**The Weekly Challenges of the Bin Bag Challenge**

**Section: Internet**

**Week: 7**

Will digitalisation help us to a greener and fairer world, or will it ultimately prove to be an accelerator for climate change and the destruction of the planet? The jury is still out. But we can help it go in the right direction, by improving the way we use our gadgets: i) lengthen the lives of our devices and ii) reduce the volume of data flowing through data centers and mobile networks.

**Objective 1 – Take stock**

Next objectives will propose goals but to set your own targets, start by taking stock of your equipment and usage, and by questioning your habits.

* **Count the electronic devices** in your house. Phones, tablets, computers, headsets and speakers, keyboards and mice, toothbrushes, connected items such as watches and bracelets, cables, television, firestick, and communication tools embedded in traditional household equipment such as thermostat, doorbell, fridge, lighting, alarms.
* **Do their biographies.** How long is their usual lifecycle? How often, how and why do you replace them?
* **Check how much time you spend on your phone.** Install a usage tracker app, to analyse your activity and the number of times you unlock your device.
* **Learn about the environmental impact of these devices: from production to usage and end of life.** The carbon footprint of our gadgets, the internet and the systems supporting them account for about 3.7% of global greenhouse emissions. You might think that buying this gadget is worth the money, but costs are today not a good indicator of environmental impact. Buying a new device can severely impact the planet, maybe more than your purse. Learn [more here about the need for digital sobriety.](https://eddar9.wixsite.com/binbag/impact-internet)
* **Have a discussion with your housemates** on the digitisation of your home. Are you over equipped? Do you need to become more sober? What do these devices bring to your life: productivity, standing, comfort, fighting boredom? Would you consider using a second-hand device, repairing a broken one, not buying another gadget? Should you spend less time on screens?

**Objective 2 –** **Hold onto your digital devices!**

Every year [an estimated 2 million tonnes of electronic and electrical equipment](https://www.hse.gov.uk/waste/waste-electrical.htm) is discarded by householders and companies in the UK. The simplest way to reduce it is to use less devices, and extend their lives**.** Resist the temptation of the latest shiny object!

* Check if you [are taking good care of your devices](https://quickfix764642297.wordpress.com/2018/04/01/how-to-take-good-care-of-your-electronic-devices/).
* Commit to thinking before buying new devices. Your carbon footprint should play a big part in your decision. Check these websites for second-hand digital items: [CeX](https://uk.webuy.com/buy/), [MusicMagpie](https://www.musicmagpie.co.uk/), Amazon, [GiffGaff](https://www.giffgaff.com/mobile-phones/refurbished). Refurbished items now often come with a multiyear warranty.
* Find the addresses near you where you can repair, donate or recycle devices that no longer fit the bill (including [WEEECharity](https://weeecharity.co.uk/)) – don’t just bin it.

More information and tips [here](https://eddar9.wixsite.com/binbag/post/hold-onto-your-digital-devices).

**Objective 3 – Reduce the energy consumption of your devices**

An easy fix is to reduce the energy used to run your devices.

* **Turn off devices.** Go around the house, list appliances that are often left on standby and should be turned off (TV, internet box, computers, screens, toothbrushes, speakers, coffee machine, …). Organise your house so that it is easy to turn them off when not in use, at least at night (use plugs with switches; add calendar reminders). Get your housemates involved.
* **Power down your computers if you are away for more than 2 hours.** Often people don’t want to turn off their computer because they have many Internet tabs open. But you can set Firefox, Chrome, to re-open tabs on start-up. So there is no reason not to shut down every night! Check [this](https://support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/restore-previous-session).
* **Screens:** do not use animated screen savers, lower the brightness of your screen. And obviously, turn off screens when not in use (TV, computers, phones).
* **Printer**: switch off when not using; print only after a thorough check and only what you need; print in lower quality mode (draft); densify your text to use less pages, work on margins; use a low ink font like Calibri, Century Gothic, Garamond, Times New Roman or [Ecofont Vera](https://www.fonts4free.net/ecofont-vera-sans-font.html).
* **Charging**: avoid charging your devices overnight. Telephone chargers continue to use electricity even when you unplug the phone. Charging appliances overnight are not only a fire risk but also a drain on battery life.

**Objective 4 – Improve your streaming habits**

Watching, listening, reading online requires energy. You can access the same content with less energy.

* **Video streaming**: turn off autoplay from all the streaming sites (YouTube, Netflix, Amazon videos, etc.); set your default to lower quality videos; stop watching videos with mobile data (use Wi-Fi or cable only) and watch on the smaller screen you can.
* **Calls**: prefer audio only to video; for work, consider talking to your colleagues to get them into audio only (say hi with the video and turn to audio only for the rest of the call?).
* **Music**: use WiFi and avoid using mobile data; do not use videostreaming to listen music.

More info and tips [here](https://eddar9.wixsite.com/binbag/post/improve-your-streaming-habits).

**Objective 5 – Save energy – Occupy less online space**

The cloud might not be visible but it is a big energy consumer. So only use it when you need it.

* **Learn how to improve your practices** in terms of Cloud storing, emails use and storage, Internet browsing and social media[here](https://eddar9.wixsite.com/binbag/post/occupy-less-online-space).
* **Clean your Cloud storage**: are you using Microsoft OneDrive, GoogleDrive, DropBox, iCloud, Amazon Cloud or other online storage platforms? Go online and clean up: delete what you do not need (yes, you should go through all these photos and only keep a selection!) and consider what items you could move to an external hard drive.
* **Empty your inbox**: if you are still looking at your emails in a browser, install an email software (on your laptop and/or phone) and download your emails; and empty your inbox and other folders – keep only the emails you need, don’t forget the sent emails. From now, avoid overcrowding your mailbox by sending no more unnecessary emails; using “reply all” and “copy” only when needed. If you haven’t already, unsubscribe from newsletters you don’t read.
* **Install a more eco positive engine system -** such as [Ecosia](ecosia.org/).

More info on why this is needed and ideas to reduce your online space [here](https://eddar9.wixsite.com/binbag/post/occupy-less-online-space).