

READING SAMPLE · SELECTED PAGES

# EVENING

## WITHOUT THE SCROLL AUTOPILOT

Seven evenings. Find your own rhythm.

40 PAGES · WORKBOOK



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# A scrap of paper is enough

You do not have to read this book in one sitting. Open it wherever you find something useful right now. The sequence can help you organise your thoughts; it is not a ticket that needs every box stamped before you are allowed to move on.

Each evening has three pages: an explanation, an experiment with an example, and a worksheet for you. Allow a few minutes for reading. The experiment itself usually needs five to ten minutes of preparation or reflection. You observe what happens as you go about your evening. Setting up device options for the first time may take longer.

## **Make this book your own**

- 01** Have a pen ready, or use your PDF reader's annotation tools. The writing spaces are designed for paper or handwritten PDF notes; they are not fillable form fields.
- 02** Choose an ordinary evening. If your working day ends in the morning, that is your after-work time too.
- 03** Change just one thing to begin with. Afterwards, briefly note whether it fitted your actual day. Leave the other activities for another time if they do not suit today.

Every experiment page includes a two-minute version. You can also skip a day. There is no streak to maintain and nothing to catch up on.

### **STAYING REACHABLE COMES FIRST**

Before changing anything, check who must be able to reach you. Agreements, on-call duties, caring responsibilities and important alerts take priority. The practical contact check is on page 16.

# Was that my choice?

An hour spent watching a film you were looking forward to can be exactly the evening you wanted. Ten minutes spent switching between five apps, on the other hand, can feel as though you never settled anywhere. Time alone tells you little about what you actually wanted to do.

For this book, a different question is useful: does what I am doing still match the reason I picked up my phone? The answer may be yes. In that case, you do not have to talk yourself out of enjoying your phone.

## A small distinction

**A deliberate choice:** you want to message a friend, check a route, look up something specific or enjoy some entertainment. If someone asks, you can roughly explain what you are looking for.

**Continuing without noticing:** the message has been answered. You have found the information. Yet the next app is already open. You can barely identify the transition. That is the moment we call ‘scroll autopilot’ here.

Habits can develop when actions are repeated in similar situations. Later, the situation itself may prompt the familiar movement. That does not mean all phone use is automatic. [1]

### FOR TODAY

If you notice such a transition, name it quietly to yourself: ‘The message is finished. Now I am carrying on browsing.’ That description alone gives you something specific to work with.

# Oh, there it is again.

You are sitting on the sofa. Suddenly, your phone is in your hand. Perhaps you wanted to check the time. Perhaps not. On the first evening, that brief moment is what matters: what happened immediately before it?

You do not have to put the device down straight away. Otherwise, observing can easily become another rule you might break. Today, you are collecting a description. Keep it simple, without ‘always’ or ‘never’.

## **Stay with one situation**

Choose a transition that happens anyway: the first pause after eating, waiting for someone, or the moment you sit down. Do not try to count every reach for your phone. One useful example is worth more than a list you abandon after ten exhausting minutes.

Your trigger may be external, such as a notification. It may also lie in what you are experiencing: you are waiting, avoiding a task or looking for entertainment. These are possible descriptions. You decide which, if any, fits you.

Perhaps you cannot identify a clear reason. You can write that down too. ‘I did not notice’ is an observation, not a wrong answer.

### **TODAY'S FOCUS**

Look more closely at one moment. You are not yet trying to reduce screen time or create a perfect evening. Preparation: about five minutes. Observation: on one suitable occasion.

# Before the next swipe

- 01** Put a note where you intend to sit later. Write ‘What just happened?’ at the top. That is all the preparation you need.
- 02** When you notice the phone, pause for a moment. In a few words, record where you are, what prompted you, and what you actually wanted to check.
- 03** Then make a fresh decision. You can keep browsing, complete a specific task or put the device down. In this experiment, what matters is being able to describe the transition.
- 04** Read the note again at the end of the evening. Add no more than one sentence. Do not search for a hidden explanation if an ordinary one is enough.

