

Let teenage athletes sleep in, researchers say

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Credit: University of Western Australia

A new investigation into the impacts of electronic gadgets has revealed that the removal of these devices for a couple of days does not affect sleep quality or influence performance in young elite athletes. The results suggest that to encourage optimal athletic performance, we should instead just let teenagers sleep in.

Researchers from the Centre for Sleep Science at The University of Western Australia worked with young, elite judo athletes from the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) Combat Centre to understand the impacts of sleep on physical and cognitive performance.

It was thought that [sleep loss](#) would negatively affect cognitive performance and reaction time and the use of [electronic devices](#) - such

as smartphones and tablets - in the evening would negatively affect the amount of quality and sleep.

The researchers monitored the effects of the removal of electronic devices for 48 hours in 23 judo athletes during a six-day training camp at the Australian Institute of Sport. The athletes wore an activity- monitor to measure [sleep quality](#) and next day athletic and [cognitive performance](#)

The researchers found that although athletes tried to go to bed earlier when the devices were removed, they fell asleep at the same time as those who has access to electronic devices. Removal of the devices did not affect their sleep quality, or next-day physical performance compared to those who continued to use electronic devices.

The reason for the lack of difference is attributed to the commencement time of the training which meant all athletes were required to wake very early in the morning.

Lead author, Ian Dunican said teenagers are likely to have 'owl' behavioural sleep tendencies, characterised by later bedtimes and later evening use of electronic devices.

"Early morning starts for young adults can impact sleep opportunities and lead to sleep loss," Mr Dunican said.

"By scheduling daily training start times after 8am, [young athletes](#) have more opportunity for [sleep](#) and recovery, leading to improved athletic performance."

The study was published in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*.

More information: Ian C Dunican et al. The Effects of the Removal of Electronic Devices for 48 hours on Sleep in Elite Judo Athletes, *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* (2017). [DOI: 10.1519/JSC.0000000000001697](https://doi.org/10.1519/JSC.0000000000001697)

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