



Cal Newport Digital Minimalism

The low-down on how to disconnect

Contents

- Who is Cal Newport?
- Digital minimalism: The apps, the noise, and the quiet
- The digital minimalism 30-day challenge
- Digital minimalism: Key takeaways
- To digital minimalism and beyond

Living with social media at our fingertips has costs beyond just lost time as we scroll mindlessly through our feeds. Over the past decade or so, we've come to realize that [there's anxiety that comes from seeing the staged versions of other people's lives online](#) and comparing them to ours.

Additionally, this lost time is also productivity lost. When a huge chunk of your day is spent on social media, you're not just wasting your time—you're also not getting any work done. Studies have shown that the average person looks at their phone [58 times a day](#), and approximately 30 out of 58 times are usually done during work hours.

We know exactly an expert who can help you, so don't go closing that tab just yet! Author Cal Newport gives us a lifestyle that we can look into if we want to take back what is rightfully ours.



Who is Cal Newport?



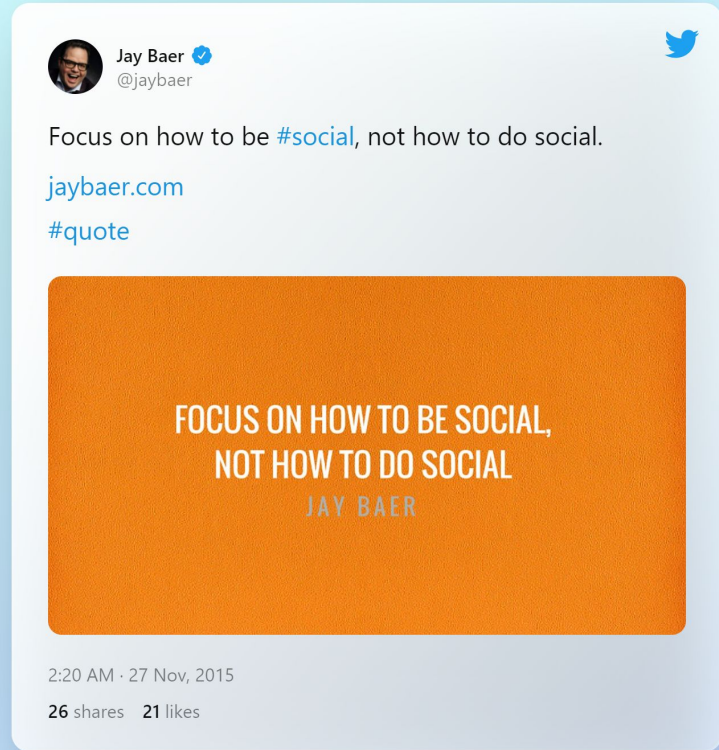
Cal Newport is a computer science and mathematics professor at Georgetown University. He finished his undergraduate degree at Dartmouth College and earned his Ph.D. in Computer Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He has taught at the Princeton University Department of Computer Science and the Yale University School of Management.

Newport's name has become synonymous with productivity and work hacks—thanks to his critically acclaimed books *Deep Work* and *So Good They Can't Ignore You*. Newport knows what he's talking about, and people love it. In fact, *Deep Work* was a Wallstreet Journal bestseller and Amazon Best Business Book selection back in 2016.

His books' success paved the way for his most recent work, *Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World*, in which he talks about how technology can diminish your productivity, mental state, and overall quality of life, and helps his readers climb out of the seemingly endless pit that is (again) social media.

Digital Minimalism: The apps, the noise, & the quiet 🧘

Cal Newport's Digital Minimalism on living better with less technology is about how the convenience of technology actually inconveniences us. We thought instant messaging was a great way to communicate and create bridges, only to realize it has just made us feel more detached and has built faulty roads that lead to questionable destinations.



The book provides its readers with insights on how to create a meaningful life in the digital age as we live in an era of information overload and constant distractions. It outlines the benefits of digital minimalism, such as eliminating distractions and spending more time on self-care.

Newport argues that social media and technology, make it difficult for people to experience solitude. As we are constantly checking notifications or are being “plugged in” to work. Digital Minimalism by Cal Newport encourages us to take back our attention by applying different practices to minimize our digital consumption, free our minds from clutter, and establish boundaries to live happy lives that aren’t overly wired to technology.