## COMPLETED EXAMPLE · FICTIONAL

Mara: kitchen, waiting for the water to boil. I wanted to answer my sister's message. Afterwards, I opened the feed without looking for anything in particular. Tomorrow, I will observe that same waiting time again.

## If you only notice later

You do not have to rewind the previous half-hour. Write down where you are sitting and what you still remember. Perhaps you will notice the same pattern earlier another day. Or perhaps a different starting point will suit you better.

## IF YOU ONLY HAVE TWO MINUTES

Answer just this question: ‘What was I doing immediately before?’ One sentence on a scrap of paper is enough. Afterwards, put it inside the book.

# One moment, seen more clearly

Describe one specific situation. There is no score here. If you write afterwards, feel free to label it 'from memory'. That way, you will not later confuse a guess with a precise observation.

**Date and approximate time**

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**What was I doing just then?**

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**What did I want to check on my phone?**

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**What would actually feel good or be helpful right now?**

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**What happened after this moment?**

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## EXAMPLE · FICTIONAL

'After dinner. I was already on the sofa and wanted to check the time. Then I answered a message. I could also have simply stayed sitting there.'

For the next experiment, choose either the same transition or a different one. Repeat the observation only if it is useful. You do not have to turn it into a daily monitoring ritual.

# Behind the references

Numbers in the text refer to these sources. The author's exercises and fictional examples are not research findings. All listed online sources were researched on 9 September 2026.

## **[1] Wood & R nger (2016) · Psychology of Habit**

Review of how habits develop and are performed in recurring situations. Provides conceptual background, not evidence that this workbook is effective.

DOI: 10.1146/annurev-psych-122414-033417

## **[2] Monge Roffarello & De Russis (2023) · Digital Self-Control Tools**

Systematic review and meta-analysis, ACM TOCHI 30(4). Puts digital self-control tools in context and identifies research needs. It does not establish a general guarantee of success.

DOI: 10.1145/3571810

## **[3] Mertens et al. (2026) · Wellspend: Randomized Controlled Trial**

JMIR mHealth and uHealth, e56824. Data collected May–June 2023; 70 iPhone users; three weeks. Mixed findings; two authors had professional links to Wellspend. The study examined an app, not a workbook.

DOI: 10.2196/56824

## **[4] Brockmeier et al. (2025) · Social media use and well-being**

Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being 17, e12646. Secondary analysis of the same research project as [3], examining well-being and stress. It should not be counted as an independent replication.

DOI: 10.1111/aphw.12646

## **[5] Brockmeier et al. (2025) · Planning a digital detox**

Computers in Human Behavior 168, 108624. Randomised planning study involving 787 students. No significant effect on total smartphone use; applicability to working adults remains an open question.

DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2025.108624

# When a menu looks different

Manufacturer help reviewed on 9 September 2026: Apple for iOS 26; Google for Android menus that vary by device. No individual devices were tested. Links below retain the German edition's source pages.

## **[6] Apple · Set up Focus on iPhone**

Creating, customising and activating a Focus. Also explains schedules and settings shared across devices.

[support.apple.com](https://support.apple.com) · [Set up Focus](#)

## **[7] Apple · Allow or silence notifications for a Focus**

Selecting people and apps, plus additional call options. You still need to test your own contact routes.

[support.apple.com](https://support.apple.com) · [Choose exceptions](#)

## **[8] Google · Limit interruptions with Do Not Disturb and other modes**

Notification filters, people, apps and other interruptions. Google explicitly notes differences between devices.

[support.google.com](https://support.google.com) · [Modes and exceptions](#)

## **[9] Apple · Schedules and App Limits in Screen Time**

Setting up App Limits; the accompanying introduction explains how to remove them. Check whether multiple devices or apps are being counted together.

[support.apple.com](https://support.apple.com) · [Set up App Limits](#)

[support.apple.com](https://support.apple.com) · [Remove App Limits](#)

## **[10] Google · Manage Digital Wellbeing**

App timers, usage information and restrictions, including those affecting work accounts. Menu names may change with updates.

[support.google.com](https://support.google.com) · [Digital Wellbeing](#)

If a menu is missing, use Settings search or the manufacturer's help. After each change, test the contact routes you need. These instructions do not replace that check.