

# Parents urged to watch weekend tech use as teens settle into school

February 28 2023

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

We all know that teenagers love their sleep. But if your teen is a regular night owl, then they could be overdosing on technology at the expense of their sleep, according to new research from the University of South Australia.

Assessing sleep, well-being, and technology use of Australian [teenagers](#), researchers found that those with a "late sleep chronotype" (a preference for a later bedtime) may be at greater risk of disturbed sleep from excess technology than their counterparts with an "early sleep chronotype."

Published in *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, the study compared bedtime "digital diets" of 462 Australian school students (aged 12–18 years) on weekdays and weekends finding that technology use and sleep differ on [weekend](#) compared to weekdays.

Specifically, [social media](#) or texting was predictive of shorter sleep on weekends (but not weekdays), and TV/streaming was predictive of a later wake time on weekdays (but not weekends).

Teens with a late sleep chronotype were associated with more frequent technology use, with older teens more likely to use social media/texting or TV/streaming, and younger teens more likely to be gaming.

UniSA researcher and postgraduate student, Alexander Reardon, says that understanding the links between sleep and technology use is important, especially as children have recently returned to school.

"Owning a [mobile phone](#) and having access to technology is common for many [young people](#), but teenagers are notorious for being 'glued' to their phone or device, and it's important that we understand how this might affect different aspects of their lives," Reardon says.

"We already know that many teenagers don't get enough sleep on school days. This can be quite normal as teenagers tend to experience natural delays in their 'body clocks' as they get older, leading them to go to bed later and get up later. But most of these teens catch up on missed sleep on weekends when they have a chance to 'sleep-in.'"

"Yet when we add technology to the mix, this catch-up sleep is far less likely to happen, leaving many teenagers with a serious sleep deficit."

[Australian sleep health guidelines](#) recommend that teenagers get between 8–10 hours of sleep a day.

UniSA researcher Dr. Alex Agostini says that without enough sleep teenagers are more likely to struggle with schooling and well-being.

"When we don't get enough sleep, we can experience problems with thinking, concentration, memory, reaction times and mood, all of which make it harder to perform daily tasks and increase the risks of mistakes," Dr. Agostini says.

"Teenagers often need to learn good sleep habits. This can include everything from the benefits of a sleep routine, finding ways to wind down, as well as cutting back on late night technology use.

"For teens and parents, the message is clear: cut back on night-time tech and not only will get a better night's [sleep](#), but everyone will be in a better head space the next day."

**More information:** Alexander Reardon et al, Adolescent sleep, distress, and technology use: weekday versus weekend, *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/camh.12616](https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12616)

Provided by University of South Australia

Citation: Parents urged to watch weekend tech use as teens settle into school (2023, February 28) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-02-parents-urged-weekend-tech-teens.html>

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