

Digital Media Use and Mental Health

Teacher's Guide



Primary Activities

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Objectives and recommendations for the teacher	4
3. Day 1 – Digital media and well-being	
• Activity 1: Digital media and well-being	5
• Activity 2: Dice game – Media emotions	7
4. Day 2 – Healthy use of digital media	
• Activity 1: Guided debate – Media screen time	9
• Activity 2: Classification – Healthy or unhealthy?	11
5. Day 3 – Reflection and healthy habits	
• Activity 1: Round table – Media experiences	13
• Activity 2: Group work – Media-free zones and times	14
• Activity 3: Final reflection and personal commitment	15
6. Complementary activities	
• Complementary Activity 1 — Digital media diary	16
• Complementary Activity 2 — Digital situations theatre	17
7. Printable materials and resources	
• Materials checklist per session	19
◦ Day 1	
▫ Activity 1: Digital media and well-being	20
▫ Activity 2: Dice game – Media emotions	30
◦ Day 2	
▫ Activity 1: Guided debate – Media screen time	33
▫ Activity 2: Classification – Healthy or unhealthy?	34
◦ Day 3	
▫ Activity 2: Group work – Media-free zones and times	45
▫ Activity 3: Final reflection and personal commitment	46
◦ Complementary activities	
▫ Complementary Activity 1 — Digital media diary	47

INTRODUCTION

The use of **digital media** is part of the daily life of primary school pupils. Smartphones, tablets, video games and online platforms influence their way of relating, their free time habits and even their **rest and emotional state**. For this reason, it is essential that children develop a **critical awareness** from an early age about how, when and how much they use these resources, as well as the impact they have on their well-being.

This module aims to accompany pupils in a process of **reflection and active learning** regarding their own media habits. Through participatory dynamics, debates and games, **awareness of the benefits and risks** of digital media is encouraged, along with the importance of establishing **healthy breaks** and the ability to create personal self-regulation strategies.

The teacher's role is fundamental to guide conversations, moderate shared experiences and propose tools that allow each child to find a **balance between digital use and screen-free activities**. With this workshop, the aim is to ensure that pupils not only understand the effects of digital media in their daily lives, but also develop **responsible habits and personal goals** that promote their overall well-being.

Key ideas

- **Digital media** are part of the daily life of primary school pupils.
- Smartphones, tablets, video games and platforms influence relationships, free time, **rest and emotions**.
- It is necessary for them to develop critical awareness about the use of media and its impact on well-being.
- The module proposes active reflection, debates and games to **foster learning**.
- The teacher has a **central role** as a guide and moderator.

Workshop objectives

- **Reflect on the personal use** of digital media.
- **Identify benefits and risks** of digital consumption.
- Understand the importance of establishing healthy breaks.
- Develop personal **self-regulation** strategies.
- Encourage **responsible habits** and personal well-being goals.

Note for the teacher

- Create a **safe space** for dialogue and reflection.
- Use participatory dynamics (**debates, games, group activities**).
- Highlight the importance of the **balance between screens and screen-free activities**.
- Accompany each child in recognising their own habits and **proposing alternatives**.
- Support the formulation of **achievable personal goals**.

Key words

- Digital media
- Social networks
- Online emotions
- Digital self-esteem
- Social comparison
- Digital identity
- Healthy limits
- Cyberbullying
- External validation
- Conscious disconnection
- Emotional regulation
- Social pressure
- Responsible screen use
- Emotional impact of "likes"
- Mindfulness

Expected results for module 8

At the end of this module, the pupil is expected to develop a **more conscious and critical perspective** on the emotional impact of digital media, as well as tools to relate to them with **greater balance, respect and self-care**.

A1 Day 1. Digital media and well-being (45 minutes)

Activity 1: Round table - Digital media and well-being (15 a 20 minutes) Adapt it to the pace and participation of your group.

Materials

- ☐ Everyday objects (real or images)
- ☐ Classroom with seating arranged in a circle
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers
- ☐ Images or illustrations of media use situations

1.1.1 Objectives

1. Invite pupils to reflect on their own **media habits** and how these influence their physical, emotional and social well-being, creating a space for **participatory and conscious dialogue**.

1.1.2 Activity procedure:

1. **Arrange the chairs in a circle** with the whole class and give a brief visual introduction to the topic; you can use the module presentation for support.
2. Show various images (printed or projected) related to the use of digital media.
 - Guiding questions:
 - *"What do you see in these images?"*
 - *"Which activities seem healthy or unhealthy to you?"*
 - *"Which digital media do you use every day?"*
3. Place the symbolic objects in the centre.
4. Explain to the pupils that each object represents an aspect of their media habits. Give a brief presentation of each to contextualise.
5. Open the debate with questions such as:
 - *How do digital media influence your rest time?*
 - *Which activities do you like most when you are not using screens?*
 - *Do you have set times to use your mobile? How do you stick to them?*
 - *What happens when you spend too much time in front of a screen?*

Guide to symbolic objects



Encourages reflection on the times and usage habits of the device.



Symbolises time management and breaks in media use.



Encourages debate on screen-free activities.



Refers to healthy sleep and moments away from screens.



Represents offline activities.

6. Invite pupils to share personal experiences of digital media use and how they feel about it.
7. Collect on the whiteboard the main ideas that emerged from the debate (e.g. benefits, risks, related emotions).
8. Close the activity by thanking them for their participation and linking it to the theme of the module:
 - *"Digital media are part of our lives, but we can also learn to use them in a way that takes care of our well-being."*

Nota for Teachers

- Symbolic objects act as **visual activators** and help to make the debate more dynamic.
- It is not necessary for everyone to speak; **respect the silences** and encourage active listening.
- If you feel it is necessary, limit the time of each contribution so that everyone can participate.
- You can keep the list of ideas collected on the whiteboard in the classroom to revisit them in subsequent activities.

A2

Activity 2: Dice game - Media emotions (20 minutes)

Adapt it to the pace and participation of your group..

