

Frequently asked questions

What's changing in 2020?

- A new digital technology policy will be put in place in NSW public schools from the start of Term 1 in 2020. It will cover student use of mobile phones, smartwatches, tablets, laptops and any other device that allows connectivity to the internet and applications.
- The policy builds upon the important work in schools to teach young people to use digital technology in safe, responsible and respectful ways as we prepare students for life beyond the classroom.
- Each school will work with their students and local communities to implement the new arrangements.

Why does the new policy cover all digital devices, not just mobile phones?

- The benefits and risks associated with digital devices are not unique to mobile phones. Other devices, such as laptops, tablets and smartwatches, pose similar challenges and opportunities.
- All digital devices, not just mobile phones, should be used in safe, responsible and respectful ways.



What's changing in primary schools?

- Primary-aged students will not be allowed to use digital devices during class time, recess and lunch, unless for an educational purpose or where a student needs it for other reasons, such as an adjustment to support their learning and wellbeing.
- For many schools, this reflects current practice and will not represent a major change.

Why are you restricting digital devices in primary schools?

- We know that digital devices present a new challenge for schools, teachers, parents and carers and students.
- We also know that if used inappropriately, they may put young people at risk and can be a distraction from their learning and engagement.
- The learning, wellbeing and safety of our students is a priority, which is why we are restricting the use of digital devices, including mobile phones, in our primary schools.



What is meant by educational purpose?

- An educational purpose is any use approved by a teacher or principal that supports student learning, wellbeing or educational attainment.
- We recognise that digital technology can empower authentic, meaningful, collaborative and engaged learning, and can better prepare students for their lives beyond school.

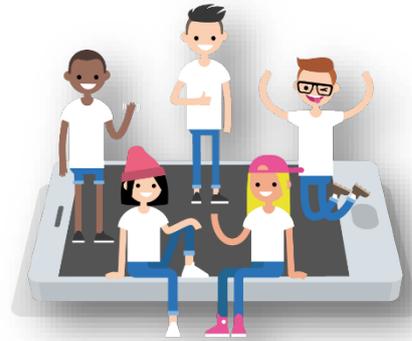
Frequently asked questions

Is this just a restriction on something the government doesn't like?

- No. The restriction reflects the NSW Government's commitment to take action on things that matter to school communities.
- Through the 2018 Review into the non-educational use of mobile devices in NSW schools, we heard parents, teachers and students acknowledge that digital devices can be a distraction in class even though they can provide benefits to students' learning.
- Supporting schools to manage the benefits and risks these devices can present means we have a responsibility to act.

Will mobile phones and other digital devices still be seen in schools?

- The new policy will not restrict teachers from incorporating digital devices and online services into their classrooms for educational use.
- At times, this could mean mobile phones are used in class when they are a useful tool for learning. Teachers and other school staff are best placed to make this decision.
- Teaching appropriate use of digital technology supports students to develop the skills they need in digital literacy, problem-solving, creativity, teamwork and interpersonal relationships and prepares students for lifelong learning.



Will anyone be exempt from the restriction in primary schools?

- Each school will consider the needs of their students when developing school procedures. Exemptions may apply for students in some circumstances.
- Except where required by law, the school principal has discretion to consider and approve exemptions and to choose which parts of the school procedure the exemptions applies. The exemption may be ongoing or for a certain time period.
- An exemption can be requested from the principal by parents, carers, school counsellors, school psychologists and student support officers as well as students themselves.
- Identifying and responding to the personalised learning and support needs of all students, including a need for digital devices, is an ongoing school process of collaborative planning and consultation with the student and their parents or carers.



What happens as new digital devices come on to the market – will they be restricted too?

- Any new device or technology that can receive, store, process and share digital information and connect to applications, websites and other online services is covered by the new arrangements.
- Policy and school procedures will be reviewed from time to time and updated as necessary.

