

Texting smarts for adults and kids

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(HealthDay)—Texting is a quick and easy way to communicate, but it can be a dangerous distraction when you're also doing anything else. Young or old, the human brain simply can't give full attention to several

tasks at once.

Besides stealing your attention, texting slows your reaction time and keeps you from focusing on the world around you. Knowing when and when not to text will help you stay safe when you're connected.

Make it a rule not to text when you're doing something that requires total attention, and mute your phone so you won't be distracted. Driving tops the list. Set a good example for your kids—pull over before you read or answer a text.

Next is walking. Research has found that, mile for mile, distracted walking results in more injuries than distracted driving, and makes pedestrians 60 percent more likely to veer off course.

One lab study, published in the journal *Procedia Manufacturing*, tested [reaction time](#) among [college students](#) using a smartphone in a variety of ways, such as texting, watching a video or playing a game. Though accident risk was highest during gaming, doing any one of the distraction actions while walking increased the risk of a pedestrian accident.

If you must text while walking, download a [mobile app](#) that lets you do it by voice command so you don't have to look down to type.

Other no-text scenarios include jogging outdoors; using fitness equipment or machinery of any kind; and when alone after dark because being distracted could make you an easier target for a thief.

The risks of [texting](#) also go beyond the physical. A study of college freshmen found that the more daily texts they sent, the greater their sleep problems, feelings of burnout and loss of [emotional well-being](#).

The bottom line: Only text when it doesn't put you or anyone else in

danger.

More information: The Federal Communications Commission has more on the hazards of texting while driving, including a link to [state laws](#) and facts about wireless devices.

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