# The Effect of Multitasking on Reading Comprehension in Teens

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With cell phone use becoming ubiquitous in the academic lives of teenagers, high school students use their cell phones for social connection in a multitasking way while studying and doing homework. For the context of our study, we defined multitasking as using the cell phone while performing an off-line academic task. Many students have the conception that multitasking has no effect on their academic performance. This study was designed to determine if this assertion had any ground. To accomplish this task we had forty-seven voluntary participants between the ages of 15 and 18 take a reading comprehension test of SAT leveled practice questions wholly focused on the task, and then take another similar test while they responded to automated text messages. A final survey determined the participants' level of experience with multitasking in an academic environment and measured long term memory from the reading comprehension tasks. The results highlighted that when the students texted while taking the reading comprehension test they did 9% worse by a statistically significant amount, a confidence interval greater than 95 percent. Students remembered 6% more from the passages they read while not texting, also a statistically significant amount. Under these overriding conclusions, we analyzed subgroups created from the post survey. Gender had no effect on the students ability to multitask, and neither did multitasking confidence or age. The students were able to accurately answer questions relating to the texts they received while testing, but were unable to accurately remember large details from the passages in the test.

**Awards Won:**