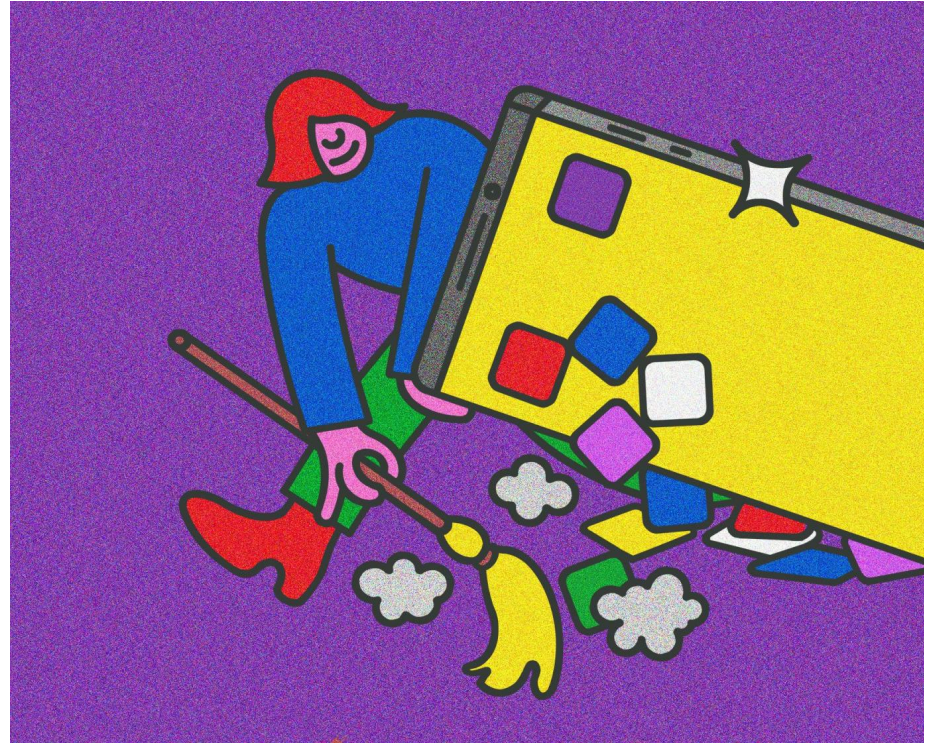
After all, it’s about time we stop making social media engagements a personality trait, because it’s not really healthy for you and the people around you who are actually trying to reach out. As Jay Baer, founder of Convince & Convert said: “Focus on how to be social, not how to do social.”

In Digital Minimalism, Newport unveils a world with less screen time where we can use it to complete actual work or spend more quality time for ourselves and the people we love.

The Digital Minimalism 30-Day Challenge 🦵

To put Newport's wisdom to practice, he challenges his readers to go on a 30-day digital minimalism journey, applying what he has imparted in his book.

Grab your pen and paper, and no, do not open your notes app!



So what's the point of this challenge? The goal is to achieve a "minimalist technology," not to get rid of all technology (though some people may go this route) but rather, to reduce dependency on devices or "accessories" so one can live a more streamlined life. Now, to reduce your dependency on technology, you will need to disconnect from social media, delete apps that you don't actively use anymore, and rely on good old paper planners.

Yes, PAPER PLANNERS and not your synced-up Cloud calendar that gives you a tirade of notifications.

A good example of this is deleting your Facebook app. Having direct access to a social media platform via its app compels you to check it every time you get a beep. An alternative is if you do have to open Facebook, do it via your phone's browser. This way, the barriers for entry are higher thus, making it less convenient to use and forcing you to only do what is necessary rather than being sucked into the vortex of endless social media content.

It's basically like cutting off a toxic friend! You won't really realize how much of a negative impact they have on you unless you cut them off. For some people who also took on the challenge, cutting off social media is even comparable to an addiction withdrawal.

After the challenge, many don't become a digital minimalist. Rather, they were able to introduce certain practices in their daily routine that minimize their digital consumption and dependency. And in effect, taking a break off, especially on social media, has helped many people, such as Ed Sheeran (see *image left*, Source: [The Hits](#)) to reclaim their concentration and time so they can focus on the things that truly matter.

[Stephanie Vozza, writing for Fast Company](#), also claimed that the 30-day challenge has helped her better connect with people in her life:

“When the 30 days were over, I chose to not put Facebook back on my phone...I access Facebook on my laptop...If I want to check in with a friend, I can simply visit their page ... or better yet, call them”



Key take-aways of Cal's Digital Minimalism ✓

Newport lists four practices that readers should look into implementing in their everyday lives.

Image source: [SaamVisual](https://www.saamvisual.com).



#1 Spend time alone

The first practice is very self-explanatory, but it's exactly what Newport wants his readers to do. Newport uses the term "solitude" and gives it a different definition. Rather than being physically alone and away from anyone else, he talks more about solitude in our heads.

After all, it's one thing to be physically alone, but it's another to be alone with your thoughts and acknowledge their existence without the judgment of others.

It's essentially centered on being mindful of your thoughts and yours alone. We can also liken this activity to the practice of mindfulness in which you become present to what you are experiencing at the very moment and face thoughts with intention and without judgment.

Digital Minimalism by Cal Newport argues that rather than being with our thoughts and acknowledging them, we acknowledge notifications and fill our hours with consumption of media and content that we didn't even ultimately choose to consume--we feel like we are obligated or compelled by social media noise into creating content just because others are doing it too.