- 10 minutes of play
- 10 minutes of debate and final reflection

Materials

- ☐ Templates to build the dice (media and emotions)
- ☐ Heavy paper/card (min. 120 g/m²)
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Glue
- ☐ Ready-made dice (1 for media + 1 for emotions per group of 6 pupils)
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers

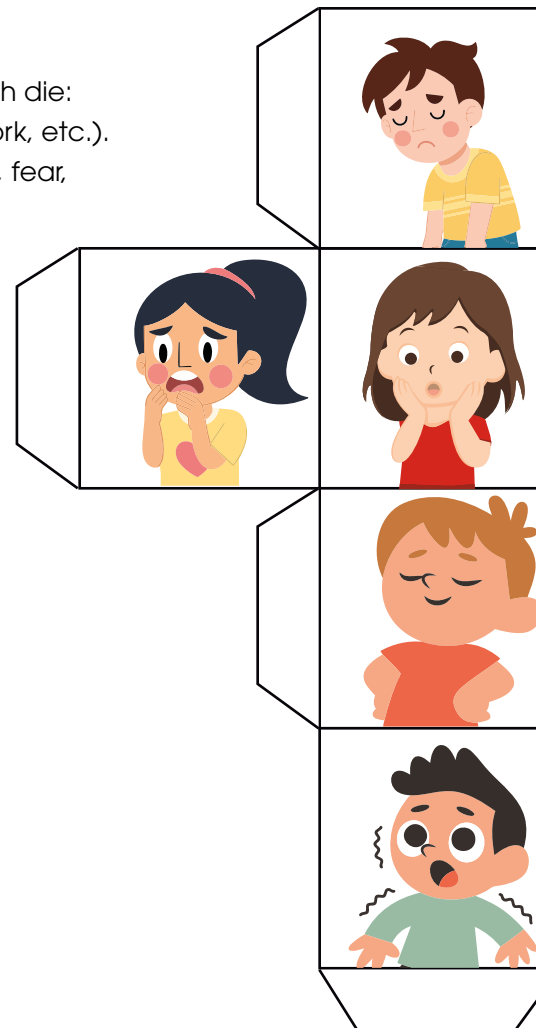


1.2.1 Objectives

To help pupils identify and express how different digital media trigger **different emotions**, encouraging reflection on **positive and negative experiences** in their daily use.

1.2.1 Activity procedure:

1. The teacher explains the rules of the game and the meaning of each die:
 - **Media die:** indicates the type of media (e.g. video, social network, etc.).
 - **Emotions die:** shows the associated emotion (e.g. joy, frustration, fear, surprise, serenity, etc.).
2. Divide the class into small groups (maximum 6 people per group).
3. In turns, each pupil rolls both dice.
 - The combination obtained (**media + emotion**) will be the starting point to tell a related personal experience.
 - Example: "social network + joy" -> share what causes joy on social networks.
4. Continue until all pupils have participated.
5. Close the activity in plenary:
 - Reflect together on shared emotions.
 - Identify positive and negative experiences.
 - Record the most important ideas on the whiteboard



Teacher's Note

- Ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to participate, even if some do so briefly.
- Observe if **positive or negative emotions** prevail and use this data as an indicator for future discussions.
- If you wish, you can add a **third die with concrete situations** (e.g. "at school", "at home", "with friends") to enrich the dynamic.

A1

Day 2. Healthy use of digital media (45 minutes)

Activity 1: Guided debate - Media screen time (20 minutes)

Device	Healthy time	Real time	Time of day		
			Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Console					
Television					
Computer and laptop					
Smartphone					
Tablet					
Total time	Total time	Total time			

Materials

- ☐ Chairs arranged in a circle.
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers/chalk.
- ☐ Slide or printable, or write "Media screen time" on the whiteboard (1 for a large class).

2.1.1 Objectives

1. Encourage students to **reflect on their own habits** of digital media use, recognise patterns and compare different usage times within the group.

2.1.2 Activity procedure:

1. **Prepare the space:** organise the chairs in a circle to create an environment of open and safe dialogue.
2. **Introduce the topic:** explain that the activity aims to discover when and for how long they use digital media during the day. Clarify that **there are no right or wrong answers**.
3. **Pose the main question:**
 - *"When and for how long do you use your tablet or smartphone every day?"*
 - Give examples: *"Some people use it in the morning before coming to school, others mainly in the evening before going to sleep."*
 - Write down the different times and exposure durations to digital media that emerge from the debate.
4. **Use the Think-Share-Present technique:**
 - **Think:** one minute of individual reflection.
 - **Share:** in pairs; students talk with their partner.
 - **Present:** each pair shares their ideas with the group.
5. **Collect the answers:** write on the whiteboard or on the printable the most mentioned times (morning, afternoon, evening, before bed) and **highlight similarities or differences**.

6. **Group reflection:** open a dialogue with questions such as:
 - *What similarities do we observe?*
 - *Which differences draw our attention?*
 - *Do you think the time you use your smartphone influences sleep, concentration or mood?*
7. **Closing:** summarise the main ideas and link to the next activity:
 - *"Now that we know when we use media the most, we will reflect on which habits are healthy and which are not."*

Teacher's note

- Give space to all students, encouraging the quieter ones in particular.
- Remind them to **listen without judging**.
- Use the information obtained as a starting point to work on **healthy habits** in the next activity.

A2 Activity 2: Healthy or unhealthy use? (20 minutes)

2.1.1 Objectives

1. Help students to **analyse different digital media use situations**, distinguishing between healthy and unhealthy practices, and to co-create a shared list of **positive habits**.

Materials

- ☐ Cards with situations (e.g.: "using media just before sleeping", "taking breaks while playing video games", "looking at your smartphone during meals").
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers/chalk.
- ☐ (Optional) Draw two columns on the whiteboard or use the printable or presentation slide, with the titles: Healthy and Unhealthy. 1 per large class.

2.2.1 Activity procedure:

1. **Form small groups** of 4 to 6 students.
2. **Hand out the cards:** each group receives a set of daily situations related to media use.
3. **Group classification:**
 - They discuss each situation.
 - They decide if it is **Healthy or Unhealthy** (or if it depends on the context).
 - They justify their decision.
4. **Presentation of results:** each group shares 2-3 examples with the rest of the class, explaining their reasoning.
5. **Plenary discussion:** collect the conclusions on the whiteboard, creating two columns:
 - Healthy and Unhealthy, or use the printable.
 - Highlight cases where there was disagreement to encourage reflection.
6. **Collective synthesis:** work together to create a list of healthy habits to keep as a reference for the rest of the module.
7. **Closing and final reflection:** ask questions such as:
 - *Which habits surprised you?*
 - *Which unhealthy behaviours are the most common?*
 - *What small changes could you apply starting today?*

Unhealthy



Healthy



Healthy and unhealthy use of digital media

Healthy

Unhealthy

Teacher's note

- There will be situations with **mixed interpretations** (e.g. playing video games can be positive if done with friends, or negative if it takes away hours of sleep). Take advantage of this to **deepen the reflection**.
- Emphasise that it is not about judging, but about learning to **distinguish between habits** that favour or harm well-being.
- Keep the list of healthy habits **visible in the classroom** as a reminder.

A1

Day 3. Reflection and healthy media habits (45 minutes)

Activity 1: Media experiences (15 minutes)

Adapt it according to the needs and pace of your group.

Materials

- ☐ Chairs arranged in a circle or semi-circle.
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers/chalk.

3.1.1 Objectives

1. Encourage the **free expression** of experiences and emotions related to digital media use, promoting active listening and shared reflection.

3.1.2 Activity procedure:

1. **Prepare the space** in a circle or semi-circle to favour eye contact.
2. **Pose the main question:**
 - *"When and how do you use communication media and how do you feel about it?"*
3. **Give students their turn** to share experiences, feelings and concrete examples.
4. **Collect on the whiteboard** the most significant contributions, grouping ideas by emotions, contexts or habits.
5. **Close the activity** by thanking them for their participation and highlighting the importance of recognising how media use influences our **well-being**.

