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SMARTUP[®]
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1. Introduction

This e-booklet aims to empower young people with recommendations, tips and tricks on being more sustainable in a digital world. Topics range from planning a digital decluttering process, digital archiving approaches, managing screen time, digital detoxification, applying the concept of digital minimalism against digital hoarding and explaining the digital footprint.

The content is aimed at young people between 18 and 28 who need empowerment and new competencies in sustainable digital use to become more self-aware in the digital world and to improve their (un)sustainable digital practices in their everyday use. In addition, the content may also be of interest to school consultants, youth workers and managers in different institutions working with young people (e.g., youth organisations, NGOs, etc.).



Young people need to be aware of the importance of being sustainable in the digital world, as this can help them achieve a better balance between the digital and real worlds, which can lead to a more satisfied personal and career life. Sustainable use of digital tools involves a balanced relationship between online and offline activities, which reduces the negative effects of overexposure to screens for young people, such as stress, fatigue and sleep disturbances, and has a positive impact on their health and well-being.

In addition, effective management of screen time can contribute to better organisation of tasks, leading to increased work productivity and the achievement of goals. Above all, it is important that they use screen time to develop their careers, skills and build professional networks and relationships.

Sustainable use of digital technology also has an environmental impact, so young people can contribute to reducing the use of unnecessary devices, recycling electronic waste and choosing environmentally friendly technological solutions. Young people already thinking about sustainable approaches can contribute to the future development of innovative

technological solutions that improve the lives of society and solve global challenges in the digital world.

2. EU digitalisation strategy, guidelines and vision for a greener transition

In recent years, the European Union (EU) has embarked on a multifaceted journey, intertwining digitalisation with a steadfast commitment to sustainability and a greener transition. This strategic amalgamation reflects the EU's recognition of the transformative potential of technology in shaping economies and societies, and concurrently, the imperative to harness these advancements for environmental preservation. This comprehensive narrative delves into the EU's digitalisation strategy, the guidelines that steer this trajectory and the visionary landscape that envisions a harmonious coexistence of technological progress and ecological stewardship.

EU Digitalisation Strategy:

At the core of the EU's digitalisation strategy lies the “[Digital Europe Program](#)”, a pivotal instrument outlining the Union's investments in critical digital domains. High-performance computing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and the cultivation of digital skills are the focal points of this program, informing about the EU's intent to secure technological sovereignty while fostering innovation and competitiveness.

Moreover, the “Digital Compass”, an integral facet of the “[2030 Digital Decade](#)” initiative, delineates precise targets for the digital transformation. These include ensuring that 80% of EU citizens possess basic digital skills, 75% of businesses use cloud computing services and 90% of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) achieve at least basic digital intensity by 2030. This strategic roadmap underscores the EU's commitment to inclusivity, emphasising that the benefits of digitalisation must be accessible to all strata of society.

Guidelines for a Greener Transition:

In parallel to its digitalisation efforts, the EU has meticulously crafted guidelines to seamlessly integrate technological advancements with broader climate and environmental objectives. Central to this approach is the conceptualisation of the “[Digital Green Deal](#)”. This groundbreaking initiative seeks to leverage digital technologies as a catalyst for achieving climate neutrality by 2050, epitomised by a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

Digitalisation is viewed as an indispensable tool in achieving these ambitious targets. Sectors such as energy, transport and agriculture, are prime candidates for transformative change. Smart grids, enabled by digital technologies, enhance the efficiency of energy distribution, while precision farming, facilitated by digital solutions, optimises resource and minimises environmental impact.



Furthermore, the EU emphasises the principals of a circular economy, envisioning a paradigm shift towards sustainable resource use. Digital technologies play a pivotal role in monitoring and optimising resource flows, reducing waste and fostering a closed-loop system that minimises environmental impact.

Vision for a Greener Transition:

The EU's vision for a greener transition is nothing short of transformative. It envisions a future where digitalisation becomes an unequivocal enabler of sustainability rather than a contributor to environmental degradation. At the heart of this vision lies the “Digital Green Deal”, propelling a comprehensive transformation towards a circular economy and climate-neutral practices.

This vision extends to smart cities, where digital technologies are harnessed to optimise resource management, reduce energy consumption, and enhance the overall quality of life for citizens. Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) are seen as instrumental in crafting innovative solutions for pressing environmental challenges. AI, for example, can optimise energy consumption in buildings, while IoT devices enhance monitoring and management of water resources.

Ultimately, the EU envisions a future where digitalisation, guided by sustainable principles, emerges as a powerful and transformative force for addressing climate change and building a resilient and eco-friendly future.

