NEWS LESSON

What Happens in Five Minutes Without Your Phone?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What do you reach for when you have two minutes with nothing to do?
2. When was waiting more enjoyable than you expected?
3. Would you rather be bored alone or entertained by something you did not choose?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**psychologists**	☐	A	scientists who study how people think and feel
2	**digital**	☐	B	things like films, music and games that people enjoy
3	**entertainment**	☐	C	to see or hear something
4	**increasing**	☐	D	getting bigger or more
5	**ordinary**	☐	E	sad because you are alone or have no friends near
6	**lonely**	☐	F	normal, not special
7	**notice**	☐	G	to plan things or put them in a good order
8	**organise**	☐	H	using phones, computers and the internet

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

There is always a video to watch while you wait. Yet researchers have discussed evidence that people may be feeling more bored, not less.

1 You are waiting for a friend who is ten minutes late. What do you do? Many of us immediately pull out our phones. We watch a video, check the news or scroll through social media. There is always something to pass the time with, almost anywhere and at any time.

2 You might think this means people feel less bored than in the past. However, two psychologists writing in the journal Communications Psychology in 2024 discussed evidence that boredom may actually be increasing. They suggested that digital entertainment could be one possible reason.

3 A phone offers thousands of choices. But when we move quickly from one short video to another, it may become harder to enjoy one thing for long. We get used to something new appearing every few seconds. An ordinary conversation or a slow afternoon can then seem less exciting.

4 This does not mean that phones are bad or that everybody is more bored today. We use them to talk to friends, learn new things and organise our lives. The researchers were discussing a possible explanation for a bigger change, not proving that every minute online creates boredom.

5 Boredom can sometimes tell us something useful. Maybe we need a change, a challenge or more contact with other people. It can also encourage us to start a conversation, take up a new activity or simply notice the world around us.

6 People do not all feel boredom in the same way. A young child may find a long car journey difficult, while an adult might enjoy looking at the scenery. Someone who works in a busy hospital may welcome ten quiet minutes. A person who spends the whole day alone may want more conversation and excitement. This means there is no perfect amount of entertainment for everyone.

7 The key is understanding why a moment feels empty. Are we tired, lonely or simply looking for something to do? A new video may take our mind off it for a short time, but it might not answer the real need. Sometimes making a plan with a friend or learning something new can be more satisfying. At other times, doing nothing is exactly what we need.

8 Next time you have five empty minutes, you could try putting your phone away. You might feel uncomfortable at first. Or you might notice something interesting. Either way, being bored for a moment is not necessarily a problem that needs an immediate solution.

Sources: Communications Psychology. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The two psychologists published their ideas in a journal. T F NG
2. The researchers proved that phones make every person more bored. T F NG
3. The two psychologists work at the same university. T F NG
4. The text says that a hospital worker always hates quiet time. T F NG
5. The writer says that doing nothing is sometimes the right choice. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

attention **challenge** **contact** **evidence** **explanation** **journey** **scenery**

1. Doctors studied the _____ from many tests before they decided.
2. A long _____ by car can be hard for a young child.
3. From the hotel window, we enjoyed the beautiful _____ of mountains and lakes.
4. There is more than one possible _____ for why prices rise.
5. Phones make it easy to stay in _____ with friends who live far away.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. My brother _____ me a funny message this morning. (SEND)
2. Last night I _____ a funny video about cats. (SEE)
3. My friend _____ ten minutes late yesterday. (BE)
4. We _____ twenty minutes for the bus this morning. (WAIT)
5. She _____ nothing for an hour because she felt tired. (DO)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A phrasal verb is a verb plus a small word such as up or out. Learn the whole phrase together, because the small word changes the meaning.

along	off	out	round	through	to	up

1. Anna reached into her bag and pulled _____ her phone.
2. Boredom may push you to take _____ a new hobby.
3. She scrolled _____ her friends' photos on the train.
4. It took me weeks to get used _____ my new job.
5. Please switch _____ your phone before the film starts.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What might you notice if you left your phone in your pocket for ten minutes?
2. Should every empty moment need a purpose?
3. Could making a phone less convenient make a day more enjoyable?

9 Role-play: a phone-free evening

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the housemate with an idea

You think you both spend too much time on your phones. Suggest a phone-free evening once a week. Explain why, and offer ideas for things to do instead.

Student B · the housemate who loves their phone

You use your phone to talk to friends and to relax after work. You're not sure about the idea. Ask questions, say what worries you, and try to agree on a compromise.

Useful phrases

I'd like to try something different.
What would we do instead?
I'm not sure that's a good idea.
I use my phone to keep in touch.
How about two hours, not the whole evening?
Okay, let's give it a go.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree on a plan, and what was the compromise?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 A · 2 H · 3 B · 4 D · 5 F · 6 E · 7 C · 8 G

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 F · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 evidence · 2 journey · 3 scenery · 4 explanation · 5 contact

6 Verb forms

1 sent · 2 saw · 3 was · 4 waited · 5 did

7 Language focus

1 out · 2 up · 3 through · 4 to · 5 off

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