Teacher's note:

- There may be students who prefer not to speak; **respect the silences** and value attentive listening.
- Summarise the most repeated or relevant themes to link to the next activity.
- Regulate the time based on the number of contributions.

A2

Activity 2: Media-free zones and times (20 minutes)

Adapt it according to the needs and pace of your group.

Materials

- ☐ Large card or sheets of paper.
- ☐ Coloured markers.
- ☐ Adhesive tape or material to display posters.
- ☐ Whiteboard or Printable: *"Media-free zones and times"*.

3.2.1 Objectives

1. Promote collective reflection on **moments and spaces free from screens**, identifying healthy practices and agreeing on applicable proposals for daily life.

3.2.2 Activity procedure:

1. **Divide the class** into small groups (4-6 students).
2. **Explain the task:** each group must reflect on which zones and moments can be media-free (e.g. during meals, before sleep, in the playground, during sports or family activities).
3. **Hand out the materials** and ask them to represent their ideas on a poster in a **visual and creative** way.
4. **Presentation of results:** each group shares their poster with the class.
5. **Plenary discussion:** the teacher collects the contributions on the whiteboard and a common list of *"media-free zones and times"* is created for reference.
6. **Closing:** highlight the importance of setting aside screen-free time to favour **coexistence, rest and health**.

Teacher's note:

- Encourage groups to include **real and achievable examples**.
- You can leave the final list displayed in the classroom as a **permanent reminder**.

Media-free zones and times

Zone	Time	Comments

A3

Activity 3: Final reflection and personal commitment (15-20 minutes)

Adapt it according to the needs and pace of your group..

Materials

- ☐ (Optional) Printable "My personal goal".
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers.
- ☐ Coloured pencils or markers.

3.3.1 Objectives

1. Encourage **self-reflection** and personal commitment towards a healthier use of media, strengthening individual responsibility and group support.

3.3.2 Activity procedure:

1. **Explain the dynamic:** each student must formulate a "**personal media goal**" to improve their own well-being.
 - They can express it through a drawing, a phrase or a short text.
2. **Individual creation time:** a few minutes to reflect and write/draw their own goal.
3. **Voluntary sharing:** invite some students to share their goal with the group.
4. **Group advice and support:** note down suggestions or supportive phrases on the whiteboard that classmates offer to help achieve the goals.
5. **Homework:** each student shares their personal goal at home with their parents and discusses how to put it into practice in daily life.
6. **Closing:** thank the group for their commitment and emphasise that **every small change counts** on the journey towards a healthier use of media.

Teacher's note:

- Not all students will be comfortable sharing in public; **participation must be voluntary**.
- Reinforce **realistic goals** and celebrate the diversity of proposals.
- Remind them that they can adapt their goal in the future if necessary

4.1.1 Objectives

1. To develop awareness of the **frequency and time** spent on digital media.
2. To relate media use to one's own **emotional state**.

Materials

- ☐ "Media Diary" worksheet.
- ☐ Pencils or pens.

4.1.2 Activity procedure:

1. **Hand out the diary worksheet** to each student and explain how to complete it.
2. **Explain the process:** over the course of a week, each student must note down:
 - Which media they used.
 - How long they used it for.
 - **How they felt** (e.g. relaxed, tired, happy, frustrated).
3. **Clarify any doubts** and emphasise the importance of honesty in the personal log.
4. **Classroom follow-up:** the following week, set aside time for students to **share their observations** in small groups.
5. **Plenary discussion:** collect common conclusions on the whiteboard, identifying positive habits and areas for improvement.
6. **Closing:** reinforce the idea that observing and recording habits is the **first step towards being able to change them**.

Teacher's note:

- Encourage students to be honest and not to worry about "right or wrong"; the diary is a **tool for self-awareness**, not for assessment.
- You can ask students to keep the diary as a **reference for future activities**.
- Adjust the level of detail based on the **age of the group**.

AC2

Activity 2: Digital situations theatre (30 minutes)

Adapt it according to the needs and pace of your group.

4.1.1 Objectives

1. To reflect on **daily digital behaviours** in a playful and creative way.
2. To identify **healthy alternatives** to situations of excessive media use.

Materials

- ☐ Printable cards with situations related to digital media use (e.g.: "staying up late watching videos", "using your smartphone while eating", "playing online games with a friend and losing track of time", "reading a book instead of looking at your tablet").
- ☐ Clear space in the classroom to act out the scenes.

4.1.2 Activity procedure:

1. **Form small groups** (4-6 students).
2. **Hand out a card** to each group with a specific situation.
3. **Preparation:** students develop a **short theatrical performance** showing the situation.
4. **Performances:** each group acts out their situation in front of the class.
5. **Healthy alternatives:** after each performance, the rest of the group proposes **more balanced and positive ways** to handle the situation.
6. **Teacher moderation:** lead the debate, reinforce the proposals, and summarise the **key learning points** on the whiteboard.
7. **Closing:** emphasise how humour and creativity help to **reflect on media use** in an engaging way



Teacher's note:

- Performances do not have to be perfect; the aim is to **reflect and have fun**.
- If time is limited, select only a **few situations to dramatise**.
- You can keep the cards to **reuse them with other classes** or adapt them to new themes

Materials checklist for all activities

Day 1. Digital media and well-being

1.1 Debate round - Digital media and well-being

- ☐ Everyday objects (real or images)
- ☐ Classroom with seating arranged in a circle
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers
- ☐ Images or illustrations of situations

1.2 Dice game - Media emotions

- ☐ Templates to build the dice (media and emotions)
- ☐ Heavy paper/card (min. 120 g/m²)
- ☐ Printer
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Glue
- ☐ Printed emojis
- ☐ Ready-made dice (1 for media + 1 for emotions per group of 6 pupils)
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers

Day 2. Healthy use of digital media

2.1 Guided debate - Media screen time

- ☐ Classroom with seats in a circuit/circle
- ☐ Printable to record screen time

2.2 Classification - Healthy or unhealthy?

- ☐ Cards with situations (e.g.: "using media just before sleeping", "taking breaks while playing video games", "looking at mobile phone during meals").
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers/chalk.
- ☐ (Optional) Two columns on the whiteboard with the titles: Healthy and Unhealthy.