In conclusion, the EU's digitalisation strategy, intricately woven with sustainability objectives, signifies a paradigm shift in how societies approach technological advancement. By setting clear guidelines and ambitious targets, the EU endeavors to ensure that the benefits of digitalisation are not only realised across diverse segments of society but also contribute substantively to environmental preservation. This holistic and forward-thinking approach reflects the EU's commitment to creating a digital future that not only propels technological progress but also safeguards the planet for future generations.



3. Digital footprint challenges in digital world era (energy-consumption, storage process, screen scheduling)

In today's era of digital technology, our daily interaction with it is deep and all-encompassing. Every mouse click, internet search, social media post, email exchange, and online transaction we make leaves behind traces and data that collectively constitute our digital footprint. This digital footprint has become an inherent part of modern life, playing a crucial role in how we communicate, stay informed, and entertain ourselves.

DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS

What do yours say?

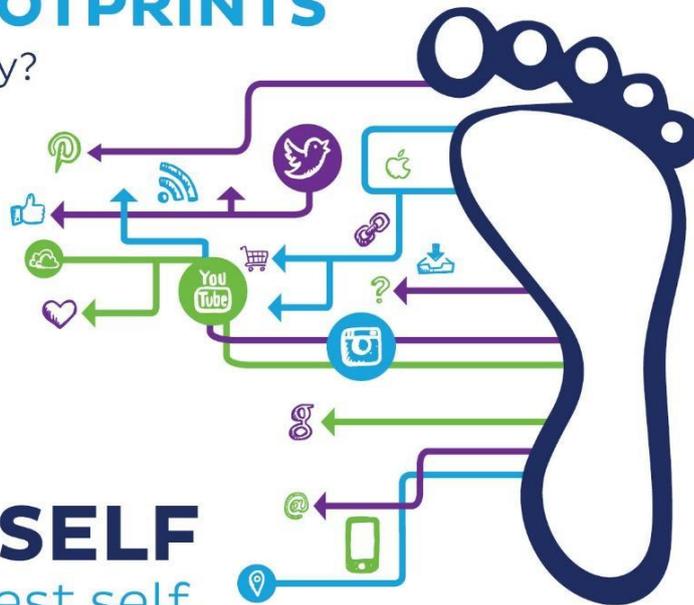
BE CAREFUL ABOUT:

- What you share.
- Where you share.
- With whom you share.

BE SMART ABOUT:

- Sites you visit.
- Emails you open.
- Links you click.

BE YOURSELF
but be your best self.



Source: <https://safesitter.org/digital-footprints/>

One of the key challenges related to the digital footprint is energy consumption. The digital world requires significant amounts of electrical energy to sustain its devices and infrastructure. Data centers, where data is stored and maintained, are often vast and require massive amounts of electricity. This energy consumption has profound environmental and economic implications, raising questions about sustainability and the need for energy-efficient technologies. Reducing energy consumption in the digital realm becomes crucial to mitigate its impact on the environment.

The storage process presents another challenge concerning the digital footprint. With vast amounts of data generated daily, the question arises of how to efficiently store, organise, and protect this information. Data security becomes a top priority due to the increasing



prevalence of cybersecurity threats and the risk of data loss. Additionally, data storage capacity must continually expand to cope with the growing volume of information. Long-term data preservation also requires attention, as some data must remain accessible even after extended periods.

The third challenge pertains to screen scheduling. In today's world of constant connectivity, we spend an increasing amount of time in front of screens on various devices such as smartphones, computers, televisions, and tablets. This trend can have negative consequences on our physical and mental health, including sleep disturbances, reduced concentration, and diminished social interaction. Managing screen time becomes essential to maintaining a balance between online and offline activities and promoting healthy usage of digital technologies.



Source: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/tired-ethnic-working-mother-at-home-with-playing-kids-4474029/>

The digital footprint has become an integral part of contemporary life, bringing with it challenges and questions that need to be addressed. Energy consumption, the storage process, and screen scheduling are key aspects of these challenges. Understanding, addressing, and managing these challenges are becoming increasingly important to ensure a sustainable and healthy digital future. This requires collaboration between users, technology companies, and regulatory bodies to strike a balance between innovation and the protection of our environment, data, and personal well-being. The digital footprint,



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while unavoidable, can be better understood and managed to realise its full potential in today's digital world.

