



Hi graduate friends,

Let's talk about cellphones and how they can interfere with your learning. Although cellphones are amazing devices that allow us to stay connected with our loved ones, they can also negatively impact our learning. Attention is crucial for taking in, processing, and managing information and because of the important role cellphones have taken in our lives, they can easily interfere with our attention.



Some studies have even shown that the mere presence of a cellphone can increase “phone conscious thoughts” and impair performance on cognitive tasks (Tanil & Yong, 2020). Now that's when your phone is just there and quiet, what might happen if there are also calls or notifications coming in?

Kaminske et al. (2022) tested students on both easy (e.g., identify red when the word also says **red**) and difficult tasks (e.g., identifying red when the word says **blue**) in different conditions including when cell phone notifications were present and when they were not. In both conditions, participants were slower to respond to questions when they could hear cellphone notifications, and the interesting thing is that it didn't even matter if it was their own cellphone or someone else's! Similarly, End et al. (2009) showed that student participants took less relevant notes when someone else's phone rang for 5 second, while they were watching video content.

So it seems that your cellphone notifications could be lowering your speed and making it harder for you to recognize relevant information. Now that you know, try to optimize your study sessions by putting your phone away and on silent for the block of time that you have decided to work. As studies show, this will help both you, and those trying to work around you. And perhaps if you're studying with a friend, you can encourage them to do the same?

Best,



Najmeh Keyhani (she/her/hers), PhD, from your [Learning Development & Success team!](#)

**Reference:**

End, C. M., Worthman, S., Mathews, M. B., & Wetterau, K. (2009). Costly cell phones: The impact of cell phone rings on academic performance. *Teaching of Psychology, 37*(1), 55–57.

Kaminske, A., Brown, A., Aylward, A., & Haller, M. (2022). Cell phone notifications harm attention: An exploration of the factors that contribute to distraction. *European Journal of Educational Research, 11*(3), 1487–1494.

Tanil, C. T., & Yong, M. H. (2020). Mobile phones: The effect of its presence on learning and memory. *PLoS One, 15*(8), e0219233.

---

GRADUpdATE is a monthly e-newsletter dedicated to helping students succeed in graduate school. This information is provided by Learning Development & Success. To unsubscribe/subscribe, e-mail [gradupdate-request@uwo.ca](mailto:gradupdate-request@uwo.ca), type 'unsubscribe' or 'subscribe' as the subject & click send. To view previous newsletter, visit the [GRADUpdATE Archive](#).