Day 3. Reflection and healthy media habits

3.1 Round table - Media experiences

- ☐ Classroom with a circle of chairs
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers

3.2 Group work - Media-free zones and times

- ☐ Large card or sheets of paper
- ☐ Markers or material for drawing/writing
- ☐ Adhesive tape or material to display posters
- ☐ Printable: "Media-free zones and times"

3.3 Final reflection and personal commitment

- ☐ (Optional) Printable "My personal goal"
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers
- ☐ Coloured pencils or markers

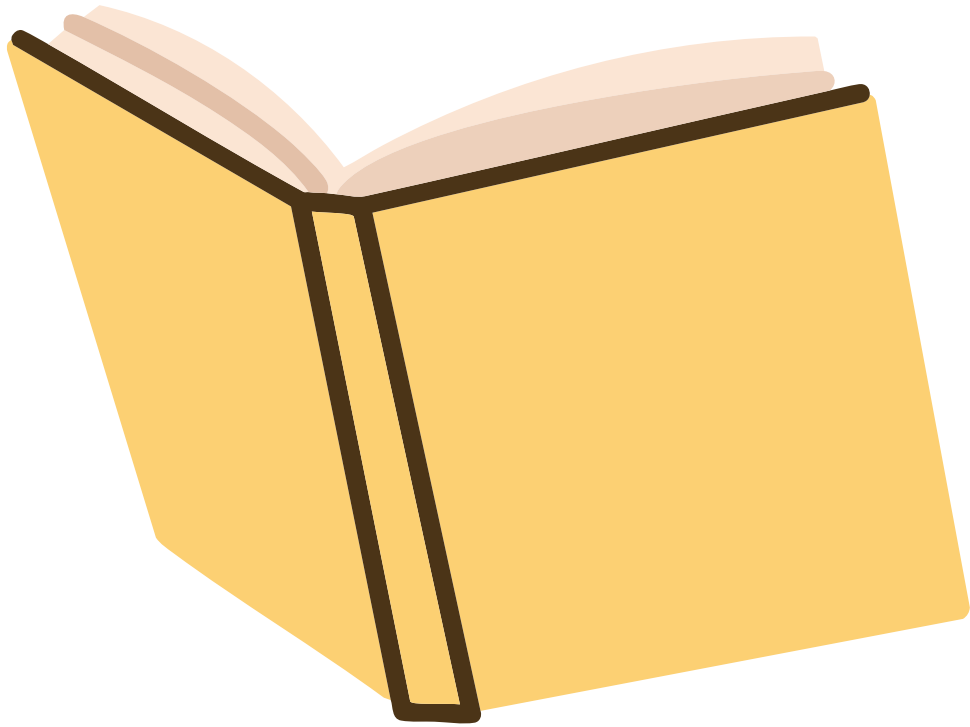
Complementary activities

- ☐ Printables: Cards with situations related to digital media
- ☐ "Media Diary" template

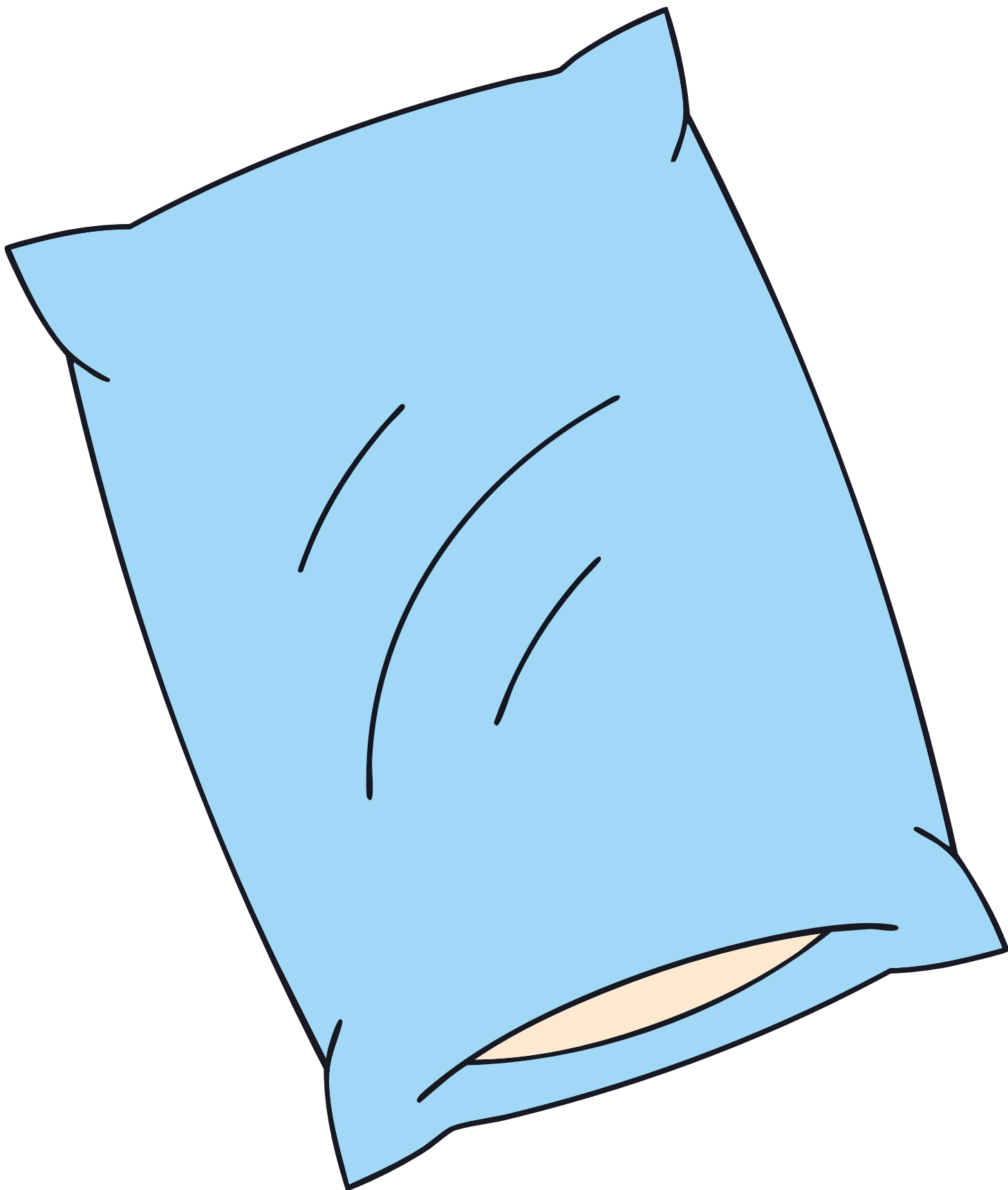


The ideas we share in this workshop are simple suggestions on how to use the material. Feel free to adapt it to your needs: you can divide the workshop into two parts, spread it over several days or complete it in a single session, as you see fit.

You know your pupils and you know what is best for them. Likewise, materials can be used in both paper and digital format, depending on what is most convenient.













