

Teacher's Key

Social Media and Mental Health: Who Is Affected and How (Level B2)

Vocabulary Matching

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|----|---------------|
| 1 | wind down = N | 9 | blunt = D |
| 2 | correlation = A | 10 | lifeline = O |
| 3 | cancel out = H | 11 | tentative = J |
| 4 | harassment = L | 12 | pooled = K |
| 5 | plausible = G | 13 | cut back = B |
| 6 | vulnerable = M | 14 | dismiss = C |
| 7 | pronounced = I | 15 | outweigh = F |
| 8 | compulsive = E | | |

Fill in the Blank

- | | | | |
|---|-------------|----|-----------|
| 1 | wind down | 8 | blunt |
| 2 | correlation | 9 | lifeline |
| 3 | harassment | 10 | tentative |
| 4 | plausible | 11 | pooled |
| 5 | vulnerable | 12 | cut back |
| 6 | pronounced | 13 | dismiss |
| 7 | compulsive | 14 | outweigh |

True or False

- True.** The reading says bullying and poor sleep were more strongly linked to well-being.
- False.** The correlation is described as negative but small.
- True.** Girls seemed most vulnerable between 11 and 13, and boys between 14 and 15.
- False.** Girls were more likely to struggle; boys were more likely to have problems with gaming.
- True.** Roughly one in ten felt worse.
- False.** Total screen time did not predict later problems; a rising pattern of compulsive use was linked to worse mental health.
- False.** The writer calls the evidence tentative and says a 2025 analysis found no clear overall link.
- True.** They limited Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat to about thirty minutes a day.
- False.** Haidt argues the evidence points to harm, while Odgers and other critics dismiss that idea.
- True.** The final paragraph states this.

Language Focus: Noun Clauses with Whether, Who, How, and What

Example answer: Researchers want to know **whether boys react differently**. Researchers want to know **how much time teenagers spend online**.

Comprehension Questions: Model Answers

- 1 The scene is a person who is supposed to wind down at eleven at night but keeps scrolling. It leads to the question of whether this adds up to a mental health problem. The writer says scientists disagree about the answer.
- 2 Screen use explained less than half of one percent of the differences in well-being, so the link is negative but small. Bullying and poor sleep were more strongly linked to well-being.
- 3 An average combines everyone into one number. If social media helps some people and hurts others, the two effects may cancel out, so the average can look small even when individuals are affected.
- 4 Girls were more likely than boys to struggle to control their use, while boys were more likely to have problems with gaming. In British data on 14-year-olds, the link between heavy use and symptoms of depression was also stronger for girls.
- 5 Girls seemed most vulnerable between 11 and 13, and boys between 14 and 15. Researchers suggest this may reflect puberty, which starts later in boys. The negative link was most pronounced in young adolescents, and the gap between girls and boys appeared only at that stage.
- 6 Time is a blunt measure because it ignores how people use social media. In the US study, total screen time did not predict later problems, but a rising pattern of compulsive use was linked to worse mental health.
- 7 Almost half felt better after passive use, about four in ten noticed no change, and roughly one in ten felt worse. This matters because an average can hide large differences between individuals, so a group result may not describe any one person.
- 8 For older adults the picture is milder and less clear. Some studies suggest social media may reduce loneliness, but the evidence is tentative, and a 2025 analysis that pooled many studies found no clear overall link. The effect seems to depend on who is using it and why.
- 9 Open answer. A strong answer notes that a three-week student experiment found less loneliness and depression when use was limited to about thirty minutes a day, while a 2025 review of short breaks found no significant effect on mood, and another review of reduction trials found a small improvement. Haidt argues the evidence points clearly to harm, especially for girls. Odgers and other critics dismiss the idea of an epidemic driven by social media and say most evidence is correlational.
- 10 Not Given. The reading does not say whether problematic use has risen or fallen since 2018. (The WHO release does report a rise, but the reading does not.)
- 11 No. The writer says scientists disagree, that results are mixed, and that findings from Australia may show which arguments hold up. The writer does not treat the evidence as settled.
- 12 Best answer: to point to a real-world test of the debate. The writer says researchers plan to follow young people for several years and that their findings may show which arguments hold up. The writer does not claim the law works and does not criticize the government.

