

Tech at School: Ban or Balance?

1. Introduction: Technology Rules Around the World

Approximately 10 minutes

Introduce the issue using these examples:

- **Australia:** Smartphones have been banned or restricted in all public schools since 2024. At the same time, schools are encouraged to use generative AI responsibly.
- **France:** Public middle schools require students to keep smartphones put away during the school day. Restrictions are also being extended to high schools.
- **England:** From September 2026, schools are expected to prohibit smartphones and similar devices throughout the school day.

Ask the class:

Should schools ban technology to protect students, or teach students to use it responsibly?

Briefly collect possible benefits and risks on the board.

2. Prepare for the Debate

Approximately 20–25 minutes

Divide students into groups and give each group a role card. Groups complete the Debate Preparation Worksheet.

Each group should prepare:

- a clear position;
- two strong arguments;
- one example;
- one possible counterargument and response;
- one proposed school rule.

Students may use an AI chatbot to develop or test their arguments. They must evaluate its suggestions rather than copy them.

Possible prompts:

- “What arguments might our group make about banning smartphones and AI at school?”
- “Give us a strong counterargument to our position.”
- “Which parts of our argument need stronger evidence?”
- “Suggest a compromise between a complete ban and unrestricted use.”

3. Facilitated Debate

Approximately 20–30 minutes

Round 1: Opening Statements

Each group has one minute to introduce its perspective, position, and strongest argument.

Round 2: Questions and Responses

Groups question one another and respond to counterarguments. The moderator ensures that everyone speaks respectfully and stays on topic.

Round 3: Find a Compromise

The groups negotiate a possible school policy. They should consider:

- when smartphones may be used;
- whether AI may be used for homework;
- how AI use should be acknowledged;
- possible medical or emergency exceptions;
- consequences for breaking the rules.

4. Decision and Reflection

Approximately 10 minutes

Vote on one of three options:

1. Complete ban
2. Use only with permission
3. Use under clear rules

Use the most popular ideas to create a short **School Technology Agreement**. Students then complete the reflection worksheet individually.

Activity Cards

Role Card 1: Student Representatives

You represent students at the school.

Consider:

- How can smartphones and AI support learning?
- When do these tools become distracting or unfair?
- Should students have a voice in creating the rules?
- What exceptions might students need?

Prepare a policy that protects learning while respecting students' independence.

Role Card 2: Teachers and School Administration

You represent teachers and school leaders.

Consider:

- How do smartphones affect concentration and classroom management?
- How can teachers tell whether work was completed independently?
- Can AI be used as a helpful learning tool?
- Which rules would be realistic to enforce?

Prepare a policy that is clear, fair, and manageable.

Role Card 3: Parents and Digital-Safety Experts

You represent parents and specialists in digital safety, privacy, and media literacy.

Consider:

- How can schools protect students from cyberbullying and harmful content?
- What privacy risks are connected to AI tools?
- How can families contact students in an emergency?
- Is banning technology safer than teaching responsible use?

Prepare a policy that protects students while developing their digital skills.

Debate Preparation Worksheet

Group/role: _____

1. Our Position

We believe that smartphones and generative AI should:

- ☐ be completely banned
- ☐ be used only with permission
- ☐ be allowed under clear rules

Our position in one sentence:

2. Our Strongest Arguments

Argument 1:

Example or evidence:

Argument 2:

Example or evidence:

3. Prepare for a Counterargument

Another group may argue:

Our response:

4. Our Proposed Rule

We propose that the school should:

One necessary exception is:

5. Opening Statement

We represent _____.

Our position is _____.

Our strongest argument is _____.

We therefore propose _____.

Reflection Worksheet

My Decision

Before the debate, I supported:

☐ a complete ban ☐ permission-only use ☐ regulated use

After the debate, I support:

☐ a complete ban ☐ permission-only use ☐ regulated use

The most convincing argument was:

My opinion changed or stayed the same because:

One fair rule for our school would be:

If we used AI, one suggestion we accepted, changed, or rejected was:
