

## 'It made my day more meaningful': the Japanese gen Zers attempting a two-hour limit on smartphone use

### Level 1: Elementary

#### 1 Warmer

a. Look at the image and discuss the questions.



1. Where is it normal to see a sign like this? Where is it not normal?
2. Why do people want to control how much they use smartphones?
3. What difference could using your smartphone less make to your life?

#### 2 Key words

a. Match the correct word to each definition. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

restrict

rule

authorities

manages

residents

1. when someone is able to do something, even if it is difficult \_\_\_\_\_
2. people who have the power to make rules or laws, like the government or police  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. something that tells you what you can or cannot do \_\_\_\_\_
4. people who live in a particular place \_\_\_\_\_
5. to limit or control something \_\_\_\_\_

succeeded

challenge

mayor

complained

punishment

6. something unpleasant that happens when someone breaks a rule or law  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. something difficult that tests your ability or effort \_\_\_\_\_

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8. did something well; reached your goal \_\_\_\_\_
9. the leader of a town or city \_\_\_\_\_
10. said that you were unhappy about something \_\_\_\_\_

**b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.**

1. His \_\_\_\_\_ for being late was to do extra homework.
2. In our school, one \_\_\_\_\_ is that students must not use phones in class.
3. Learning English is a big \_\_\_\_\_, but it's also exciting.
4. People often \_\_\_\_\_ about the noise from the construction.
5. She \_\_\_\_\_ to study every night even though she works during the day.
6. He really wants to \_\_\_\_\_ in passing his driving test.
7. The city \_\_\_\_\_ decided to build a new park in the city centre.
8. There was a new doctor who told him to \_\_\_\_\_ how much sugar he eats.
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ opened the new library in the town square.
10. All the \_\_\_\_\_ of the town helped clean the streets after the storm.

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*Authorities in Japan are taking action against excessive phone time – but what is it like to restrict scrolling to 120 minutes a day?*

**Justin McCurry**

**8 October, 2025**

- 1 Shoki Moriyama works full-time for a company in Tokyo. However, he still manages to spend about eight hours a day on his smartphone. Moriyama is 25 and like many young people, he cannot imagine life without social media, news, and short videos.
- 2 In Japan, many people use smartphones too much. Authorities are becoming worried about the effects on health and family life, especially for children. The town of Toyoake, in central Japan, has introduced a new rule. They want their 69,000 residents to restrict their smartphone use to two hours a day, but there is no punishment if people don't follow the rule.
- 3 Moriyama joined others in their 20s to try the challenge. Some people succeeded, and others did not. He usually checks apps like LINE, TikTok, and Instagram many times a day. However, he said it was difficult to stay off them.

"I spend around eight hours a day on my phone, so two hours is way too little" he said. Yet, he did manage to stop after one hour and 50 minutes. He read a book, studied, and went to the gym with the extra time.

- 4 His colleague, Tomomi Hanaoka, also tried to restrict her use. She spends three hours a day on her phone during the week and six or seven hours on weekends. "Two hours felt very short," she said. Though it was hard, she "used the extra time to read and do other things".
- 5 Toyoake's mayor, Masafumi Koki, said he wanted people to think about how they use their phones. After people complained online, he explained that the rule was not strict. "If someone hears two hours, they'll stop and think about how long they really use their smartphone for," he said.
- 6 Another young person, Aya\*, said she couldn't keep to two hours, but the challenge made her think more about her habits. "I spent more time enjoying conversations and noticing what was happening around me." she said.

\*Name has been changed on request.

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Are these sentences True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Shoki Moriyama works part-time in Tokyo and spends only two hours a day on his smartphone. T / F
2. The town of Toyoake asked people to use their smartphones for no more than two hours each day. T / F
3. Moriyama found it easy to stay off social media during the challenge. T / F
4. Tomomi Hanaoka usually spends more time on her phone at weekends than on weekdays. T / F
5. The mayor of Toyoake said people would be punished if they used their phones for more than two hours. T / F
6. Aya said the challenge helped her notice more about what was happening around her. T / F

#### 4 Key language

a. Match the halves of the sentences from the article.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. He usually checks apps like TikTok many times a day.        | a. but the challenge made her think more about her habits |
| 2. They want their residents to restrict their smartphone use, | b. she used the extra time to read and do other things.   |
| 3. Shoki Moriyama works full-time.                             | c. However, he said it was difficult to stay off them.    |
| 4. She couldn't keep to two hours,                             | d. but there is no punishment.                            |
| 5. Though it was hard,   | e. However, he spends eight hours a day on his phone.     |

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#### b. Complete the sentences using *but*, *however* or *though*.

1. Many students use their phones to study. \_\_\_\_\_, they often get distracted.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I like my smartphone, I try not to use it too much.
3. Smartphones are very useful, \_\_\_\_\_, they can also be addictive.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ she was tired, she still watched videos on her phone
5. I wanted to read a book, \_\_\_\_\_ I spent the evening on my phone instead.
6. He forgot his phone at home. \_\_\_\_\_, he still had a nice day.

### 5 Discussion

#### a. Discuss these statements.

- Smartphone use only has a positive effect on our culture.
- Governments should control how we use technology.

### 6 In your own words

#### a. In pairs or small groups, do a survey on smartphone use in your class.

#### b. Present your survey results to the class. Compare the different members of the class and describe people who use their smartphones a little and those who use them a lot. Include *but*, *however* or *though* in your presentation. Here is an example.

*The results of my survey showed there was a lot of variety in how people in the class use their smartphones. Someone used their phone for over nine hours a day. However, he works in social media. Some people use their phone for less than two hours, but they live at home with their family. Though they thought it was difficult to do, everyone in the class thought it was a good idea to use our smartphones less.*