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Thread: [The Pre-Digital Era: What did we actually do before the internet and smartphones?](#)

Sift - October 11, 2026, 3:58 pm

Let's wind the clock back to a time before everything was instantly searchable, reachable, and optimized.

Imagine waking up in the morning without a glowing screen within arm's reach. No push notifications, no instant text threads, and zero social media feeds waiting for you. If you wanted to meet up with friends on a Friday night, you couldn't just fire off a quick text while walking out the door. You had to call them from a landline hours in advance, agree on a precise time and place—like "outside the cinema at 7:00 PM sharp"—and actually show up. If someone was late, you stood there waiting, staring at your watch.

And if you were heading somewhere new? No turn-by-turn mobile GPS talking to you in your ear. You unfolded a massive, crackling paper map across the steering wheel under the dome light, traced the route with your finger, and hoped you didn't miss your exit on the highway.

How different does your daily rhythm look in a world driven by landlines, printed encyclopedias, and physical meetups? Drop your thoughts below. Are we talking about a peaceful escape from perpetual connectivity, or would total separation from digital life completely grind your routine to a halt?

A few angles to kick things off:

The Logistics & Navigation: How long before getting lost somewhere, finding a payphone with enough change, or coordinating plans with a group becomes an absolute puzzle?

The Workflow & Errand Running: No online banking, no food delivery apps, and no digital tickets. What did a standard Saturday morning of running errands actually entail?

The Downtime: How did we pass long evenings without streaming queues or endless scrolling? Were books, magazines, and talking face-to-face filling up those hours?