



# Digital Life and Technology

Note-taking: phone-free study spaces | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511

## 1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner before you read.

1. Where do students usually go when they need to study quietly?
2. Why can phones make homework more difficult?
3. What rules could help students use technology more responsibly?
4. Would a phone-free study space work in your school? Why, or why not?

### Exercise 3 at a glance

In this activity, you will read one factual text and complete notes using information from the text. In the exam, this task is usually worth 7 marks. This practice version includes extra notes to help you build confidence. Use short words or phrases from the text, not your own ideas.

## 2. Read for overall understanding

Read the text. What are two main reasons schools create phone-free study spaces?

### Phone-Free Study Spaces

Many schools now use online learning platforms, but teachers have also noticed that constant alerts can interrupt study. In one school library, staff created a phone-free study space after students said they checked messages even during short homework tasks. The aim was not to punish students. It was to reduce digital distractions and help students focus for longer periods. Students leave their phones in numbered lockers and collect them when the session ends. A small clock on each table helps them notice how much can be completed in twenty quiet minutes.

The study space also teaches practical habits. Before students begin, they write a short study plan and choose one realistic target. Some students use a printed checklist to break large tasks into smaller steps. Teachers say this helps students avoid switching between apps and develop independent learning habits. A few students were worried at first, but many later said they finished homework faster because they did not keep checking social media. The school also noticed that students asked better questions when they had already tried to solve a problem by themselves.

There are rules to keep the space fair. Students can use school computers for research, but they must close entertainment websites. If a student needs a translation tool, they ask a supervisor first. This prevents students from using the internet for quick answers instead of thinking carefully. The school also gives advice about how to protect personal information, especially when students log in to shared devices. Staff remind students to sign out properly and avoid saving passwords on public computers.

Organisers say the room is not meant to make technology seem harmful. Instead, it helps students decide when technology is useful and when it becomes a distraction. The biggest challenge is staffing the room after school, because students need adults who can answer questions without doing the work for them. Some parents also ask whether students should be allowed to check messages in an emergency, so the library keeps one supervised phone at the desk. The room is busiest before exams, but it is also used by younger students who are learning how to revise for the first time. Even so, teachers say the space has improved concentration and made homework feel more manageable.

### 3. Strategy focus

#### Copy the exact useful phrase

For note-taking, the answer is usually a phrase inside one sentence. Copy the phrase that fits the heading, but leave out examples or extra explanation.

### 4. Practice note-taking task

Complete the notes using information from the text. Use short words or phrases from the text. Do not add your own ideas.

| Notes                           | Write short answers           |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Why the study space was created | - .....<br>- .....<br>- ..... |
| Study habits students practise  | - .....<br>- .....<br>- ..... |
| Rules for using technology      | - .....<br>- .....<br>- ..... |
| Challenges and benefits         | - .....<br>- .....<br>- ..... |

### 5. Vocabulary notebook

Underline five useful words or phrases from the text. Check their meaning, then record them in your vocabulary notebook.

### 6. Follow-up tasks

1. Discussion: Which phone rule would be most useful in your school? Give reasons.
2. Strategy: Underline three exact phrases in the text that could be copied as notes.
3. Writing: Write a short set of rules for a phone-free homework club.
4. Vocabulary: Circle words and phrases connected to digital life and study habits.

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## 2. Read for overall understanding

Suggested answer: to reduce digital distractions and help students build better study habits.

## 4. Practice note-taking task

### Why the study space was created

- constant alerts can interrupt study
- reduce digital distractions
- help students focus for longer periods

### Study habits students practise

- write a short study plan
- choose one realistic target
- break large tasks into smaller steps

### Rules for using technology

- close entertainment websites
- ask a supervisor first
- protect personal information

### Challenges and benefits

- staffing the room after school
- improved concentration
- made homework feel more manageable

## Notes for checking

This is an extended practice version of the IGCSE ESL note-taking task. The live exam normally has fewer marks, but this version includes extra notes to build confidence and selection skills.

Accept short phrases that keep the same meaning.

Learners should avoid copying a whole sentence if a shorter note answers the heading.

Some answers need more than one or two words, especially when the key detail is a phrase.