

Technology a bad thing

[Technology](#)



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Writing, Technology and Teens
Teens write a lot, but they do not think of their emails, instant and text messages as writing. This disconnect matters because teens believe good writing is an essential skill for success and that more writing instruction at school would help them. April 24, 2008
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C. 20036 202-419 4500 <http://www.pewinternet.org/> Summary of Findings
Teenagers' lives are filled with writing. All teens write for school, and 93% of teens say they write for their own pleasure. Most notably, the vast majority of teens have eagerly embraced written communication with their peers as they share messages on their social network pages, in emails and instant messages online, and through fast-paced thumb choreography on their cell phones.

Parents believe that their children write more as teens than they did at that age. This raises a major question: What, if anything, connects the formal writing teens do and the informal e-communication they exchange on digital screens? A considerable number of educators and children's advocates worry that James Billington, the Librarian of Congress, was right when he recently suggested that young Americans' electronic communication might be damaging " the basic unit of human thought – the sentence. 1 They are concerned that the quality of writing by young Americans is being degraded by their electronic communication, with its carefree spelling, lax punctuation and grammar, and its acronym shortcuts. Others wonder if this return to
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text-driven communication is instead inspiring new appreciation for writing among teens. While the debate about the relationship between e-communication and formal writing is on-going, few have systematically talked to teens to see what they have to say about the state of writing in their lives.

Responding to this information gap, the Pew Internet & American Life Project and National Commission on Writing conducted a national telephone survey and focus groups to see what teens and their parents say about the role and impact of technological writing on both in-school and out-of-school writing. The report that follows looks at teens' basic definition of writing, explores the various kinds of writing they do, seeks their assessment about what impact e-communication has on their writing, and probes for their guidance about how writing instruction might be improved.

At the core, the digital age presents a paradox. Most teenagers spend a considerable amount of their life composing texts, but they do not think that a lot of the material they create electronically is real writing. The act of exchanging emails, instant messages, texts, and social network posts is communication that carries the same weight to teens as phone calls and between-class hallway greetings. At the same time that teens disassociate e-communication with “writing,” they also strongly believe that good writing is a critical skill to achieving success – and their 1

Dillon, Sam. “In Test, Few Students are Proficient Writers,” *The New York Times*, April 3, 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/03/education/03cndwriting.html?em&ex=1207454400&en=https://assignbuster.com/technology-a-bad-thing/>

a866a90118b1f389&ei= 5087%0A Summary of Findings parents agree.

Moreover, teens are filled with insights and critiques of the current state of writing instruction as well as ideas about how to make in-school writing instruction better and more useful. Even though teens are heavily embedded in a tech-rich world, they do not believe that communication over the internet or text messaging is writing.

The main reason teens use the internet and cell phones is to exploit their communication features. 2 3 Yet despite the nearly ubiquitous use of these tools by teens, they see an important distinction between the “ writing” they do for school and outside of school for personal reasons, and the “ communication” they enjoy via instant messaging, phone text messaging, email and social networking sites. 85% of teens ages 12-17 engage at least occasionally in some form of electronic personal communication, which includes text messaging, sending email or instant messages, or posting comments on social networking sites. 60% of teens do not think of these electronic texts as “ writing. ” Teens generally do not believe that technology negatively influences the quality of their writing, but they do acknowledge that the informal styles of writing that mark the use of these text-based technologies for many teens do occasionally filter into their school work. Overall, nearly two-thirds of teens (64%) say they incorporate some informal styles from their text-based communications into their writing at school. 0% of teens say they sometimes use informal writing styles instead of proper capitalization and punctuation in their school assignments; 38% say they have used text shortcuts in school work such as “ LOL” (which stands for “ laugh out loud”); 25% have used emoticons (symbols like smiley faces O) in

school work. For more information on teens and electronic communication, please see Part 4: Electronic Communication starting on page 21. The impact of technology on writing is hardly a frivolous issue because most believe that good writing is important to teens' future success.

Both teens and their parents say that good writing is an essential skill for later success in life. 2 Analysis of daily communications choices is based on all teens, regardless of technology ownership. 3 Lenhart, Amanda, Madden, Mary & Hitlin, Paul. (2005) "Teens and Technology: Youth are Leading the Transition to a Fully Wired and Mobile Nation," Pew Internet & American Life Project, Washington, DC, July 27, 2005 Writing, Technology & Teens - ii - Pew Internet & American Life Project Summary of Findings 83% of parents of teens feel there is a greater need to write well today than there was 20 years ago. 6% of teens believe good writing is important to success in life – some 56% describe it as essential and another 30% describe it as important. Parents also believe that their children write more now than they did when they were teens. 48% of teenagers' parents believe that their child is writing more than the parent did during their teen years; 31% say their child is writing less; and 20% believe it is about the same now as in the past. Recognition of the importance of good writing is particularly high in black households and among families with lower levels of education. 4% of black parents say that good writing skills are more important now than in the past, compared with 82% of white parents and 79% of English-speaking Hispanic parents. 88% of parents with a high school degree or less say that writing is more important in today's world, compared with 80% of parents with at least some college experience. For more information on this topic, please visit Part

6: Parental Attitudes Toward Writing and Technology starting on page 36 and Part 7: The Way Teens See Their Writing and What Would Improve It on page 42.

