motivation in using screens:

Want to

Have to

What Someone Else Thinks (this is nuanced, Influence of friends and family/relationships could be positive or negative)

Nothing else to do

For a purpose (like to get better at something or for a specific reason, to learn a new skill or meet people)

Reflection

Have students write or draw answers to:

One thing I love to do with technology is...

One limit or habit for using technology that I think is helpful is...

One way I can balance screen time with other kinds of fun is...

Encourage students to connect this reflection to a Live Your Why wellness theme, like Working Your Brain or Connecting With People.

Wrap-Up

“Technology can be a great tool for fun, learning, and connecting with others. But just like eating too much candy, too much screen time can leave us feeling tired or grumpy or just out of balance since sometimes when we use technology, time seems to fly by, only doing one thing. When we learn to use technology in healthy ways and take breaks to do other things, we feel better overall.”

Extension Ideas:

Have students brainstorm a list of “Tech/Screen-Free Fun” ideas to post in the classroom or school.

Create a home tech/screen agreement template that families can fill out together.

Use Zones of Regulation check-ins before and after tech use for a week and reflect.