

Section 1: Analysis & Insights

Executive Summary

Thesis: Excessive screen use harms children across five developmental domains (Social, Educational, Behavioral, Emotional, Health). The solution is to reframe the internet from a “right” to a “privilege” (reward) that is earned through functional behavior, using a structured “Tech Diet” rather than cold-turkey bans.

Unique Contribution: Written by a clinician who specializes in gaming addiction, this book offers field-tested, granular tactics (like capping mobile data to 1GB to prevent hotspotting) that theoretical books miss. It is highly tactical and addresses the “arms race” between savvy teens and parents.

Target Outcome: A sustainable family ecosystem where screen time is enjoyed but capped, and prioritized *after* real-world responsibilities (sleep, school, sport) are met.

Chapter Breakdown

- **The Assessment:** The 5 Developmental Domains and the “Should I Panic?” checklist.
- **The Steps:** The 7-Step “Tech Diet” plan (from preparation to maintenance).
- **Troubleshooting:** Dealing with workarounds (VPNs, hotspots) and explosive push-back.

Nuanced Main Topics

The 5 Developmental Domains

Don’t just count hours. Look at impact: 1. **Social:** Are they withdrawing from real-world friends? 2. **Educational:** Are grades dropping? 3. **Behavioral:** Is there aggression when screens are removed? 4. **Emotional:** Is their mood dependent on gaming? 5. **Health:** Sleep, hygiene, and diet. Intervention intensity should match the severity of these impacts.

Reframe as Reward (The Core Shift)

Most parents treat the internet as a utility (like water) that is taken away as punishment. Marshall argues it should be treated as a salary (like money) that is earned. You don’t get paid if you don’t show up to work. You don’t get Wi-Fi if you don’t do school/sport.

The “Nothing to Lose” Risk

If you ban a teen for a month, they have “nothing to lose” and will burn the house down (escalate behavior). Marshall advocates for a **24-hour maximum penalty**. Every day creates a new chance to earn access. This keeps the carrot dangling and maintains parental leverage.

Controlling the Infrastructure

You cannot win a physical wrestling match for a device. You win by controlling the infrastructure (the Router). Turning off the internet remotely is cleaner, safer, and more effective than trying to confiscate an Xbox from an angry teenager.

Section 2: Actionable Framework

The Checklist

- ☐ **Panic Check:** Assess the 5 Domains. Is this mild habit or severe addiction?
- ☐ **Game Face:** Parents must agree on “bottom lines” before talking to the kid.
- ☐ **Control Wi-Fi:** Get a router/app (like Circle/KoalaSafe) that allows remote pausing.
- ☐ **Cap Data:** Call the telco and cap the kid’s mobile data (1-5GB). No unlimited data.
- ☐ **Negotiate:** Sit down and agree on the “Price” (what must be done to earn screens).
- ☐ **The 24hr Rule:** Cap punishments at 24 hours to keep them motivated.

Implementation Steps (Process)

Process 1: The Infrastructure Setup (Step 1 & 6)

Purpose: Secure technical control before starting the conversation.

Steps: 1. **Wi-Fi:** Install a smart router device or change the admin password. Ensure you can pause specific devices from your phone. 2. **Mobile Data:** Call the phone provider. Remove “unlimited data.” Cap it at a low amount (e.g., 2GB). 3. **Explanation:** If they have unlimited data, they will just hotspot their console when you turn off Wi-Fi. You must close this loop.

Process 2: The Negotiation (Step 3)

Purpose: Get buy-in (or at least compliance).

Steps: 1. **Map the Day:** Draw a circle. Fill in Sleep, School, Travel, Sport, Meals, Homework. 2. **Highlight the Gap:** Show them the small wedge left (“See? You only have 2 hours free max”). 3. **The Deal:** “You can have these 2 hours for gaming, IF [X, Y, Z] happen first.” 4. **The Rules:** Define the 3 non-negotiables (e.g., Attend school, Homework done, No violence).

Process 3: The “Name Your Price” Protocol (Step 5)

Purpose: Link behavior to access clearly.

Steps: 1. **Define the cost:** “Aggression = Cost.” 2. **Define the currency:** “Internet time.” 3. **The Equation:** “If you swear at me, you lose 30 mins tonight. If you hit a wall, you lose 24 hours.” 4. **Enforce:** When the rule is broken, cut the connection calmly. “You couldn’t afford the internet today. Try again tomorrow.”

Process 4: Troubleshooting the “Extinction Burst”

Purpose: Survive the initial pushback.

Steps: 1. **Expect it:** It will get worse before it gets better. (The “Extinction Burst”). 2. **Don’t engage:** When they scream/beg, do not argue. The Wi-Fi is already off. 3. **Hold the line:** If you cave during the burst, you teach them that “Screaming = Wi-Fi.” 4. **Reset:** Next morning, greet them normally. “New day. Here is how you can earn your time today.”

Common Pitfalls

- **The Empty Threat:** “No iPad for a month!” (You won’t enforce it, and they know it).
- **The Physical Battle:** Trying to wrestle a phone from a teen’s hands. (Dangerous. Use the router).
- **The Loophole:** Forgetting about the neighbor’s open Wi-Fi or the mobile hotspot.
- **Inconsistency:** Mum says no, Dad says yes. (The teen will wedge this gap instantly).