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4. Digital archiving approaches

4.1 Digital archiving

Digital archiving refers to storing, organising, maintaining and preserving digital information in electronic form for long-term storage. The purpose of digital archiving is to keep electronic records, documents, photographs, audio and video recordings and other digital content to remain accessible and usable in the future. Digital archiving is important in today's digital age, where more and more information is being created and stored electronically. Preserving digital archives is crucial for the preservation of cultural heritage, scientific research, business documents and other important content.

Digital archiving is important for all generations, especially for young people, who are increasingly generating and using digital content. By understanding the importance of organising and managing digital content, young people can ensure that they will have access to important information in the future while maintaining digital order and security.

10 approaches to digital archiving for youth:

1. **Digitalisation of physical or analogue materials into digital form** so that they can be stored and processed electronically.
2. **Regular maintenance of the digital order** by reviewing and editing digital files, including deleting unnecessary files, organising them in folders and clearly naming files.
3. **Use Cloud Services** to store important files in the cloud and make them easily accessible from different devices (cloud storage services: Google Drive, Dropbox or OneDrive).
4. **Regularly backing up important data** to prevent the loss of information due to potential errors or loss of devices. The use of automated backup solutions is recommended.
5. **Organisation of digital data by categories** (e.g., personal, study, work) to easily track and find specific information.
6. **Adding metadata** (e.g., descriptions, keywords, authors, date created) to quickly identify and understand the content of files as well as to facilitate future searches.
7. **Saving important emails, conversations and other digital communications** that may be relevant in the future (e.g., for career development).
8. **Avoid storing unnecessary files, apps and data** to maintain transparency and reduces the burden of irrelevant information.
9. **Long-term storage** to store digital archives on durable and reliable storage media that can preserve information for decades or even centuries.
10. **Maintain compatibility with the latest technologies** by periodic checking and updating of digital archives to prevent outdated file formats.

4.2 Digital detox

Digital detox is a term used to describe a period during which an individual intentionally reduces or completely stops using digital devices and technology such as smartphones,



computers, tablets and other electronic devices. Digital detox has become increasingly important as people spend more time in front of screens and are exposed to constant information. The purpose of a digital detox is usually to reduce stress, improve mental health, increase attention, restore energy and re-establish a balance between the digital world and real life.

Signs indicating it could be time for a digital detox:

- **Dependency** and checking your smartphone or other devices frequently, even when unnecessary.
- **Sleep problems** may be related to overexposure to blue light from screens before bedtime.
- **Reduced ability to focus** and maintain attention on tasks.
- **Social isolation** or reduced social interaction in the real world.
- **Increased stress** and feelings of being overwhelmed.



4.3 Time management

Time management is an extremely important approach and a challenge in ensuring digital minimalism, as individuals need to consciously limit their digital presence and time spent on digital devices. This also includes reducing the use of social networks, limiting screen time and generally reducing digital noise in everyday life.

Why is it important to manage screen time?

- **HEALTH:** Managing screen time contributes to a healthier and more balanced lifestyle. Taking regular breaks avoids the negative effects of prolonged exposure to screens, which cause eye fatigue, headaches and other vision problems. In addition, by managing your time, you activate physical activity and prevent problems related to physical health, such as bad posture, and mental health, such as stress.
- **PRODUCTIVITY:** Effective time management allows you to better focus your attention, which leads to increased productivity and better-quality work, and therefore to faster achievement of your goals.
- **RELATIONSHIPS:** Time management allows more time to spend with friends and family, which strengthens interpersonal bonds.
- **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Time away from screens can be spent on personal development, self-reflection and pursuing goals outside the digital world.

Screen scheduling tips:

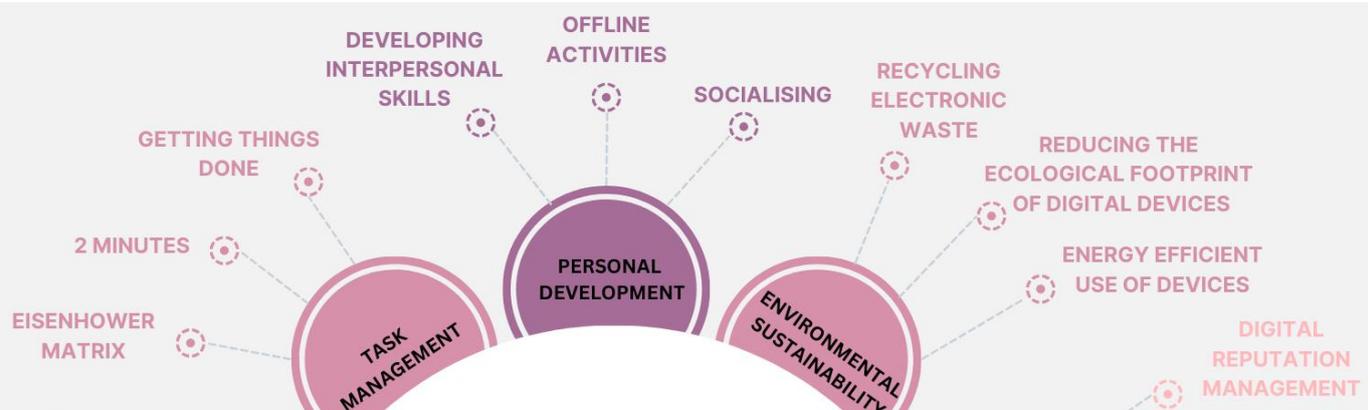
- **Set clear limits:** Set timeframes for using digital devices on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Example: limit time on social networks or checking emails.
- **Introduce non-digital breaks:** Take a short break from the screen every hour to reduce eyestrain and maintain productivity.



