

# Mobile Phone Use and Its Impact on Student Learning

## (for Parents and Students)

### Impact of Using Smartphones in the Classroom Unrelated to Student Learning

Students who use their mobile phone to send messages unrelated to the content they are learning perform significantly worse than their peers who did not use their mobile phone at all. Students who did not use their phone at all:

- scored 70% more on their recall of information
- took 50% more notes
- earned grades 10-17% higher than those using their mobile phone inappropriately.

[\(Kuznekoff, Munz & Titsworth, 2015\)](#)

### The Brain Drain

Students who turn their phones to silent and turned upside on their desk or put away in their bag/pocket perform significantly poorer in class than those who have their phone in another room/locker. This occurs even if the student is not checking their phone. Simply having a mobile phone within reach results in a 'brain drain' where students' attention is frequently directed at their phone (or trying not to think about their phone) rather than their lesson. This is especially the case for those students who feel 'addicted' to their phone.

[Ward, Duke, Gneezy & Bos, 2017\).](#)

In an experiment where a mobile phone was 'accidentally' left a participants' desk, it was found that the mere presence of a mobile phone resulted in significantly worse results on more challenging tasks than when a notebook was 'accidentally' left behind.

[Thornton et al, \(2014, as cited in Wilmer, Sherman & Chein, 2017\)](#)

### Smartphones and their Impact on Attention

Mobile phones create interruptions to attention. These interruptions can be a result of the mind wandering to their smart phone, a result of the phone's notification grabbing their attention or simply observing others using their phone. Interruptions to attention result in interruption to learning.

Once people's attention shifts to their phone and they tend to engage in a chain of more unrelated activities on their phone that can delay returning to their original task by 400%.

Any interruption that exceeds 15 seconds (which mobile phone usage frequently does) results in significantly more errors made in the original task.

[Wilmer, Sherman & Chein, 2017\)](#)

## Benefits of Teacher Directed use of Mobile Phones in the Classroom

Teacher directed use of mobile phones can prove a valuable tool for students' learning as it can allow students to block out distractions or inspire creativity by playing music while working, taking photos of notes, using the mobile to take notes and access online learning platforms.

Mobile phones can help students remain active in their learning by being able to use their mobile as a tool to move further when they get stuck and while waiting for the assistance of a teacher.

However, even teacher directed use of mobile phones can result in distractions as other apps on the smartphone can draw away attention from the current task.

[Ott, Magnusson, Weilenmann and Segerstad \(2018\)](#)

## Self-Regulation and Mobile Phone Use

Students are aware that mobile phones can be both a beneficial learning tool and a source of distraction. In order to effectively use mobile phones as tools for learning and avoid distractions, parents and schools need to be teaching students good habits to self-regulate their phone use.

[Ott, Magnusson, Weilenmann & Segerstad, 2018](#).

## The Impact of Banning Mobile Phones in Schools

Four English cities have found that banning the mobile phone in schools has resulted in an improvement in student achievement compared with school who have not implemented the ban. In particular, it was found that the lowest achieving students made the greatest achievements after a phone ban. These students received an increase in test scores by an amount equal to an additional hour a week of school, or adding five extra days to the school year.

[Beland and Murphy \(2015\)](#)

## References

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