

HOW TO HOST A

Gaming + Digital Detox Session

A Practical Guide for Youth & Church Leaders

About This Guide

This guide combines two complementary approaches to youth ministry: Digital Evangelism Through Gaming and the Digital Detox framework. Together they create an evening that meets young people in the digital world they love, then invites them to step back from it — unplugging to reconnect with God and each other.

PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE EVENING

1. What Is This Evening About?

This is a combined event with two distinct but connected halves:

 Gaming Night (Digital Evangelism)	 Digital Detox Session
Meeting young people where they already are — in gaming culture — to build genuine relationships.	An intentional, guided time to lay down devices and reconnect with God and one another.
Relationship-first. Play together, listen, have fun.	Reflection-first. Pray, worship, and encounter God without the noise of tech.
Evangelism happens naturally through trust built over shared activity.	Faith is deepened through stillness, creative prayer, and honest conversation.

The power of this combined evening is the contrast: young people experience both the joy of technology used well, and the freedom that comes from putting it down. Neither half preaches at them — both invite them in.

Core Principles (Gaming Night)

- Relationship First, Message Second — earn the right to be heard by playing, listening, and engaging before sharing anything spiritual.
- Be Authentic — young people know when you're trying too hard. Just be yourself.
- Play WITH, Not AT — this is a shared activity, not a sermon platform.
- Consistency Builds Trust — show up regularly; relationships form over time.

Core Principles (Digital Detox)

- This is not anti-technology — it's a positive invitation to press pause.
- Frame it as a challenge, not a punishment — we want young people excited, not resentful.
- Lead by example — leaders put down their own devices too.
- Use an opt-in approach — never force participation.

PART TWO: BEFORE YOU BEGIN

2. Planning Questions to Answer First

Before the event, work through these eight questions — they shape every practical decision you'll make.

1. Who is this evening for?

Decide your audience before you communicate anything. Is this open to all ages, or youth-specific? If running within a wider church event, consider a dedicated 'youth zone' where young people and their leaders can participate together. An opt-in approach works best — especially if you have first-time visitors who may not expect their phone to be taken.

2. Will you physically collect phones/devices?

Physically surrendering a device is a powerful symbolic act. If you have secure storage (a locked room, safe, or locker), use it. Options include:

- Digital Detox branded bags (one per person, with a name label)
- A raffle-ticket system: attach a ticket to each device, give the matching stub to the young person to reclaim it later — like a cloakroom.
- If no secure storage is available, simply ask young people to switch off and put devices in bags or pockets.

Either way, mark the moment — make it intentional, not casual.

3. Do you have a safe check-in/out system?

Assign dedicated team members to manage device check-in and check-out. The bigger the group, the bigger the team you'll need. Plan a simple flow to avoid a bottleneck — mark out a clear queue or traffic system so your check-in team doesn't get overwhelmed.

4. Full tech detox, or just personal devices?

You don't need to turn off the lights! Technology at its core isn't the enemy. Decide in advance whether you'll use music apps, projectors, or gaming consoles during specific parts of the evening. A mix works well: guided reflection using an app or music, then periods of complete stillness with no screens at all.

5. How will you explain this to young people in a way that excites them?

Avoid framing it negatively. Don't say: 'We're taking your phones so you can't talk to your mates.' Instead:

- Frame it as a challenge — push yourselves outside your comfort zone and try something new.
- Involve young people in planning — ask them what worship song to include, or what snack to have. Ownership creates buy-in.
- Let them invite their friends — if they've helped shape it, they'll champion it.

