

Why We Use Digital Technology in Our Lives

Consider the many different ways we use digital technology and notice the benefits and drawbacks of each.

Information Seeking. You're only one click away from the answers to all your questions. And you can find information so quickly and easily as long as you use the right keywords. Everything you ever wanted to know seems to be online. However, the ease of accessing information may tempt us to think that *all* worthwhile information is online, leading us to neglect other information resources (like books and films) that are not digital in nature. We may also be fooled into thinking that all questions have easy-to-find answers, and, if we aren't vigilant about our sources, we may find inaccurate or outdated information.

Just for Kicks. The Internet functions to spice up our lives. There's always a new video to watch or game to play. Online, we can have emotional experiences that are thrilling and exciting. There are so many new things to explore! With it, we may forget our worries and concerns for a while. Online thrill seeking may be safer than thrill seeking in real life. But when it becomes our main source of excitement, it may also lead us to avoid our responsibilities and duties.

Relationship Matters. The Internet is a type of social club. We can develop and maintain our friendships online, and that's important. It feels good to be socially connected to others. We can interact with people we've never met in person who share our interests. In some cases, we can feel more relaxed when we interact online. However, online interaction should not become a substitute for our existing real-world social relationships with family, co-workers, neighbors and friends.

Constant Connectedness. Sometimes when we're not using the Internet, we think about using it. If we can, we may check Facebook or e-mail many, many times a day. Because of the immediacy of the Internet, we might feel a sense of "missing out" when we're not connected. The ability to multitask online may make us feel like we should be multitasking all the time.

Something to Think About

Do you know people who hide the amount of time they spend online from their family, co-workers and friends? You might, according to [researchers at Stanford University School of Medicine](#), who conducted a large-scale random-sample national survey to find out how many people may have a problem with compulsive Internet use.

Did You Know? More than 8 percent of Americans acknowledge that they hide their Internet use or use the Internet to escape a negative mood. "In a sense, some people are using the Internet to 'self-medicate,'" said the study's author. "And obviously something is wrong when people go out of their way to hide their Internet activity."

Think About It. For some, the problem is with online pornography or gambling. Compulsive use of the Internet to check e-mail, make blog entries or visit Web sites or chat rooms may be pleasurable in the moment but can lead to significant problems on personal and professional levels. Compulsive texting -- especially while driving -- can be truly dangerous. "We often focus on how wonderful the Internet is, how simple and efficient it can make things," notes Dr. Elias Aboujaoude, the lead researcher for the Stanford study. "But we need to consider the fact that it creates real problems for a subset of people."