NEWS LESSON

Could You Put Your Phone Away for Dinner?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What makes a meal with other people enjoyable?
2. Is it rude to look at your phone while you are eating with someone?
3. Would you like a phone-free dinner, or would it annoy you?

2 Key words

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

1	**ombudsman**	☐	A	a person whose job is to make sure people are treated fairly
2	**leaflet**	☐	B	a group of people with the same job or aim
3	**reunion**	☐	C	full of energy and noise
4	**official**	☐	D	a person with an important job in an organisation
5	**lively**	☐	E	a small piece of paper with information on it
6	**association**	☐	F	a time when people meet again after being apart
7	**limits**	☐	G	to feel close to someone
8	**connect**	☐	H	the most that is allowed

3 Read

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

Some restaurants in Sardinia are asking families to put their screens away. Instead, they want parents and children to talk and play together.

1 You are at a restaurant with your family. The food has not arrived yet, and everyone is looking at a phone. Nobody is arguing, but nobody is talking either. Does that sound peaceful, or a little sad? A group of restaurants in Sardinia, an Italian island, wants families to try something different.

2 Fifteen restaurants have agreed to take part in a one-month trial called "At the table without screens". Families eating at those restaurants will be asked to put their devices away. The idea is to give parents and children more time to talk during their meal. The restaurants chose to join the scheme, so it is not a rule for every restaurant on the island.

3 After families hand in their devices, staff will offer them a "reunion kit". It contains games and drawings designed to help children and parents spend time together. The games have time limits, so they fit around a restaurant meal. Families can also use the time to share stories about their day.

4 The kit also holds a short leaflet for parents. It explains the risks of too much time online and gives advice about social media at home.

5 Anna Cau, Sardinia's children's ombudsman, is leading the project. An ombudsman is an official whose job is to protect people's rights. She wants public places to help families connect, rather than leaving parents to deal with screens alone. A local restaurant association is supporting the trial too. Its island president said that lively chatter is often replaced by silence, and that children are sometimes handed a device to keep them quiet.

6 Of course, a phone can be useful at a restaurant. A parent might be waiting for an important message, and a game can help a tired child wait for food. People may also disagree about whether a restaurant should make rules for a family's meal. A quiet table does not always mean an unhappy one.

7 Still, the idea raises an interesting question. If the screens disappeared for an hour, what would happen next? Some families might enjoy the break. Others might discover that starting a conversation takes a little more effort than picking up a phone. Either way, the trial invites them to find out.

Sources: The Guardian, Sardinian restaurants ban families from using phones at the table. Picture: .

4 True, false or not given

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

1. Fifteen restaurants have agreed to take part in the trial. T F NG
2. Every restaurant on the island must follow the rule. T F NG
3. The reunion kit contains games and drawings. T F NG
4. Most families in Sardinia like the idea. T F NG
5. Parents can read about the risks of too much time online in the kit. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

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

advice **disagree** **effort** **peaceful** **rights** **risks** **silence**

1. The leaflet explains the _____ of too much time online.
2. My doctor gave me some good _____ about sleeping better.
3. After a busy week, a quiet evening at home feels calm and _____ .
4. Climbing the hill took a lot of _____ , and we were tired at the top.
5. My brother and I often _____ about which film to watch.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. You _____ at a restaurant with your family. (BE)
2. Fifteen restaurants _____ to take part in a one-month trial called “At the table without screens”. (AGREE)
3. Families at those restaurants _____ a reunion kit by the staff. (OFFER)
4. The restaurants _____ to join the scheme, so it is not a rule for every restaurant on the island. (CHOOSE)
5. Anna Cau, Sardinia's children's ombudsman, _____ the project. (LEAD)

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, like put away. The small word changes the meaning, so learn them together.

across	away	in	out	through	up	with

1. Please put your phone _____ in your bag and enjoy the meal.
2. At the door, parents hand _____ their devices and get a reunion kit.
3. Some children are given a tablet to help them deal _____ a long wait.
4. It is a trial, so the restaurants will find _____ whether families enjoy it.
5. It is easy to pick _____ a phone when a conversation feels difficult.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

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

1. Would you choose a restaurant with a phone-free rule? Why or why not?
2. When is using a phone during a meal understandable, and when is it annoying?
3. What helps people have a good conversation when they eat together?

9 Role-play: a phone-free table

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

Student A · the restaurant manager

Your restaurant has joined the phone-free trial. A family has just sat down. Explain the rule and the reunion kit. Answer the parent's worries and decide if there can be any exceptions.

Student B · the parent

You are eating out with two children and you are expecting an important message. You don't like being told what to do. Ask questions, explain your problem and try to agree a solution.

Useful phrases

Could I just explain how it works?

I'm expecting an important message.

It's only for one meal, and we've got games for the children.

I'd rather decide that for myself.

What if there's an emergency?

Let's agree on a compromise.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you reach an agreement, and was the rule fair?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

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

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 T · 4 NG · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 risks · 2 advice · 3 peaceful · 4 effort · 5 disagree

6 Verb forms

1 are · 2 have agreed · 3 will be offered · 4 chose · 5 is leading

7 Language focus

1 away · 2 in · 3 with · 4 out · 5 up

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