- **Schedule offline activities:** Set time for device-free activities. Example: taking walks, reading books or spending time with friends and family.
- **Use time management apps:** There are apps that help you track time spent on your devices and can help you set and maintain goals to limit your use. Examples: Forest (stay focused on the important things in life), Flipd (track your break time and work, boost your motivation and connect with community), Freedom (focus on what matters, block distractions).
- **Weekly review and adjust:** Review your habits each week and adjust your plan based on achievements and challenges.
- **Limit evening use:** Limit time in front of screens before going to bed, as blue light from screens can affect sleep quality.
- **Device-free weekends:** Take time for a digital break on weekends to help reset your mind and prepare for the new working week.

Try out different methods to efficiently manage your time:

- **Pomodoro technique** breaks the work into short intervals and maintains a high level of focus, reducing fatigue and stimulating consistency (Practice: you do one Pomodoro for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break, after every four Pomodoros you take one longer break of 15-30 minutes).
- **"Eat That Frog" method** divides work so that the most difficult and important task is done first, right at the start of the day, so you can quickly get through key tasks and increase productivity throughout the day.
- **Time Blocking technique** schedules the day into blocks of time, which are set aside for specific tasks or activities. It helps to maintain focus and prevents interruptions by focusing on only one type of activity at a time.
- **Getting Things Done® method** prioritises tasks according to their urgency and importance. It uses a system for storing and organising tasks, allowing tasks to be managed efficiently and reducing the feeling of being overwhelmed.
- **Eisenhower Matrix** divides tasks according to their urgency and importance into a four-square matrix. It helps to decide which tasks to prioritise and improves the targeting of effort.
- **"2 minutes" method** emphasises quick action on small tasks, which fits in with the dynamic lifestyle of the younger generation.
- **Kanban method** is a visual method suitable for young people who are more open to using technology and visual aids to organise tasks. The method uses a visual board with cards representing tasks, which are moved between different phases (e.g. "To-Do," "In Progress," "Completed") to track progress.
- **"EAT"** (Eliminate, Automate, Delegate) method identifies tasks that can be eliminated, automated or delegated to optimise your productivity.





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5. Digital minimalism vs. hoarding as sustainable digital housekeeping (pros and cons)

In the ever-evolving landscape of the digital age, individuals are confronted with the challenge of cultivating sustainable and organised digital spaces. Two distinct paradigms, digital minimalism and digital hoarding, emerge as contrasting approaches, each influencing how we engage with our digital environments. At the center of these philosophies, there is the practice of digital decluttering, an intentional and systematic process of organising and managing the digital assets that have become integral to modern living.

Digital Minimalism: Embracing Purposeful Simplicity

Digital minimalism advocates for a purposeful and intentional relationship with digital tools. It transcends a mere lifestyle choice, embodying a philosophy that encourages individuals to streamline their digital interactions. The emphasis is on quality over quantity, urging users to eliminate superfluous applications, files and online habits that do not align with their values or contribute meaningfully to their lives.

Moreover, the digital decluttering process in digital minimalism is a deliberate and ongoing practice. It involves a methodical assessment of one's digital landscape, questioning the relevance and need of each digital element. This process extends beyond the tangible aspects of decluttering files and applications to a more profound reevaluation of one's relationship with technology. It encourages users to realign their digital activities with their personal goals, fostering a more intentional and focused digital existence.

Therefore, digital minimalism, as a lifestyle choice, transcends the act of decluttering and becomes a mindset that continually refines our digital lives, ensuring that our online interactions remain purposeful, enriching and conducive to a balanced lifestyle.