Frequently asked questions

Won't this restriction just mean that students use their phones and devices in secret, making it harder to observe and monitor issues?

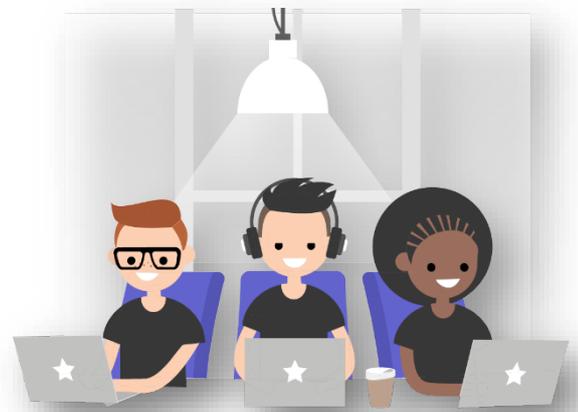
- The new policy and school arrangements focus on equipping children and young people to be safe, responsible and respectful users of digital technology and online services.
- Schools will continue to use digital technology to reinforce and complement classroom teaching and educate students about safe, respectful and responsible online behaviour.

What will be the consequences for a primary school student who is caught with a digital device during school time?

- Schools will administer the restriction in the way that best suits their school community.
- These consequences should reflect current wellbeing and disciplinary approaches used in schools.

What's changing in secondary schools?

- Secondary school principals will continue to determine the extent to which digital devices and online services are restricted or permitted in their schools.
- Students, parents, carers, and school staff will be consulted in the development of school arrangements.
- The new policy may not result in major changes to a school's current arrangements.



Why aren't you restricting digital device use in secondary schools as well?

- We recognise that technology plays an important and increasing role as students' progress through their education.
- Secondary schools will consider a range of options to manage devices, ranging from complete restriction to promotion of safe, responsible and informed use. The decision will be made by individual schools in consultation with their communities.
- This gives secondary schools the flexibility to find a balance between the benefits and risks that best supports their students.

Frequently asked questions

Will anyone be exempt in secondary schools that restrict digital devices?

- Each school will consider the needs of their students when developing school procedures. Exemptions may apply for some students in some circumstances.
- Except where required by law, the school principal has discretion to consider and approve exemptions and to choose which parts of the school procedure the exemptions applies. The exemption may be ongoing or for a certain time period.
- An exemption can be requested from the principal by parents, carers, school counsellors, school psychologists and student support officers, and, if required, students themselves.
- Identifying and responding to the personalised learning and support needs of all students, including a need for digital devices, is an ongoing school process of collaborative planning and consultation with the student and their parents or carers.

What about primary and secondary students who need digital devices to support their learning or wellbeing?

- Some students require reasonable adjustments to their learning and support needs under the Disability Standards for Education 2005. This includes a medical condition impacting a student. The school must consult the student, and their parents or carers as appropriate, in determining the adjustments for the student.
- Reasonable adjustments include access to digital technologies to participate in the education on the same basis as a student without a disability. Providing reasonable adjustments to students with disability is an obligation under the Disability Standards and does not require students or parents to seek an exemption under the new policy.



We are happy with the current arrangements at our school. Why do they need to change?

- The new policy may not result in a major change in the arrangements at your school.
- Each school will work with their students and community to implement any new arrangements.

How can I have my say about arrangements at my school?

- Contact your school regarding opportunities to participate in consultation or meetings regarding school arrangements.

Frequently asked questions

Shouldn't we be supporting students to be safe, responsible and respectful users of technology?

- Yes. We all share a responsibility to support students to use technology responsibly, effectively and in age-appropriate ways.
- This is why the policy recognises the shared responsibilities of students, school staff, parents and carers.
- The Department is providing school communities with a range of supporting resources to help them foster safe, responsible and respectful student use of technology. Students, parents and teachers, can learn more at <https://digitalcitizenship.nsw.edu.au>



What sort of risks may students face when they use digital devices?

