
Less focus in classroom can be fended off with less access to technology during school hours

Technology Causes Distractions

We should be aware of the risks we take when we use technology. Students say they feel a constant need to connect and talk with others on social media (Soltan). Multi-tasking can weaken a child's attention span and a lack of concentration can lead to lower test scores (Sullivan). Growing up in the twenty-first century means that technology is spreading into every facet of a student's learning environments. This same technology can be distracting because it can interrupt a student's learning time, affect a child's attention span, and cause kids to score lower on tests.

"Larry Rosen, a professor at California State University-Dominguez Hills, published a study that attempted to quantify how often students are distracted by technology while studying. Rosen told 263 students to work on an important school assignment. Even knowing they were being watched, the students couldn't resist texting or using social media" (Sullivan). After only two minutes, most of the kids had already been distracted by technology. (Sullivan). Out of the fifteen minutes given to work on the assignment, only sixty-five percent of the time was used for schoolwork. That means that for five minutes and fifteen seconds kids were not doing their homework and instead were using electronic devices (Sullivan).

Teachers tend to believe that technology has definitely affected the way children learn and retain information (Richtel). "Students report that even without the constant reminders provided by notification lights and sounds, they are internally preoccupied with whether anyone is trying to get in touch with them or comment on their statuses" (Soltan). Evidence from psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience suggests that when students multitask while doing schoolwork, their learning is far spottier than if the work had their full concentration and attention (Paul).

Developing brains can become more accustomed than adult brains to multitask constantly, which lessens the ability to sustain attention (Richtel). Michael Rich, a professor at Harvard Medical School, says, "Their brains are rewarded not for staying on task but for jumping to the next thing." Ellen Goldman adds, "In an attempt to survive, we master the art of multitasking and time management."

Another factor in children's weakened attention spans is the "Wikipedia problem." A "Wikipedia problem" is defined as students become used to getting quick answers. They thus are more likely to give up when an easy answer escapes them (Richtel). Students are also coming to the realization that the internet can be used for things besides schoolwork. "I click and something happens," says high school senior Vishal. Reading a book or doing homework is less exciting. He likes the immediate gratification that technology provides (Richtel).

Many tests have also show that interrupted studying time can lead to lower test scores. Alessandro Acquisti and Eyal Peer at Carnegie Mellon University's Human Computer Interaction lab asked 136 college students to take a standardized cognitive test. Some of the recruits were

given many distractions, such as texts. The other group was put in a quiet room with no interruptions. The interrupted group scored 20 percent lower than the quiet group (Sullivan).

Based on research we have to conclude that technology is distracting and interrupts a student's learning time, affects a child's attention span, and causes kids to score lower on tests. Both parents and students should be aware of the distractions caused by technology. Digital devices can be useful tools in a learning environment. However, we must make sure we stay focused, and we must remember what is important. We can always talk to friends later.

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