

Digital Fast Parent Guide

Helping all families, of all ages, all the time, ADVANCE in their journey with Christ.

As we begin a new year, we want to help our families *reset rhythms, reclaim connection, and refocus our hearts* around what matters most. A digital fast isn't about removing something good, it's about making room for something better. Here's a simple guide to help your family participate throughout January.

SET AN ACHIEVABLE GOAL

Before you change anything, start by noticing your *normal*. As a family:

- Check your device's screen time report.
- Estimate the *total time* spent on TVs, tablets, phones, and games.
- Talk about how screens most often “steal time” from connection, creativity, sleep, or peace.

Then set a goal the whole family can reach. Keep these principles in mind:

Encourage each other.

Celebrate small wins. Cheer each other on. This isn't punishment—it's discipleship, practice, and formation.

Model the way.

Kids imitate what they see. When parents lead the digital fast with joy and consistency, kids naturally follow.

Know your “why.”

Share the reason your family is participating:

More peace. More presence. More conversations. More connection. More Jesus.

When the fast feels challenging, return to the why.

REPLACE SCREEN TIME WITH ACTIVE TIME

God designed our bodies to move, and moving helps our minds and moods. In fact, physical activity releases endorphins.

If your child seems restless, overstimulated, frustrated, or tired, try an “active reset.” Here are some ideas:

- Go for a bike ride or take a family walk.
- Shoot hoops or play a quick backyard game.
- Make a scavenger hunt or obstacle course.
- Play cards, build Legos, do a puzzle, or play a boardgame.
- Bake cookies or bread. Cooking together.
- Put on a worship playlist and have a family dance break.
- Take a quick trip to a new park, hiking trail, etc.
- Try indoor chores together: cleaning races, 5-minute pick-ups, etc.

Screens numb. Activity restores.

DRAW A CLEAR LINE BETWEEN SCREENS AND BEDTIME

Healthy sleep fuels healthy hearts, brains, and emotions. But screens delay melatonin release and stimulate the brain, which is not good for winding down.

For January, aim for:

No screens at least 60 minutes before bedtime.

Use this time for calming activities:

- Reading
- Coloring
- Journaling
- Listening to worship or instrumental music
- Talking about the day
- Bedtime devotionals

Keep devices out of bedrooms.

Truthfully, this is a standard best practice. As parents, we have the opportunity to protect our kids from the enemy seeking to devour them through their devices.

Create a “drop station” in the kitchen or another common space where they can leave devices.

Device notifications, even silent ones, break sleep cycles.

Charging devices outside the bedroom protects the whole night’s rest.

A rested home is a peaceful home.

MAKE MEALTIMES SCREEN FREE

Screens during meals distract us from connection, conversation, and paying attention to how full we are.

For January:

Make breakfast, dinner, or weekend meals a “digital-free zone.” This creates space to talk, laugh, pray, and enjoy each other.

(Cooking with a recipe on your phone is totally fine, just set the phone aside once the meal begins.)

If you are not already having family dinners during the week, consider reorienting your schedule to prioritize.

Uninterrupted presence together is the goal.

REDUCE SCREEN TIME GRADUALLY

This is a digital fast, not digital shock therapy. The win isn’t perfection, it’s progress.

Here’s how to pace your December/January:

Set one clear family goal.

Examples:

- “We’ll cut 30 minutes of screen time each week.”
- “We’ll remove screens from bedrooms.”
- “We’ll have screen-free evenings 2+ nights a week.”

Be specific about the “why.”

Take steps.

Adjust slowly. Celebrate every step.

Create simple boundaries.

Examples:

- No games until homework is done.
- TV stays off until after dinner.
- No TikTok or YouTube during rides in the car (replace with conversation or worship music).

Make it fun.

Ask: “What can we DO now that we have this time back?”

(See “Replace Screen Time with Active Time” ideas.)

Set the same expectations for everyone.

Kids can sniff out hypocrisy. Lead with the behavior you’re asking for.

EXPECT SOME BOREDOM

Boredom is good!

Boredom isn't failure, it's fertilizer.

When kids are bored, their brains get creative. They build, imagine, problem solve, and discover who God made them to be.

Don't rush to replace boredom with instant entertainment. Give it a minute. You might be surprised by what grows.

LASTING ENCOURAGEMENT

A digital fast is more than a challenge; it's a chance to *Advance* as a family. **Being** present with one another, devoting additional time in relationship with God, **finding** new ways to connect, and creating memories that last.

January is just the beginning.

Imagine what could happen if your family builds these rhythms all year long.