Digital Hoarding: Navigating the Sea Accumulation

On the other end of the spectrum, digital hoarding is characterised by an accumulation of digital assets without a clear organisational structure or discernible purpose. Digital hoarders often find it challenging to part with files, applications, or emails, leading to the accumulation of vast amounts of data. This approach may offer a sense of security through comprehensive backups, but it can result in an overwhelming digital clutter, hindering efficiency and contributing to electronic waste.

Additionally, the digital decluttering process for digital hoarding involves confronting the challenge of organising copious amounts of data. It requires creating systematic filing systems, categorising files based on relevance or urgency, and making decisions about what information is genuinely valuable and what can be responsibly discarded. Digital hoarding demands ongoing efforts to strike a balance between holding onto valuable information and the need to declutter for efficiency and sustainability.

In summary, digital hoarding, as a dynamic, involves navigating the tension between preserving valuable information and maintaining an organised digital environment.

Comparative analysis: Navigating the spectrum

DIGITAL MINIMALISM	
PROS	CONS
Enhanced Focus: By removing digital distractions, individuals can concentrate on essential tasks.	Initial Effort: The process of digital decluttering demands time and effort to reassess and eliminate excess.
Reduced Environmental Impact: A streamlined digital footprint leads to lower energy consumption and decreased electronic waste.	Potential Oversight: In the pursuit of minimalism, there is a risk of overlooking valuable information or tools.
Improved Well-being: Intentional digital use fosters mindfulness and a healthier relationship with technology.	Social/Professional Pressures: Societal expectations for constant connectivity may challenge the commitment to minimalism.
DIGITAL HOARDING	
PROS	CONS
Comprehensive Archive: Digital hoarding can serve as an extensive repository for historical and reference purposes.	Data Vulnerability: Excessive accumulation may make data more susceptible to breaches or loss.
Security through Backups: The abundance of copies provides a sense of security against data loss.	Information Overload: Locating specific information becomes challenging amid an abundance of digital assets.
Potential Rediscovery: Hoarded information may hold value over time, contributing to unforeseen discoveries.	Increased Energy Consumption: The need for extensive storage solutions contributes to higher energy demands.

When comparing digital minimalism and digital hoarding, it becomes apparent that they represent points along a spectrum of digital lifestyles rather than strictly dichotomous choices. The nuances of each approach reveal that individuals may adopt elements of both paradigms based on their evolving needs and preferences.

To conclude, in an era where our personal and professional lives are intricately mixed with digital technologies, the practice of intentional digital housekeeping becomes an art. It is an art that individuals continually refine to strike the right balance between digital simplicity and the desire to preserve a comprehensive digital history.

Whether one opts for intentional simplicity or values the comprehensive nature of hoarding, the digital decluttering journey remains a crucial step toward fostering a more harmonious, sustainable and fulfilling digital existence. It is a dynamic process that involves not only organising digital assets but also aligning our digital practices with our values, aspirations, and the broader goal of contributing to a sustainable and resilient digital future.

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6. Conclusion

This e-booklet addresses the imperative need for young people to embrace sustainable digital practices in our modern world. It offers recommendations, tips, and strategies for managing digital life effectively and responsibly. The content is designed for young individuals between the ages of 18 and 28, with the aim of empowering them to become more self-aware and make informed choices regarding their digital activities.

By promoting sustainable digital use, we encourage young people to strike a balance between their online and offline lives, leading to improved overall well-being. Sustainable digital practices involve reducing screen time, managing digital clutter, and being mindful of one's digital footprint. These actions can help mitigate negative effects such as stress and fatigue, enhance productivity, and foster meaningful personal and professional growth.

Furthermore, the European Union's digitalisation strategy aligns with the importance of sustainability in the digital era. It sets clear guidelines and ambitious targets to ensure that digitalisation benefits all citizens while contributing to environmental preservation. The EU envisions a future where digitalisation and sustainability coexist harmoniously, leveraging technology to address pressing environmental challenges.

The challenges associated with digital footprints, including energy consumption, data storage, and screen time management, underscore the importance of responsible digital practices. We must acknowledge the environmental impact of our digital activities and strive to reduce our carbon footprint. Additionally, managing screen time and organising digital data can improve our physical and mental health, as well as enhance our productivity and personal development.

Digital minimalism and digital hoarding represent contrasting approaches to managing digital clutter. While digital minimalism advocates for intentional simplicity and focus, digital hoarding is characterised by the accumulation of digital assets. Each approach has its pros and cons, and individuals may find a balance that suits their needs. Ultimately, the goal is to cultivate a sustainable and organised digital environment that aligns with one's values and goals.