Notes on the Evidence

- No source draft was supplied; the reading is original and was checked against the sources below (all checked October 3, 2026). Large analysis: Orben and Przybylski, 2019, *Nature Human Behaviour*, three large UK and US datasets (n = 355,358). Digital technology use explained at most 0.4 percent of the variation in well-being. This covers digital technology in general, not social media alone, so the reading says screen use. In the same data, being bullied was associated about 4.3 times more negatively with well-being than technology use, and sleep and breakfast showed stronger associations. The reading says bullying and poor sleep were more strongly linked to well-being.
- Gender: WHO Regional Office for Europe, news release of 25 September 2024, reporting the HBSC survey of about 280,000 students aged 11, 13, and 15 in 44 countries and regions (surveyed 2022). Problematic social media use was 11 percent overall (7 percent in 2018): 13 percent of girls and 9 percent of boys. Problematic gaming was 16 percent of boys and 7 percent of girls. Kelly and colleagues, 2018, *EClinicalMedicine: UK Millennium Cohort Study*, 10,904 14-year-olds. Compared with 1 to 3 hours a day, depressive-symptom scores were 50 percent higher for girls and 35 percent higher for boys at 5 hours or more. Sleep, online harassment, self-esteem, and body image were the pathways tested. These are associations at one age, and the authors note that young people with poor mental health may use social media more.
- Age: Orben, Przybylski, Blakemore, and Kievit, 2022, *Nature Communications*. Two UK datasets (84,011 people aged 10 to 80; 17,409 followed from 10 to 21). Windows of sensitivity: girls 11 to 13, boys 14 to 15, both sexes at 19 (the reading omits the age-19 window). At other ages the link was not statistically significant. The puberty explanation is the authors' suggestion and needs more research. Lower life satisfaction also predicted more later use, at all ages and in both sexes. Older adults: Jin and Kim, 2025, *Journal of Health Psychology*, a meta-analysis of 19,134 observations, found no significant overall correlation with loneliness, with a negative association (less loneliness) in studies done before Covid-19. A 2025 systematic review of adults aged 65 and over reported some benefits but said causal conclusions cannot be drawn. The reading's phrase milder and less clear is a summary judgment. The comparison explanation in paragraph 3 matches the body-image and self-esteem pathways in the Kelly study and the upward social comparison mechanism proposed in the active-passive model; it is a proposed mechanism, not a proven one.
- Usage: Xiao and colleagues, 2025, *JAMA (ABCD Study)*, 4,285 children followed from about age 10). Rising or high addictive-type use of social media was associated with worse mental health outcomes, including suicide-related outcomes, and baseline total screen time was not. The study is observational, spanned the pandemic, and found girls more likely than boys to follow high or rising social media trajectories. Press summaries differ on the share of children affected, so the reading gives no figure, and it names no suicide-related detail. Dutch study: Beyens and colleagues, 2020, *Scientific Reports*, 63 adolescents aged 14 and 15, 2,155 assessments over a week: 46 percent felt better, 44 percent no change, 10 percent worse after passive use. The sample is small. A later study by Valkenburg's group found a different split (45, 28, and 26 percent), and definitions of active and passive use vary widely, so the contrast is debated. The reading's claim about active use matches several reviews but not every study.
- Experiments and debate: Hunt and colleagues, 2018, *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*: 143 University of Pennsylvania undergraduates, three weeks, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat limited to 10 minutes each a day. Loneliness and depression fell more in the limited group; other measures (for example anxiety and fear of missing out) did not differ between groups. Lemahieu and colleagues, 2025, *Scientific Reports*: ten studies, 4,674 adults, 38 effect sizes, no significant effect of temporary abstinence (mostly 1 to 28 days, commonly 7) on positive affect, negative affect, or life satisfaction. A separate 2025 meta-analysis of randomized trials of restriction (*Social Science and Medicine, Mental Health*) found a small improvement in subjective well-being (g = 0.17). Positions: Haidt and Rausch, 2026 *World Happiness Report* chapter; Odgers, 2024 *Nature* essay and a 2026 *Knowable Magazine* feature. A 2024 US National Academies report concluded that evidence was insufficient to say social media causes adolescent ill health at the population level while recognizing harms to individuals. This is a live dispute, and the reading attributes each position to its owner.
- Practical advice and Australia: the bedroom tip rests on the sleep pathway in the Kelly study and on common mainstream advice; noticing how you feel is a self-monitoring step (Hunt noted that monitoring alone may have helped both groups). Seeking professional help follows the WHO's description of problematic use as addiction-like symptoms such as being unable to control use. No individual treatment advice is given. Australia: the minimum age took effect on 10 December 2025 (eSafety Commissioner); platforms removed or restricted about 4.7 million accounts by mid-January 2026. A *Knowable* feature of 13 August 2026 says a Stanford-led evaluation of more than 4,000 adolescents and parents is under way, that three-month surveys showed no change in adolescent sleep or mental health, and that most Australian adolescents reported still using the banned platforms. These details may change; the reading states only the start date and the plan to follow young people. Check the current status before class. Figures in this note are as of October 3, 2026.