

Google Develops New Features that Aim to Reduce Users’ Screen Time

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Category : Technology/Innovations

Unlocking Word Meanings

Read the following words/expressions found in today’s article.

- 1. **attempt** / əˈtempt / (n) – the act of making an effort to do something
Example: The company had many failed **attempts** before it successfully developed its latest smartphone model.
- 2. **enhance** / ɪnˈhæns / (v) – to make improvements
Example: The new device feature **enhances** the screen’s brightness.
- 3. **tone down** / taʊn daʊn / (idiom) – to lessen the brightness of something
Example: I **tone down** the brightness of my screen when I use my phone at night.
- 4. **grayscale** / ɡreɪ skeɪl / (n) – a range of different shades of gray
Example: Our old television shows videos in **grayscale**.
- 5. **transparent** / trænzˈspeər-ənt, -ˈspær- / (adj) – being open or honest about something
Example: I need to be **transparent** about your weaknesses so you can improve your performance.

Article

Read the text below.

Google has recently developed new app features in an **attempt** to address users’ unhealthy browsing habits and screen time.

These new features will enable users to track the frequency and the amount of time they spend on apps. They will be incorporated into Android P, the latest version of the Android operating system that is expected to be launched later this year.

Aside from the time management tools, Google also **enhanced** its “do not disturb” mode called “shush” to make notifications less distracting. When activated, this feature silences audio notifications and lessens visual notifications. Google is also adding a “wind down” mode, which **tones down** screen brightness as it turns into a **grayscale**. This mode aims to discourage users from using their devices before bedtime.

During the company’s I/O developer conference last May, Google CEO Sundar Pichai stated that these new features are included in the company’s initiative to promote users’ “digital wellbeing.” Google specifically hopes to help its users develop healthy screen time habits at a time when most people feel compelled to keep up with the online world for fear of missing out.

A week after Google announced its new features, Instagram CEO Kevin Systrom confirmed that the company will also launch a time management app control.

While the company did not share specific details about this new feature, Systrom emphasized the importance of knowing how excessive screen time affects users. He believes that companies should be **transparent** about these effects and he assured the public that Instagram commits to fulfilling this responsibility.

Viewpoint Discussion

Enjoy a discussion with your tutor.

Discussion A

- Do you agree that companies are responsible for letting users know about the effects of excessive screen time? Why or why not?

- [illegible]

[illegible]

- [illegible]

- [illegible]

- Aside from the ones mentioned, what other features do you think can be incorporated into apps to promote a healthy screen time among users (e.g. actual time limit per app)?

Discussion B

- How much time spent online would you still consider healthy? Explain.
- Why do you think some people want to be updated with the online world all the time?

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[illegible]