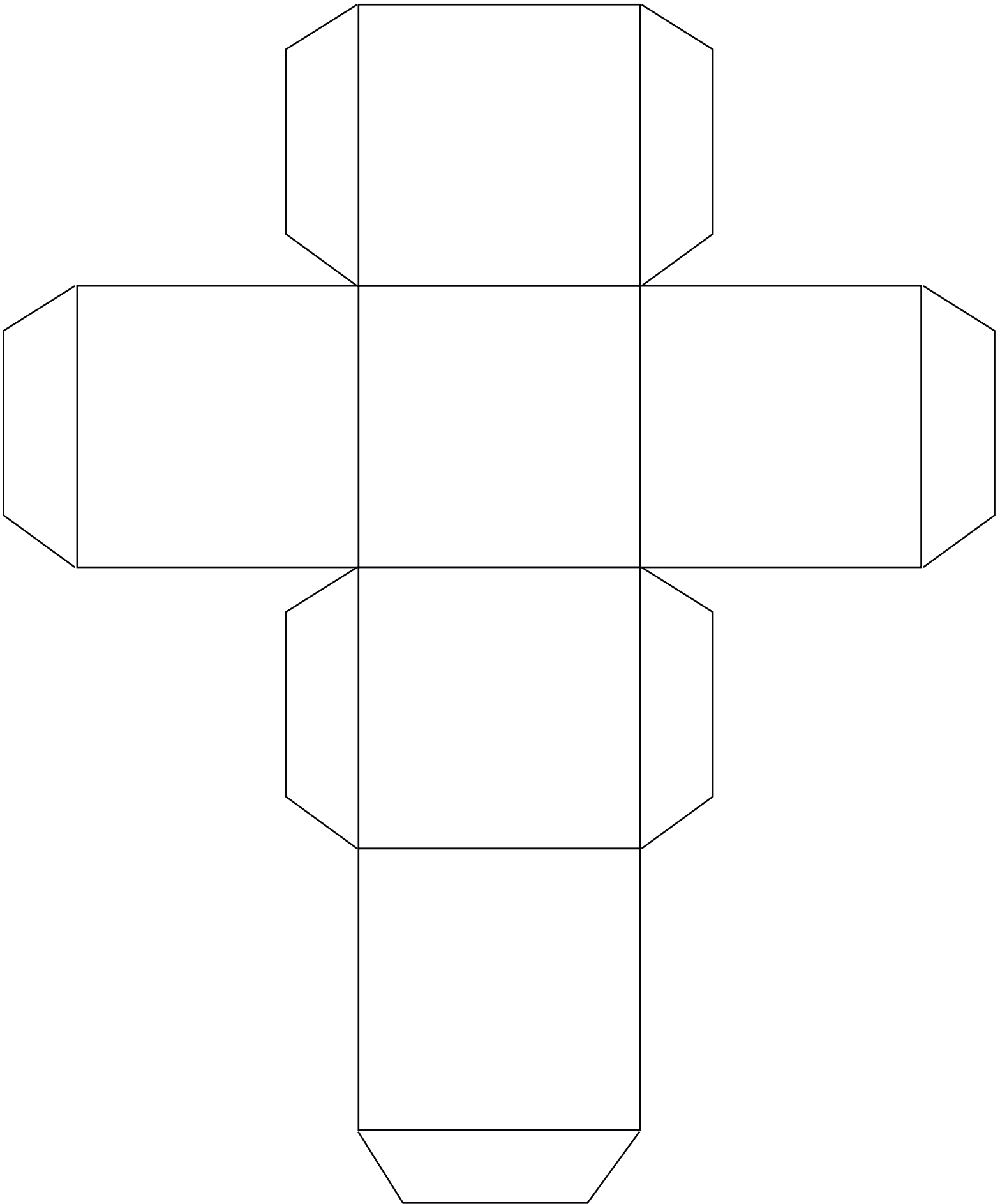


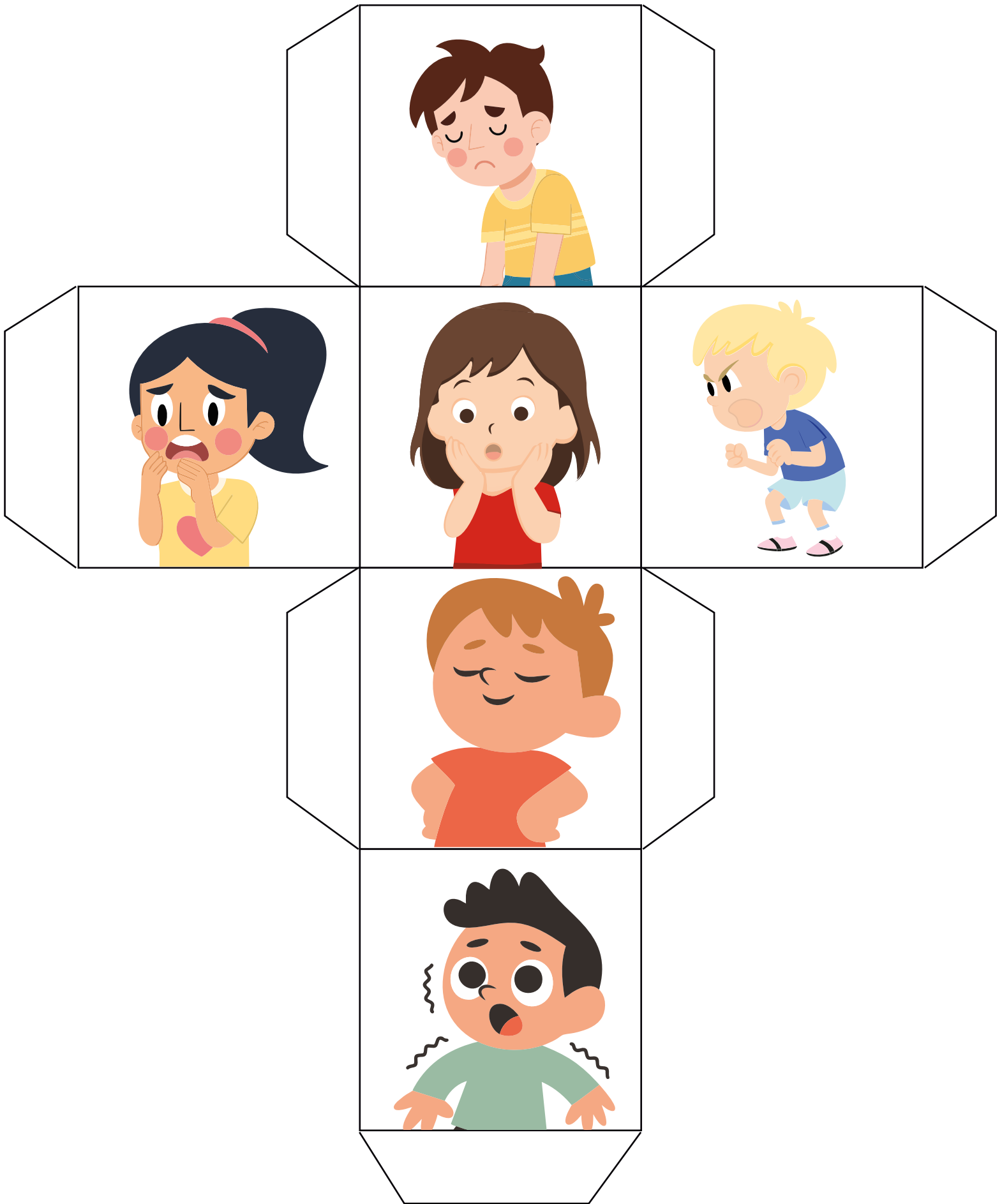


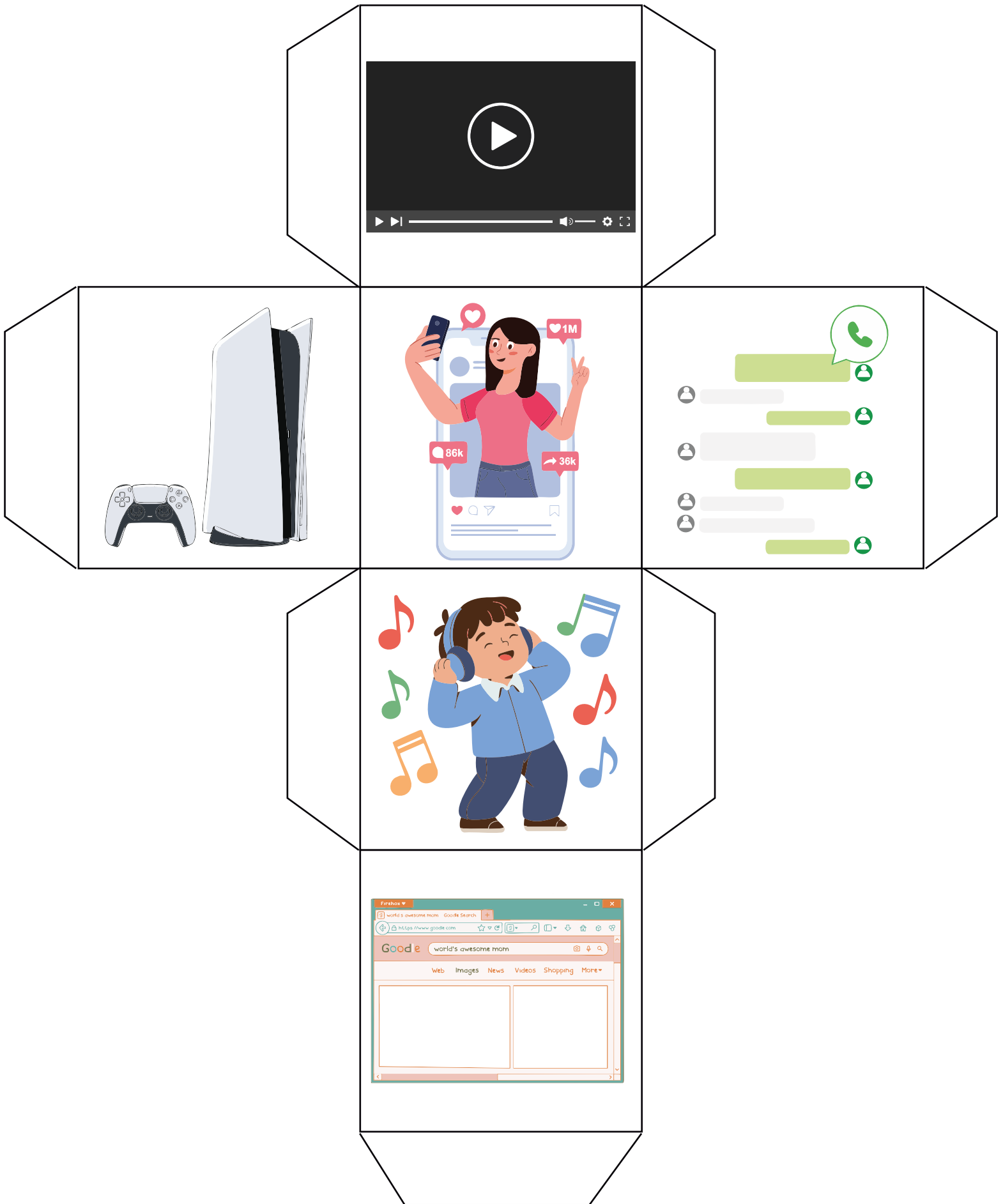




Activity 2: Dice game - media emotions



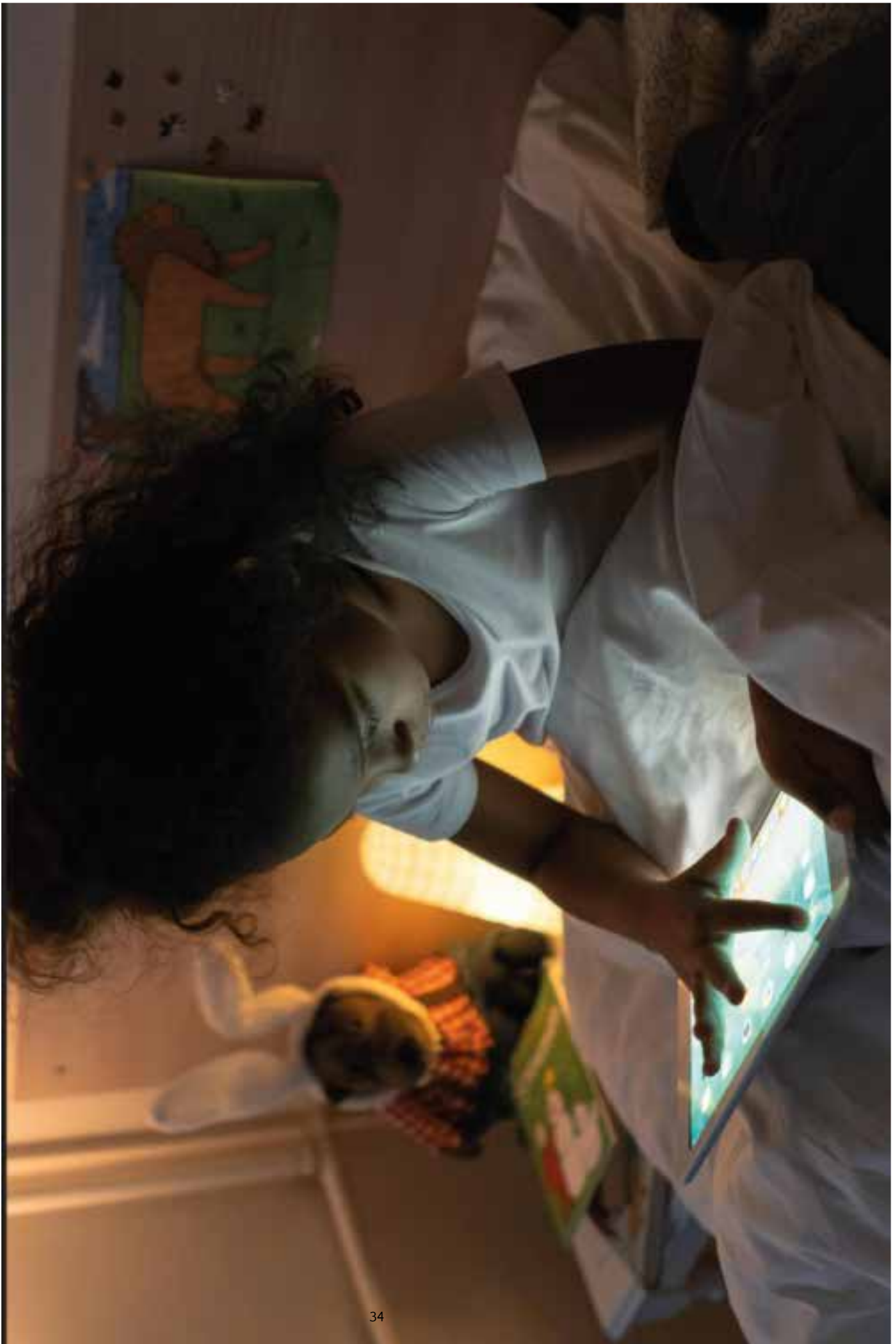




