

Should You Take a Vacation From Checking Your Email?



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How long can you go without checking your email on your [smartphone](#)? For many smartphone owners, the ability to access email anywhere, anytime can disrupt their time spent away from the office — and possibly get in the way of fully enjoying family gatherings this holiday season. Staying connected to email isn't necessarily a negative thing — it just depends on what we're looking at and how often we check our devices.

Noelle Chesley, Ph.D., associate professor and director of undergraduate studies in the Department of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, tells *Mashable* that communication technology, like smartphones and social media, blur the lines between our private lives and our public selves. Sometimes this can be problematic, she explains. In a study she conducted in [2005](#), cellphone use was linked to distress “because the technology allowed negative work experiences to spill over into personal life.” However, technology is also used to connect with those we care about. “Some research suggests that regular technology use is connected to stronger family relationships,” she added.

“So, the question is, how well can each individual person use technology to do the things that are positive for us, like help us connect with family and friends — so important around the holidays — and yet not connect to things like work that might interfere with our holiday family celebrations?” she said

For one, don't get [obsessed](#). A *Time* magazine [survey](#) of 5,000 people showed [20%](#) said they [can't go more](#) than 10 minutes without checking their smartphone (whether they're checking email or not, we don't know). And another survey of executives showed [98%](#) check their email on their smartphones after they leave the office.

“I believe that everyone needs periodic breaks from their email,” Jeff Davidson, work-life balance expert and professional speaker, tells *Mashable*. **“However, it's different depending on the job description, who they report to what their responsibilities are and so on. I used to recommend that people go long stretches without checking email, that info is now too stark for the populace — they can't do it anymore, their anxiety levels would rise too high.”**

Now he tells people to get a timer and give yourself 20 or 30 minutes where you focus on one task without checking your email or smartphone.

“It's a small promise you make for yourself and it's one that will give you an uninterrupted stretch of time,” he said.

If you don't give yourself this timer, he said, you'll check your messages simply because you can and it's tempting.

“Most older users remember a time before email, for some people email has always existed,” he said. “We thought that having a mobile device would free us, but now the mobile device has enslaved us more than the landline ever could. We must make the rules regarding our personal use of technology.”

Another way to not check your email constantly — don't give yourself the option. Leave your smartphone in your car (hidden in the glovebox) when you're going into a theater or when you're going shopping.