#2 Don't click “like”

“Don't Click ‘Like’” talks about how we should be communicating. Technology has made communication accessible and instant, yes, but too accessible to the point that we've minimized our means to just mere clicks or “likes” to show approval or emotion towards whatever anyone is letting out.

Technology has also made communicating difficult by making our networks bigger and wider, turning our channels into echo chambers rather than direct lines.

Just like with dating apps, instead of actually going out to meet someone, we've degraded this process to swiping right or left, [a report from the New York Times](#) says that the average person who does use dating apps spends 90 minutes a day swiping left or right, you could've gone for drinks and had a substantial conversation instead.

Newport presents to his readers that conversation is the only form of interaction that can maintain and build relationships—a conversation that actually entails getting to know someone a little bit more, asking how their day went, how the people in their life are, and not just sending them simplified communicators such as likes and emojis.

#3 Reclaim leisure

Newport encourages us to go back into leisure that is purposeful and not just to kill time. A digitally minimalist life is one of a lot of free time which was previously occupied by the mindless consumption of media and of technology.

This would be the best time to do something in the physical world that will last you longer than the marks or things you've built in the virtual realm, like fix a broken chair, gardening, run a mile, or sports. At large, reclaiming our leisure time with purposeful activities will ultimately leave us with tangible outcomes.

#4 Attention resistance

“Joining the Attention Resistance” is an overarching thought in the whole book. Taking back your time and attention to yourself and things that matter, not allowing big corporations to monetize your attention, and kick you back in the black hole that we're trying our best to climb out of, is one of the objectives of the 30-day challenge and, ultimately, the digital minimalist lifestyle.

To Digital Minimalism & beyond

Ultimately, towards the end of the 30-day challenge or by simply experimenting with the digital minimalism lifestyle, people realize that it's hard to fully disconnect and not depend on technology. (below Image source: [LinkedIn](#)).

DISCONNECT
TO
CONNECT.

Newport's *Digital Minimalism* teaches us that, while we really can't discredit the other good deeds of some technology, digital minimalism presents us with this empowering alternative to living in the present and experiencing life as it should be. At the heart of it all, digital minimalism is choosing a focused life in a noisy world.

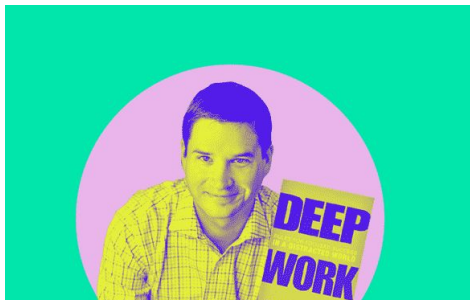
Now, with the COVID-19 pandemic, we've been forced to rely on our computers and the internet to get work and tasks done, but a study has shown that [3 out of 4 American families are in need of a digital detox](#), especially with the isolation brought about by the pandemic. This is not intended to pressure anyone to disconnect completely.

Our final tips to living a digitally balanced life:

- Spend time alone. That is, with your thoughts and your whole being.
- Don't just click "Like". Instead, communicate with people over real conversations and not just through simplified means of technology.
- Reclaim leisure. Do the things you want to do in your free time, do not let yourself be succumbed by mindless consumption of media; and
- Join the attention resistance. Claim back your time and attention, and put it towards things that truly matter in your life.

Cue the digitally minimalist life! 🧠

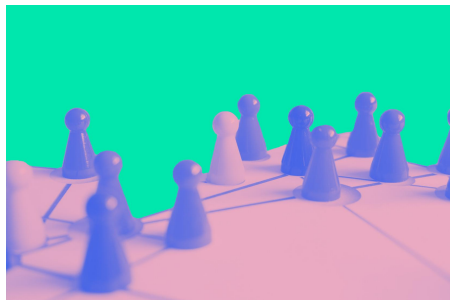
Other articles you may like



Newport: Rules, Summary & Free PDF

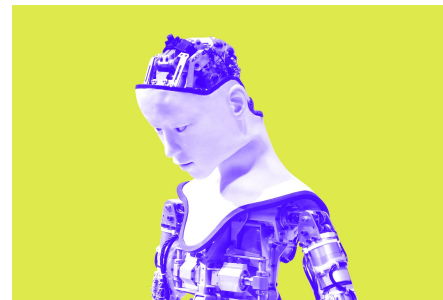


Liked Cal Newport's Digital Minimalism? You're going to love his infamous take on Deep Work in our summary and PDF.



Sync vs. Async: The Dynamic Duo

Find out how a blend of async and sync communication can level up your productivity in surprising ways.



Ditch the Schedule! Rigid Routines Hurt

We're all told that sticking to a strict schedule or self-imposed routine is good for us, and helps to maintain motivation whilst working remotely or from-home. But is this really true?