

THE EFFECT OF MULTITASKING ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

William H. Rybolt
Babson College, Babson Park, MA 02457
rybolt@babson.edu

The introduction of laptops into the classroom has enabled students to do many more things (surfing, emailing, and instant messaging to name only three) than participating in the classroom experience. At first, I believed that students shifted their focus to non-class activities only when they already understood the topic under discussion. I began to question my belief when I discovered that active multitasking students frequently had poor grades. Although work such as that of Hembrooke and Gay (2003), describing experiments with students in a Communications course and articles in *Scientific American* (Manhart 2004) and (Joelving 2009) clearly cast doubt on the benefits of multitasking, most of these conclusions are based on laboratory type studies. This presentation examines the relationship student multitasking and academic performance of first year business students at a small New England college. For example, multitasking involving cell phones has more than twice the impact of internet usage.

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