

Electronics in the Classroom Lead to Lower Test Scores

Students who were allowed to have phones and computers open in the classroom scored lower on exams.

By [Alexa Lardieri](#), Staff Writer July 27, 2018

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Using electronic devices in the classroom can be distracting to students and lead to lower grades.

[A study published](#) in the journal Educational Psychology found that students who had cellphones or laptops present while a lesson was being taught scored five percent, or half a letter grade, lower on exams than students who didn't use electronics.

Researchers separated 118 college students enrolled in the same course into two groups. Each group was taught the same material by the same professor, but one group was allowed to have cellphones and laptops open for non-academic purposes, while the other group was not. While the students allowed electronics didn't score lower on comprehension tests during lectures, they scored lower on exams at the end of the term.

The study also found that students in the device-permitting classroom who were not using devices also scored lower. The researchers attributed this to distraction from the devices around them.

"The intrusion of internet-enabled electronic devices (laptop, tablet and cell phone) has transformed the modern college lecture into a divided attention task," the study stated.

When a person's attention is divided between two tasks, fewer items concerning those tasks can be recalled later, [ABC News reported](#).

Arnold Glass, lead author of the study and professor of psychology at [Rutgers University – New Brunswick](#), told ABC that the study also applies to high school and middle school, as well as meetings in the workplace.

[According to a press release](#) from Rutgers University, the study is the first-ever to show a causal relationship between distractions from electronics and exam performance.

"Many dedicated students think they can divide their attention in the classroom without harming their academic success – but we found an insidious effect on exam performance and final grades," Glass said in the release. "To help manage the use of devices in the classroom, teachers should explain to students the damaging effect of distractions on retention – not only on themselves, but for the whole class."
