

## Texting 'lowers students' grades'

By Nick Collins 12 Apr 2013 Daily Telegraph

Students who spend long periods each day texting fall behind in their studies but reading newspapers could boost their performance, according to a new study.

Women in their first year of university spent almost 12 hours a day on media-related activities such as texting, social networking, browsing the internet and watching television.

In most cases these activities were linked to lower effort and grades, but reading newspapers and listening to music appeared to improve students' academic performance.

Rather than trying to change students' behaviour, professors should attempt to integrate unhelpful social media into academic study, for example by using it to refer students to learning material, experts said.

Researchers asked 483 female first-year undergraduates at an American university about their daily use of 11 different types of media ranging from books and magazines to films, mobile phones and social networking websites.

On average the young women spent between 11.8 and 12.1 hours per day using media of some type, although the total did not reflect how much time they spent multitasking, for example listening to music while reading.

Social networking, listening to music, texting and browsing the internet were the most time-consuming activities, each accounting for two hours per day during term time.

The researchers compared the student's habits against their average grades over two semesters of study, also taking into account the women's responses to questionnaires about their academic behaviour, confidence and problems.

The study, published in the *Emerging Adulthood* journal, found that heavy use of mobile phones, social networking websites, magazines, and film and television were linked to a decline in academic performance.

Women who watched more films and spend more time talking on their mobile phones scored lower grades in the spring term, after accounting for their grades in the autumn, results showed.

Students who spent more time social networking and reading magazines reported worse learning behaviour, for example spending less time attending classes or completing assignments, and those who spent more time watching television and reading magazines had lower confidence in their academic ability.

The findings suggest that mobile phone use may distract students from concentrating on their course work, and that social networking could lower grades by disrupting their preparation for class or distracting them from their academic goals, researchers said.

In contrast women who spent more time reading newspapers had higher grades – a fact which researchers said could be partly down to stronger focus on work and better confidence in their academic potential.

"Keeping up with current events and academic behaviours may both reflect conscientiousness; newspaper reading may also serve as preparation for classes in some fields," they wrote.

Listening to music also improved students' study habits, most likely because it made the idea of work more appealing, they added.

The researchers, led by Dr Jennifer Walsh of The Miriam Hospital in Rhode Island, wrote: "Given the popularity of social networking and mobile technology, it seems unlikely that educators will be able to reduce students' use of these media forms.

"Instead, professors might aim to integrate social media into their classrooms to remind students of assignments, refer them to resources and connect them with their classmates."

570 words

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