

B2–C1 Worksheet: Going Offline - The Rise of Silent, Phone-Free Retreats

Article

A growing number of travellers are booking weekends not for sightseeing, but to disappear from the feed. Silent, phone-free retreats ask guests to hand over devices at check-in, keep conversations to a minimum, and slow down the pace of the day. At first, many feel on edge: without the usual pings, they reach for their pockets out of habit and wonder what they are missing. Yet by the second evening, some say the fog lifts and they start to tune in to small details - the sound of cutlery, the wind in trees, the awkward comfort of doing nothing.

Organisers claim the appeal is simple: people are burnt out and craving a reset. Instead of scrolling endlessly, guests take part in gentle yoga, journalling and long walks, then sit with a book rather than flicking between apps. A few participants admit they sign up for the bragging rights, but most describe the same pattern: the first day is hard, then the urge to check messages dies down. With no group chat to keep up with, strangers often open up in quieter ways, swapping notes during designated breaks or writing postcards home.

Critics say the trend is just another wellness product dressed up as wisdom, and they may have a point. A weekend retreat will not fix every habit, and some people fall back into old routines the moment they get home. Still, supporters argue it can be a useful nudge. By setting clear boundaries, you can cut out noise for long enough to notice what actually matters. For many, the goal is not perfection, but a healthier relationship with attention - and the courage to log off without guilt.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The article says some people book silent retreats to escape constant online content.
2. Guests are allowed to keep their phones as long as they do not use social media.
3. The writer suggests many participants feel uneasy at the start of the retreat.
4. According to the article, organisers promise a retreat will permanently change everyone's habits.
5. The article mentions activities like yoga, journalling and walking as alternatives to scrolling.
6. The writer claims most guests join only to gain bragging rights.
7. The article suggests some people quickly return to old routines after going home.
8. Supporters believe the retreats can help people set clearer boundaries around attention.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. hand over	A. exhausted after long stress or overwork
2. slow down	B. remove or stop doing something
3. on edge	C. start speaking honestly about feelings or personal matters
4. reach for	D. pay close attention to something
5. tune in	E. agree to join or take part
6. burnt out	F. move your hand to take something
7. sign up	G. reduce speed or become less intense
8. dies down	H. give something to someone else, often officially
9. open up	I. becomes weaker or less intense
10. cut out	J. nervous, tense, or easily upset

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. retreat	A. planners
2. devices	B. short break away
3. minimum	C. officially chosen
4. habit	D. lowest amount
5. organisers	E. people who disapprove
6. craving	F. feeling of fault
7. designated	G. strong desire
8. critics	H. limits
9. boundaries	I. gadgets
10. guilt	J. routine

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. When was the last time you handed over your phone for any reason? How did it feel?
2. What helps you slow down at the end of a busy day?
3. Do you ever feel on edge when you cannot check messages?
4. What small details do you tune in to when you are offline?
5. Have you ever signed up for a wellness class or retreat? Would you do it again?
6. What kinds of online noise tend to die down when you travel?
7. Who do you open up to most easily: friends, family, or colleagues?
8. What would you like to cut out from your daily screen time?

Student B

1. Are phone-free retreats a genuine solution or just another product? Defend your view.
2. Should retreat organisers have the right to set strict rules about devices? Why?
3. Do people need external pressure to change habits, or can they do it alone?
4. Is boredom a problem to solve, or a skill to practise?
5. What boundaries should people set with work messages outside working hours?
6. Can a short break meaningfully reduce burnout, or is it only temporary relief?
7. Does social media create more connection or more guilt? Explain.
8. If you could redesign your attention diet, what would you keep and what would you cut out?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=T, 2=F, 3=T, 4=F, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T, 8=T

Phrase Match: 1=H, 2=G, 3=J, 4=F, 5=D, 6=A, 7=E, 8=I, 9=C, 10=B

Synonym Match: 1=B, 2=I, 3=D, 4=J, 5=A, 6=G, 7=C, 8=E, 9=H, 10=F