Day 2. Printable activity no. 1: Time spent using digital media

Dispositivo	Time of day			Real time	Healthy time	Total time
	Morning	Afternoon	Evening			
Console						
Television						
Computer e laptop						
Smartphone						
Tablet						
Total time				Total time	Total time	

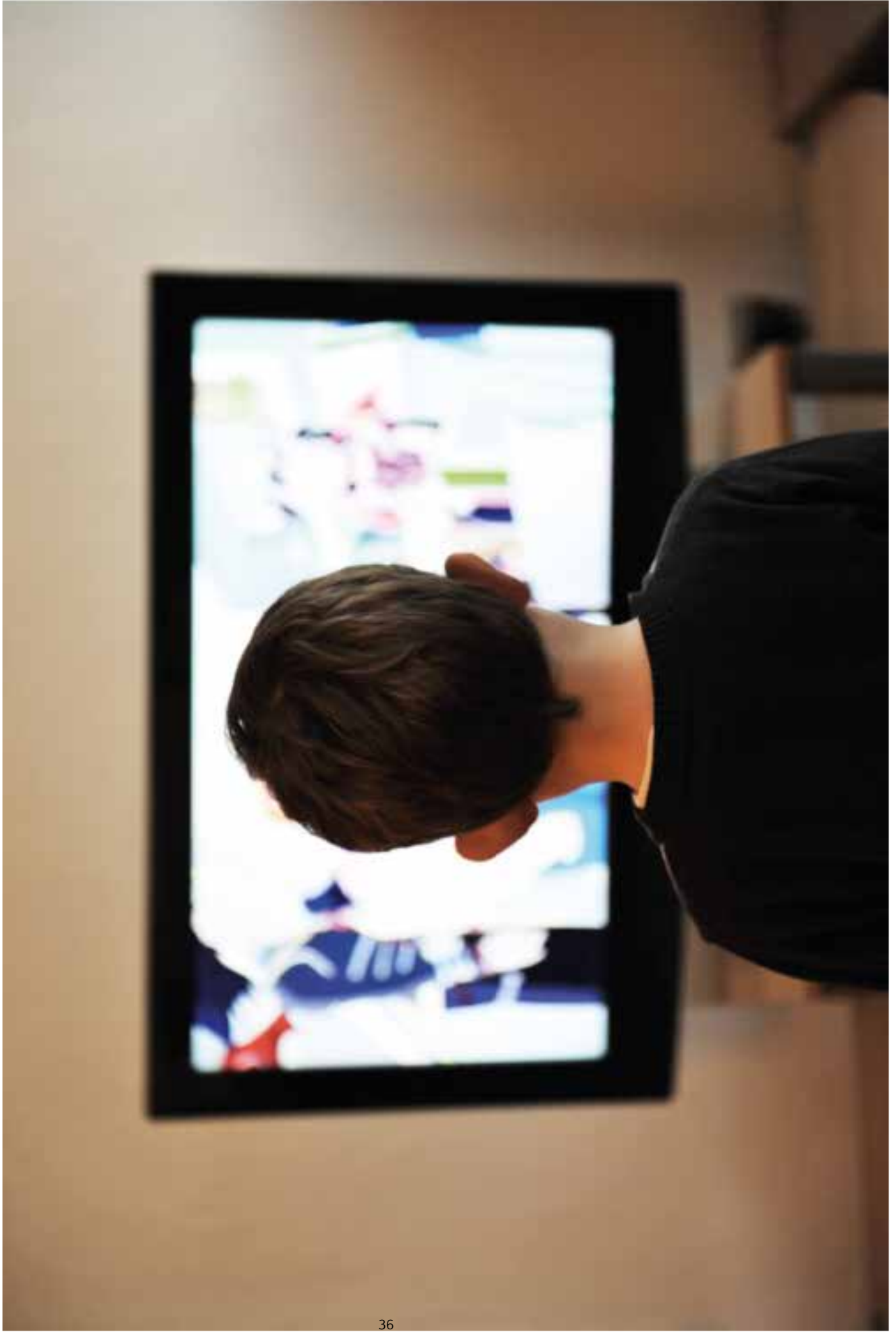
I play an exciting game on my tablet just before going to bed.



I read a book for half an hour before going to bed.



