



Viewpoints

To screen or not to screen?



The public rhetoric regarding “screen time” reflects a generally negative connotation when discussing the effects on the brains of developing children and young adults. Though the actual benefits of taking in information from text on a physical page versus a screen are small, what is unclear is why there is any difference at all? International research on the topic has provided insights into where we can look for answers as the debate continues. Check out the full article for details on the research findings.

Studies show that students of all ages, from elementary school to college, tend to absorb more when they’re reading on paper rather than screens. The advantage for paper is a small one, but it’s been replicated in dozens of laboratory experiments, particularly when students are reading about science or other nonfiction texts.

Experts debate why comprehension is worse on screens. Some think the glare and flicker of screens tax the brain more than ink on paper. Others conjecture that students have a tendency to skim online but read with more attention and effort on paper. Digital distraction is an obvious downside to screens. But internet browsing, texting or TikTok breaks aren’t allowed in the controlled conditions of these laboratory studies.

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