6. What activities will keep people engaged?

Having multiple 'zones' is key to a successful evening. These can be different rooms, or different corners of the same space. Ideas include:

- Space to pray for yourself (worries, hopes, the future)
- Space to pray for your community and church
- Space to pray for the world (use a globe or map; lay out newspapers)
- Space with arts and crafts
- Space for sung worship or background music
- Space for silence and stillness
- Space for group prayer with a leader
- Gaming stations (for the earlier part of the evening)

7. How will you end the evening?

Marking the close is as important as marking the start. Ideas:

- A short time of group or self-reflection — what did God say to you?
- A prayer and worship moment as devices are returned
- Ask young people to write down one commitment about their relationship with tech — something they can take home
- Share a meal or snacks together — reinforce real-world connection

8. Will you follow up with young people afterwards?

For young people who want to talk it through, a 1:1 conversation with a trusted leader after the event can be transformative. Here are some follow-up questions to use:

- Before the detox: How did you feel about giving up your device?
- During the detox: What was the hardest part? Did you sense anything from God?
- After the detox: Did anything surprise you about being offline?
- Moving forward: Are there any habits or boundaries you'd like to set around tech?

PART THREE: SAFETY & SAFEGUARDING

3. Safety & Safeguarding

Important

All safeguarding guidance applies to both the gaming portion and the digital detox. Please ensure your event complies with all safeguarding protocols for your church, diocese, or organisation.

Safeguarding Policies

- Follow your church's existing safeguarding guidelines
- Always obtain parental consent for under-18s
- Use approved communication channels — no private direct messages without oversight

Supervision Model

- Aim for at least two leaders present at all times (the digital equivalent of 'two adults in a room')
- Keep gaming sessions in visible, group-based environments — voice channels or group lobbies, not private chats
- Assign a named leader to oversee device storage at all times

Platform Safety Settings (Gaming)

Before running any online gaming session, review and set the following:

- Disable or monitor public chat
- Turn off random friend requests from strangers
- Use private servers or invite-only sessions
- Avoid open public voice-chat games with unknown players

PART FOUR: THE GAMING SECTION

4. Running the Gaming Session

Game Selection

Choose games that are age-rated appropriately (check PEGI ratings in the UK), collaborative rather than toxic, and non-violent or mild in tone.

☑ Good Starter Games	✗ Avoid
Minecraft — creative, collaborative, safe	Highly violent first-person shooters
Rocket League — team-based, simple	Open public voice-chat games
Among Us — great conversation starter	Games with unmoderated communities
Fortnite — use private lobbies only	
Mario Kart / party games — great for in-person hybrid	

Basic Equipment Needed

- Console (PlayStation/Xbox) or PC/Laptop per leader/station
- Headset with microphone
- Stable internet connection
- Discord (for group communication — with strict moderation settings)

💡 Cost-Saving Tips

Start with free-to-play games (Fortnite, Rocket League). Use existing devices before buying new. Ask congregation members to donate equipment. Create a shared gaming station at church. Apply for small youth grants or local funding.

How to Run a Gaming Session

Step 1: Before the Session

- Choose your game and platform
- Test tech: internet, audio, accounts
- Set session length — 60 to 90 minutes is ideal
- Brief all leaders on their roles

Step 2: Welcome

- Casual opening chat: 'How's your week?'
- Explain what you're playing
- Set expectations: fun, respect, inclusion

Step 3: Play Together

- Mix up teams — avoid cliques forming
- Encourage conversation during play
- Notice who is quiet or being left out

Step 4: Light Faith Integration

Choose one or more of the following approaches:

- Ask a reflective question: 'Where did you see teamwork today?' or 'What frustrates you most in life or in gaming?'
- Share a short personal thought — keep it to 1–2 minutes maximum
- Offer optional prayer — never forced

Note: the deepest evangelism happens in the relationship, not just in this moment. Conversations during gameplay, follow-up chats, and responding to life struggles shared in passing — these are where faith is naturally shared.

Step 5: Close

- Thank everyone for coming
- Mention the transition to the Digital Detox
- Stay available for any follow-up chats

Pairs and Teams

Use pairs or small teams within the gaming session — this builds deeper connection, reduces anyone being isolated, and creates natural conversation. Consider leader + young person pairings, rotating teams each session, or small breakout groups if the platform allows.

