

Salzburg, May 05, 2025

Dear Parents,

The following change to the school regulations regarding the ban on the use of mobile phones was announced by the Directorate of Education on Friday, May 2, 2025, and takes immediate effect:

Legal basis: §§ 43 to 50 of the School Education Act, Federal Law Gazette No. 472/1986 as amended, § 7 Paragraphs 6 to 8 of the 2024 School Regulations as per the regulation, Federal Law Gazette II No. 80/2025

Key statements/objectives:

Ensuring orderly teaching and school life, prohibition of the use of mobile phones and similar devices in primary and lower secondary schools, establishment of school-specific usage rules.

The handling of mobile phones in schools is increasingly seen as a challenge in public and media discussions. Studies and experiences from teachers show that smartphones significantly impair students' concentration and thus hinder educational success. Scientific research has also long shown that excessive smartphone use is associated with negative health effects for children and adolescents. Experts are observing an increase in sleep disorders, irritability, anxiety, and depression, which are especially linked to uncontrolled use of social media.

In Austria, some schools already autonomously implement specific mobile phone usage regulations through their school rules, while others struggle with enforcement. Relevant recommendations from the Ministry of Education already support schools in handling this issue independently. To provide clarity and ensure a consistent approach, a nationwide regulation has been introduced to establish mobile phone-free zones in schools.

As of **May 1, 2025**, the amendment to the 2024 School Regulations, published in Federal Law Gazette II No. 80/2025 on April 28, 2025, has come into force, adding Paragraphs 6 to 8 to § 7.

With this amendment, the use of mobile phones, smartwatches, and comparable devices for digital communication is prohibited. However, students may still bring these devices to school.

The ban applies to all students up to and including the 8th grade and therefore covers all public and officially recognized elementary schools, middle schools, special education schools, and lower levels of general secondary schools.

The ban is valid for the entire time students are on school premises — during lessons, all breaks, until they leave the school, including in after-school care, off-site instruction, and school events lasting up to one day. For multi-day school events involving overnight stays outside the home, age-appropriate use of the devices must be allowed (e.g., for school-related purposes like digital tickets, student ID, or contact with family at certain times).

If the school rules do not include provisions on sanctions for violations of the ban, the device must be confiscated and returned at the end of the school day or event — unless the disciplinary situation requires it to be handed over to the student's guardians. It is especially important to note that the content on a student's personal device may not be accessed without their consent.

If the school rules do not specify how devices are to be stored, any devices brought to school (mobile phones, smartwatches, etc.) must be kept turned off. Responsibility for storing the device lies with the student.

The following exceptions to the ban are possible:

1. School-specific rules may be defined in the school's code of conduct.
2. Individual teachers may allow device use for educational purposes.
3. A person responsible for supervising individualized learning time, after-school care, or summer school may permit use.
4. Use is necessary for medical reasons.

Details on the exceptions:

1. School-specific rules must be approved by the School Forum or School Community Committee. They may consider the specific situation at the school and allow deviations from the ban.
2. A teacher may allow the use of digital devices as educational tools or for specific students for instructional purposes (e.g., digital student ID in the school library, use of a digital dictionary, or fact-checking).
3. Device use may also be permitted on a case-by-case basis or generally for certain purposes in connection with afternoon care, but **not** for consuming social media, videos, etc.
4. Use for medical reasons may be necessary (e.g., for diabetics, apps compensating for physical impairments, or emergency buttons).

At our school, BG Zaunergasse, the relevant sections of the school's code of conduct as approved by the School Community Committee (SGA) remain in force:

Digital Technology

The use or handling of digital technology (e.g., mobile phones) is generally prohibited on the entire school premises. In urgent cases, calls can be made through the school office.

During the entire time on school grounds and in the school building, such devices must be in a mode that emits neither sound nor vibrations.

In case of violation, the device is handed in to the school office. Confiscated devices can only be collected at the end of the school day from the office (or principal's office).

Exceptions to the ban on digital devices:

- **Exception 1:** A teacher explicitly permits use.
- **Exception 2:** Laptops and tablets may be used in the school foyer for school-related purposes.
- **Exception 3:** Upper secondary students may use digital technology exclusively in their classroom during free periods.
- **Exception 4:** Upper secondary students may use headphones on their way to class before the first lesson (before 7:50 a.m.).

Best regards,
Erich Schön