



**mindfulbytes**

# Getting Started with MindfulBytes

A Teacher's Quick Guide

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*MindfulBytes | [mindfulbytes.io](https://mindfulbytes.io)*

*A program of NM-CCCR*

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## WHAT MINDFULBYTES IS (AND ISN'T)

Let's start with what this isn't. MindfulBytes is not a screen time lecture. It's not a program that tells kids to put down their devices. It's not another thing to add to your already-full plate.

MindfulBytes is a K-5 digital wellness program built on one simple idea: children don't need less technology — they need better awareness of how technology makes them feel.

That's it. That's the whole thing.

We teach presence, not restriction. We help kids notice what's happening in their bodies before, during, and after they use screens. When a child can recognize that their stomach gets tight during certain games, or that their breathing gets shallow after 20 minutes of scrolling, they've just developed the most powerful digital literacy skill there is — self-awareness.

This isn't abstract. A second-grader in one of our pilot sessions described it perfectly: "My tummy goes buzzy when I can't stop watching." That child just gave us a precise body-signal report. MindfulBytes gives kids the vocabulary and the space to notice signals like that — and then make their own choices about what to do next.

The research behind this comes from interoceptive awareness — the science of how we perceive signals from inside our own bodies. It's well-established in adult psychology and increasingly recognized as foundational for children's emotional development. We've simply applied it to how kids experience technology.

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## THE THREE-MOMENT SESSION STRUCTURE

Every MindfulBytes session follows the same simple rhythm. Once you learn it, you can weave it into any lesson that involves screen time.

### **MOMENT 1: BEFORE THE SCREEN — "HOW DOES YOUR BODY FEEL RIGHT NOW?"**

Before students open their devices, take 60-90 seconds for a body check-in. This isn't meditation. It's a quick weather report.

Ask students to notice three things:

- Their breathing (fast? slow? hard to tell?)
- Their body (wiggly? calm? tight somewhere?)

- Their feelings (excited? bored? worried about something?)

For younger students (K-1), use the "Weather Check": "If your body were the weather right now, what would it be? Sunny? Stormy? Cloudy?" This gives kids a concrete metaphor without requiring emotional vocabulary they may not have yet.

For older students (3-5), you can be more direct: "Close your eyes for five seconds. Notice one thing your body is doing right now. Open your eyes. Now let's go to our screens."

The point isn't to achieve calm. The point is to notice. That's the baseline they'll compare to later.

## **MOMENT 2: DURING THE SCREEN — "PAUSE AND CHECK"**

This is the hardest part for teachers to remember, and it's the most important. Midway through screen time (or at a natural transition point), pause the class for 15-30 seconds.

"Freeze for a second. Hands off keyboards. How does your body feel now compared to when we started?"

That's the whole intervention. You're not asking kids to analyze. You're asking them to compare. Before vs. now. Same? Different? How?

Some teachers use a visual signal — a chime, a hand raise, or a projected timer. Others build it into the screen activity itself ("When you finish level 2, stop and do a body check before moving to level 3").

## **MOMENT 3: AFTER THE SCREEN — "WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?"**

When devices close, take 2-3 minutes for reflection. This can be verbal (whole class or partner share), written (quick journal entry), or physical (thumbs up/down/sideways for "How does my body feel now?").

Key questions:

- "Did anything change between the beginning and now?"
- "Was there a moment where your body tried to tell you something?"
- "If you did this again, is there anything you'd do differently?"

You're not looking for right answers. You're building the habit of noticing.

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## **5 READY-TO-USE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**GRADES K-1: "MY BODY'S WEATHER REPORT"** When to use: Before any screen-based activity. Time needed: 3 minutes. Give each student a simple worksheet with a body outline and weather symbols. Before screen time, students circle the weather that matches how their body

feels. After screen time, they circle again. Then ask: "Did your weather change?"

GRADES K-1: "THE BREATHING BUDDY" When to use: After screen time, as a transition activity. Time needed: 5 minutes. Each student places a small stuffed animal or beanbag on their belly while lying down. They watch it go up and down as they breathe. After 10 breaths, ask: "Was your breathing fast or slow when we stopped using screens? Is it different now?"

GRADES 2-3: "SCREEN TIME DETECTIVE" When to use: During a screen-based lesson. Time needed: Built into the activity. Students become "detectives" investigating what screens do to their bodies. Give them a checklist: My eyes feel tired/fine/I didn't notice. My shoulders are crunched up/relaxed/I didn't notice. My breathing is fast/slow/I didn't notice. My mood is the same/different/I didn't notice.

GRADES 2-3: "THE BEFORE-AND-AFTER JOURNAL" When to use: Weekly, tied to a regular screen-based activity. Time needed: 5 minutes total. Students keep a simple journal where they draw or write how they feel before and after using screens each week. Over time, patterns emerge.

GRADES 4-5: "THE DIGITAL WEATHER FORECAST" When to use: Monday morning or before a technology-heavy lesson. Time needed: 10 minutes. Students write a brief "forecast" for their screen time: "I predict that during coding time today, my body will feel... because last time..." They revisit the forecast after the activity and rate their prediction.

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## HOW TO INTEGRATE WITHOUT ADDING TO YOUR PLATE

You don't have to create a separate "MindfulBytes time" in your schedule. Here's how teachers in our pilot programs have woven it into what they already do:

Morning Meeting: Add the body weather check to your existing morning routine. (30 seconds)  
Transitions: Use the body check-in as your transition signal before and after any screen-based activity. (15 seconds more)  
Existing SEL Time: MindfulBytes activities slot directly into social-emotional learning time. Body awareness is emotional awareness. Brain Breaks: The Breathing Buddy exercise works perfectly as a brain break after sustained screen use. Writing Time: The Before-and-After Journal counts as writing practice.

The goal is not to add something new. The goal is to add awareness to something you're already doing.

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## FAQ FROM REAL TEACHERS

"Does this replace our existing digital citizenship curriculum?" No. MindfulBytes works alongside digital citizenship programs. Digital citizenship teaches kids the rules of the road. MindfulBytes teaches them to listen to their own engine.

"What if a student says they don't feel anything?" That's a perfectly valid response. "I didn't notice" or "I don't feel anything" is meaningful data. Over time, with repeated practice, most students begin noticing more. Never pressure a student to produce a "correct" body sensation.

"I'm not a counselor. Am I qualified to do this?" Absolutely. MindfulBytes doesn't ask you to be a therapist. You're not interpreting students' responses or diagnosing anything. You're creating space for kids to notice their own experience. That's teaching.

"What if a student shares something concerning during a body check-in?" Follow your school's existing protocols for student disclosures.

"My school has limited screen time as it is. Do we even need this?" Yes. The goal isn't to manage screen time at school. It's to give students skills they'll carry with them to every screen interaction for the rest of their lives.

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## YOUR NEXT STEPS

- Try the Weather Check tomorrow morning. That's it. Just once. See what happens.
- Pick one screen-based activity this week and add the three-moment structure (before / during / after).
- Share what you notice with a colleague.
- Download the companion guides for deeper dives.
- Email [michael@merek.io](mailto:michael@merek.io) or visit [mindfulbytes.io](http://mindfulbytes.io) to learn more.

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MindfulBytes is a program of the New Mexico Center for Cybersecurity and Cyberpsychology Research (NM-CCCR), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Our research is conducted in partnership with the Center for Digital Thriving at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Learn more: [mindfulbytes.io](http://mindfulbytes.io) Research: [cyberpsychologyresearch.io](http://cyberpsychologyresearch.io) Contact: [michael@merek.io](mailto:michael@merek.io)

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