PART FIVE: THE DIGITAL DETOX SESSION

5. Running the Digital Detox

The Digital Detox follows naturally from the gaming session. Young people have experienced technology used well — now they're invited to put it down entirely, and discover what it's like to be fully present.

Sample Running Order

Transition

- Allow time for everyone to settle post-gaming.

- Think about the environment: Is music playing? What kind? Are there activities laid out?

Welcome and Introduction

- Explain what a digital detox is and why you're doing it
- Invite those present to join (opt-in approach)
- Explain the check-in/out system if implementing
- Pray together as you mark the beginning of the detox

Phone/Device Check-In

- Invite participants to hand in their phones/devices
- Ensure the system is set up and staffed before the session starts

Worship

- This will look different depending on your setting — sung worship, or reflective music
- Consider song choices that focus on resting with God and drawing close to Him

Word

- A short message on why you're doing a digital detox
- Focus on the importance of laying down distractions and reconnecting with God

Prayer and Activity Zones

If you have multiple spaces, set up different zones. If in one room, use different corners. Suggested zones:

- Pray for yourself — bring worries, hopes, and plans to God
- Pray for the community — your local area and church
- Pray for the world — use a globe, map, or newspapers to guide prayer
- Arts and crafts — creative prayer response
- Music — background worship
- Silence and stillness
- Group prayer with a leader

Small Groups

Gather young people into small groups for conversation around digital detox — what it means to them, the spiritual discipline of surrendering, and how they connect with God.

Suggested Bible passages for discussion: Psalm 46:10, Matthew 11:28–30, Romans 12:2, Luke 10:38–42, Matthew 6:33.

Worship

- A final time of worship before devices are returned
- This can flow naturally into the check-out process

Phone/Device Check-Out and Close

- Pray together as you mark the moment the detox ends
- Encourage young people to make a habit of unplugging regularly
- Ensure the check-out team is ready before young people come to collect devices

PART SIX: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

6. Sample Evening Timeline

Below is a suggested combined timeline for a full gaming night and digital detox evening, running approximately 2.5 hours.

Time	What's Happening
6:00 PM	 Arrival + Gaming Warm-Up — casual gaming, leaders mix with young people
6:20 PM	 Gaming Session — paired/team play, conversation, fun
7:20 PM	 Light Faith Integration — reflective question, short thought, optional prayer
7:30 PM	 Transition — Intro to Digital Detox, explain what's coming
7:35 PM	 Welcome + Phone Check-In — opt-in, mark the moment with prayer
7:45 PM	 Worship — songs/music focused on connection with God
8:00 PM	 Word — short message on unplugging to reconnect
8:10 PM	 Prayer Zones + Activities — young people explore at their own pace
8:30 PM	 Close — final prayer, devices returned, encouragement to unplug regularly
8:35 PM	 Fellowship — snacks, chat, leaders available for follow-up conversations

7. Final Tips for Leaders

Before the Evening

- Read through both sections of this guide in full before the event
- Brief all leaders on their specific roles (gaming, check-in, prayer zones)
- Test all technology in advance — nothing kills momentum like a connection issue
- Involve young people in planning where possible — it builds ownership

During the Evening

- Lead by example: put your own device down during the detox
- Stay attentive to who is quiet, isolated, or struggling

- Keep faith integration light during gaming — don't force it
- Be flexible — follow the energy of the group

After the Evening

- Follow up with young people who seemed to have a significant experience
- Use the follow-up questions from Section 2 to guide 1:1 conversations
- Encourage young people to try a small daily 'unplug' — even just five minutes
- Plan your next session — consistency is what builds trust and lasting relationships

Remember

The gaming night and the digital detox are both saying the same thing in different ways: you matter, we want to be with you, and there's a God who wants to know you. One meets young people where they are. The other invites them somewhere deeper. Together, they're a powerful tool for genuine youth ministry.