

Texting, social networking and other media use linked to poor academic performance

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The widespread use of media among college students – from texting to chatting on cell phones to posting status updates on Facebook – may be taking an academic toll, say researchers with The Miriam Hospital's Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine.

According to a new study, freshmen women spend nearly half their day – 12 hours – engaged in some form of media use, particularly texting, music, the Internet and [social networking](#). Researchers found media use, in general, was associated with lower [grade point averages](#) (GPAs) and other negative academic outcomes. However, there were two exceptions: newspaper reading and listening to music were actually linked to a positive [academic performance](#).

The findings, reported online by the journal *Emerging Adulthood*, offer some new insight into media use in [early adulthood](#), a time when many young people are living independently for the first time and have significant freedom from parental monitoring.

"Most research on media use and academics has focused on [adolescents](#), rather than new college students, or has only examined a few forms of media. So we were curious about the impact of a wider range of media, including activities like social networking and texting that have only become popular in recent years," said lead author Jennifer L. Walsh, Ph.D., of The Miriam Hospital's Centers for Behavioral and [Preventive Medicine](#). "We also wanted to know how media use related to later [school performance](#), since there aren't many [longitudinal studies](#) looking

at media use and academics."

Walsh and colleagues surveyed 483 first-year college women at a northeast university at the start of their freshmen year. Researchers asked students about their use of 11 forms of media (television, movies, music, surfing the Internet, social networking, talking on a cell phone, texting, magazines, newspapers, non-school-related books and video games) on the average weekday and weekend day during the previous week. In January and June, participants reported their GPAs for the fall and spring semester, and they also completed surveys about academic confidence, behaviors and problems.

The study yielded some interesting findings, Walsh said. In addition to data suggesting that college women use nearly 12 hours of media per day, researchers found that cell phones, social networking, movie/television viewing and magazine reading were most negatively associated with later academic outcomes, after accounting for their fall academic performance.

But exactly how are media use and academic performance linked? "We found women who spend more time using some forms of media report fewer academic behaviors, such as completing homework and attending class, lower academic confidence and more problems affecting their school work, like lack of sleep and substance use," said Walsh, adding that the study was one of the first to explore mechanisms of media effects on [academic outcomes](#).

Researchers also believe the findings demonstrate the central role of social media in the lives of college students, and suggest these forms of media are used more on campus than off.

"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," said Walsh. "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."

Academic counselors might also consider assessing college students' media use and encouraging them to take breaks from media, particularly while in class, studying or completing assignments, the researchers also noted.

More information: The study, "Female College Students' Media Use and Academic Outcomes: Result From a Longitudinal Cohort Study," was published online by *Emerging Adulthood* on March 26, 2013.

Provided by Lifespan

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