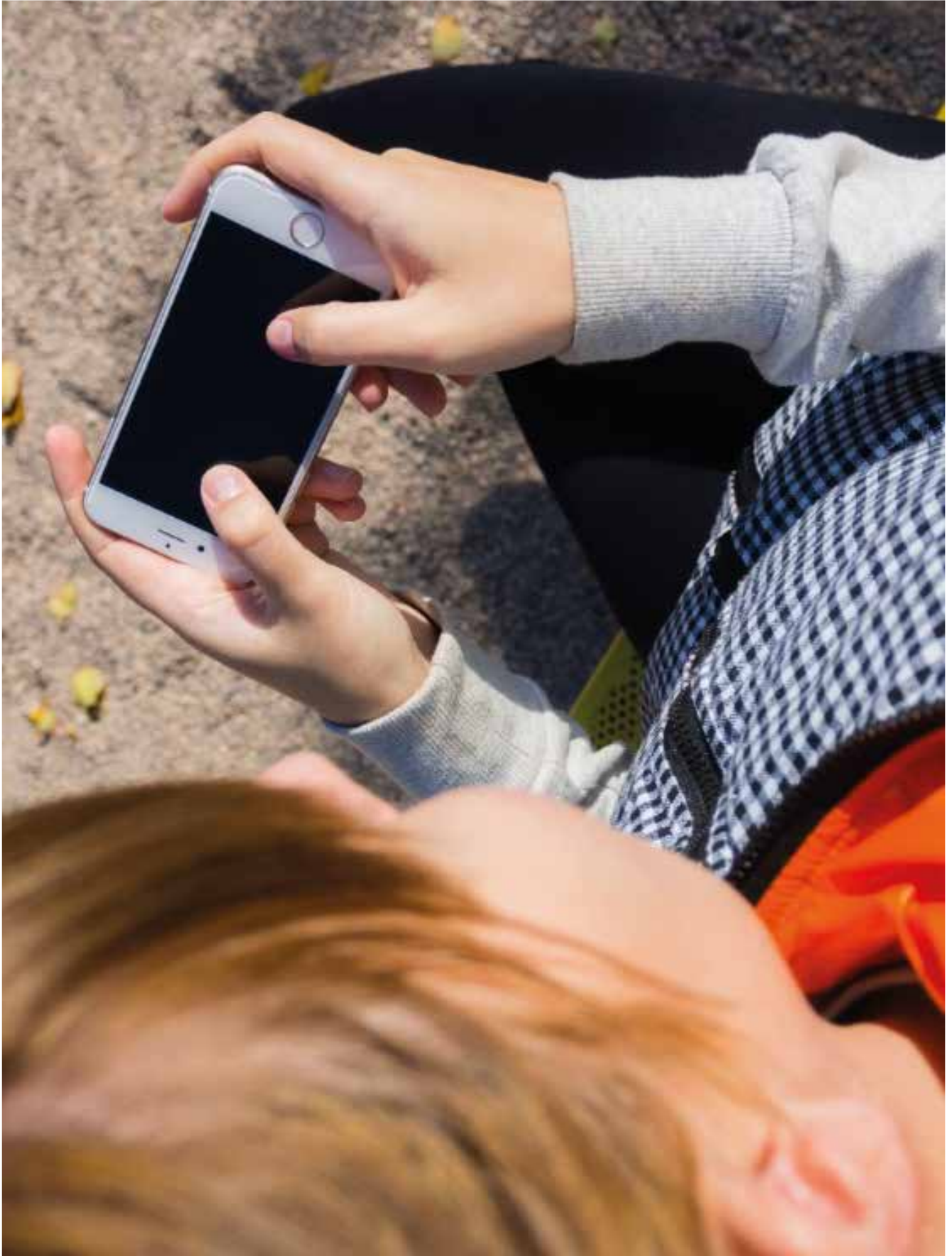
I watch TV for an hour whilst chatting to my parents. Sitting at the dining table.



I'm playing outside with my friends and leaving my mobile at home.



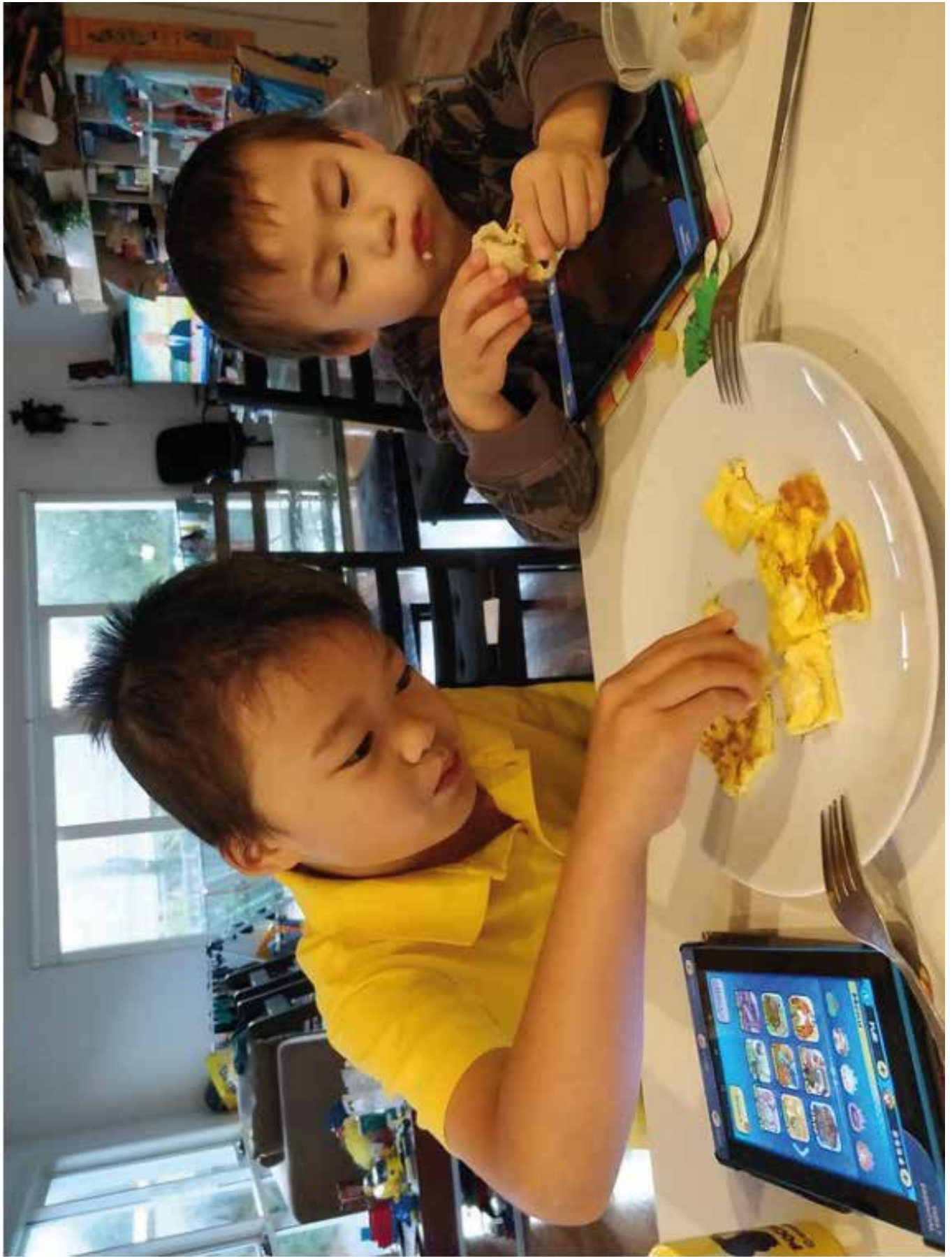
During the break, I use my smartphone to chat with my friends



I spend the whole afternoon in front of the screen without a break



Whilst I'm eating, I use my mobile phone to take photos of the food



I'm going to watch an interesting film with my parents and then we'll talk about it



Healthy



Unhealthy



Healthy and unhealthy use of digital media

Healthy

Unhealthy

Media-free zones and times				
Zone	Time	Comments		

MY PERSONAL GOAL

What feelings did I experience? In which part of the body do I feel them?

What can I do differently next time?

My media diary

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Digital media used	Digital media used	Digital media used	Digital media used	Digital media used	Digital media used	Digital media used
Time spent (approx.)	Time spent (approx.)	Time spent (approx.)	Time spent (approx.)	Time spent (approx.)	Time spent (approx.)	Time spent (approx.)
How did I feel?	How did I feel?	How did I feel?	How did I feel?	How did I feel?	How did I feel?	How did I feel?
How did I feel?	How did I feel?	How did I feel?	How did I feel?	How did I feel?	How did I feel?	How did I feel?



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