

# Strict tech rules at boarding school a bonus for teens' sleep

August 21 2023

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Struggling with a teenager who refuses to ditch digital devices at night and wakes up grumpy? Boarding school could be the answer.

A new study by University of South Australia researchers shows that boarders get 40 minutes more sleep most nights than day students, due to fixed bedtimes and stricter policies around technology use.

They go to bed earlier and wake up later, despite sleeping in shared, sometimes noisy, dormitories—factors that are normally associated with disrupted sleep.

The findings are based on a survey of 309 students from a co-educational school in Adelaide, including 59 boarders and 250 day students.

Published in the *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, the study also found that despite teen boarders getting more sleep, they experienced similar levels of stress, anxiety, and depression to their day peers.

UniSA researcher Dr. Alex Agostini says the structured routine of a boarding school—with set times for sport, dinner, study, socializing, and lights out—was more conducive to sleep.

"Night-time routine and restricting technology seem to be the key to better sleep and this was borne out by feedback both from the students surveyed and the focus groups we interviewed," Dr. Agostini says.

While homesickness can often disrupt sleep for new boarders, once they settle into their new environment and make friends, this usually settles down.

Boarding [school](#) is a double edged sword for many students, the researchers say. While it can promote [social connections](#), [life satisfaction](#) and better academic outcomes, it is also associated with loneliness, behavioral problems, and isolation.

These issues are especially common in adolescence, which is well recognized for the onset of mental health issues, with a clear link to sleep disruption.

Female boarders reported higher stress levels and loneliness than their [male counterparts](#), but there were no significant gender differences in any of the [sleep](#) or technology use variables.

**More information:** Alexander Reardon et al, Boarding versus day-students: A mixed-methods analysis of sleep and its relationship with psychological distress, *British Journal of Educational Psychology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/bjep.12624](https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12624)

Provided by University of South Australia

Citation: Strict tech rules at boarding school a bonus for teens' sleep (2023, August 21) retrieved 15 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-08-strict-tech-boarding-school-bonus.html>

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