- More students are bringing personal digital devices to schools and are doing so at an earlier age than ever before.
- The potential risks may include: online bullying, image-based abuse, access to inappropriate content on personal unfiltered devices, distraction from learning and reduced opportunities for face-to-face social interaction and physical exercise.

We know online bullying happens outside of school and at all hours. How does restricting digital devices inside schools help solve this problem?

- Just like parents are responsible for their children when they're at home, schools have a responsibility to ensure that they protect the wellbeing of students when they are in their care.
- We recognise that online bullying is a complex issue that requires a range of approaches and strategies.
- Support material for students, parents and teachers can be found at <https://antibullying.nsw.gov.au/>



Can students still take a phone to school so parents can contact them?

- Students can still take a mobile phone or other digital device to school as we understand that parents may want to contact them during their travel to and from school.
- Parents and carers can contact their children through school administration offices during school hours.

Where can students keep their phones or digital devices during school hours so they are safe and don't get stolen or damaged?

- Every school has different arrangements but if your child brings a digital device to school they do so at their own risk.

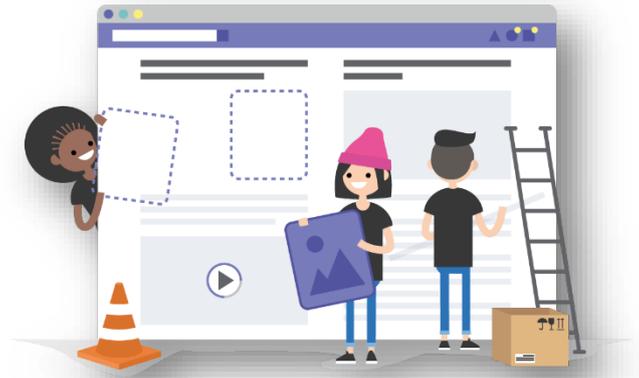
Frequently asked questions

What are some of the benefits of digital devices and online services?

- Digital technology is important in young people's lives and shapes the way they learn, communicate, work and play.
- In schools, digital technology can enhance teaching and learning and help students develop the skills they need beyond school.
- Teaching appropriate use of digital technology supports students to develop the skills they need in digital literacy, problem-solving, creativity, teamwork and interpersonal relationships and prepares students for lifelong learning.

What does the new policy mean for schools with a bring your own device program?

- Schools can continue to offer students the opportunity to bring digital devices to school under a bring your own device program. The same rules apply for all digital devices that students use at school including those provided by the school or the students themselves.



Does this policy put more pressure on teachers in an already over-crowded curriculum?

- Teachers already routinely incorporate and manage the use of digital devices and online services in classes and schools. This policy is intended to provide greater clarity, consistency and certainty for everyone to make this easier.
- The Department is providing clear age-appropriate guidelines and support for school communities on the use of digital technology.

How will teachers enforce digital device restrictions in the classroom?

- Teachers already routinely incorporate and manage the use of devices in classes and schools.
- The new restrictions are designed to give teachers greater clarity and authority to manage digital devices and online activity in class, so technology complements and enables student learning.
- Students will be expected to respect and abide by any new rules as they abide by all school rules.
- Teachers will play an important part helping to explain and reinforce to students why any restrictions are important and how to be smart, respectful and safe digital citizens when technology is used in the classroom.
- Each school will have their own procedures about what to do if digital devices or the internet are being used when they shouldn't be or inappropriately.

When does this policy take effect?

- The policy has been released for implementation from the start of Term 1 2020.

Frequently asked questions

- As of Term 1 2020, primary-aged students will not be allowed to use digital technology during class time, recess and lunch unless for an educational purpose or where a student needs it for other reasons, such as an adjustment for disability.
- Schools, in consultation with their communities should update their existing school procedure or develop a new one to reflect the new requirements, as soon as feasible in 2020.