Teens are motivated to write by relevant topics, high expectations, an interested audience and opportunities to write creatively. Teens write for a variety of reasons—as part of a school assignment, to get a good grade, to stay in touch with friends, to share their artistic creations with others or simply to put their thoughts to paper (whether virtual or otherwise). In our focus groups, teens said they are motivated to write when they can select topics that are relevant to their lives and interests, and report greater enjoyment of school writing when they have the opportunity to write creatively.

Having teachers or other adults who challenge them, present them with interesting curricula and give them detailed feedback also serves as a motivator for teens. Teens also report writing for an audience motivates them to write and write well. For more on why teens write and what motivates them, please see Part 8: What Teens Tell Us Encourages Them to Write, which starts on page 51. Writing for school is a nearly every-day activity for teens, but most assignments are short. Most teens write something nearly every day for school, but the average writing assignment is a paragraph to one page in length.

Writing, Technology & Teens - iii - Pew Internet & American Life Project
Summary of Findings 50% of teens say their school work requires writing every day; 35% say they write several times a week. The remaining 15% of

teens write less often for school. 82% of teens report that their typical school writing assignment is a paragraph to one page in length. White teens are significantly more likely than English-speaking Hispanic teens (but not blacks) to create presentations for school (72% of whites and 58% of Hispanics do this).

The internet is also a primary source for research done at or for school. 94% of teens use the internet at least occasionally to do research for school, and nearly half (48%) report doing so once a week or more often. For more information, please visit Part 3: Teens and Their Writing Habits on page 10 in the main report. Teens believe that the writing instruction they receive in school could be improved. Most teens feel that additional instruction and focus on writing in school would help improve their writing even further.

Our survey asked teens whether their writing skills would be improved by two potential changes to their school curricula: teachers having them spend more time writing in class, and teachers using more computer-based tools (such as games, writing help programs or websites, or multimedia) to teach writing. Overall, 82% of teens feel that additional in-class writing time would improve their writing abilities and 78% feel the same way about their teachers using computer-based writing tools. For more on this topic please see Part 7: The Way Teens See Their Writing and What Would Improve It starting on page 42.

Non-school writing, while less common than school writing, is still widespread among teens. Outside of a dedicated few, non-school writing is done less often than school writing, and varies a bit by gender and race/ethnicity. Boys are the least likely to write for personal enjoyment

outside of school. Girls and black teens are more likely to keep a journal than other teens. Black teens are also more likely to write music or lyrics on their own time. 47% of black teens write in a journal, compared with 31% of white teens. 7% of black teens write music or lyrics, while 23% of white teens do. 49% of girls keep a journal; 20% of boys do. 26% of boys say they never write for personal enjoyment outside of school. Writing, Technology & Teens - iv - Pew Internet & American Life Project Summary of Findings For more on non-school writing, please see Part 3: Teens and Their Writing Habits on page 10 and Part 8: What Teens Tell Us Encourages Them to Write starting on page 51. Multi-channel teens and gadget owners do not write any more – or less – than their counterparts, but bloggers are more prolific.

Teens who communicate frequently with friends, and teens who own more technology tools such as computers or cell phones do not write more for school or for themselves than less communicative and less gadget-rich teens. Teen bloggers, however, are prolific writers online and offline. 47% of teen bloggers write outside of school for personal reasons several times a week or more compared to 33% of teens without blogs. 65% of teen bloggers believe that writing is essential to later success in life; 53% of non-bloggers say the same.

For more on teens and electronic communication, please see Part 4: Electronic Communication on page 21 in the full report. Teens more often write by hand for both out-of-school writing and school work. Most teens mix and match longhand and computers based on tool availability, assignment requirements and personal preference. When teens write they report that they most often write by hand, though they also often write using computers <https://assignbuster.com/technology-a-bad-thing/>

as well. Out-of-school personal writing is more likely than school writing to be done by hand, but longhand is the more common mode for both purposes. 2% of teens say they usually (but not exclusively) write the material they are composing for their personal enjoyment outside of school by hand; 65% say they usually write their school assignments by hand. For more on the technologies teens use for writing, please see Part 3: Teens and Their Writing Habits starting on page 10. As tech-savvy as they are, teens do not believe that writing with computers makes a big difference in the quality of their writing. Teens appreciate the ability to revise and edit easily on a computer, but do not feel that use of computers makes their writing better or improves the quality of their ideas. 5% of teens say their internet-based writing of materials such as emails and instant messages has helped improve their overall writing while 11% say it has harmed their writing. Some 73% of teens say this kind of writing makes no difference to their school writing. Writing, Technology & Teens -v- Pew Internet & American Life Project Summary of Findings 17% of teens say their internet-based writing has helped the personal writing they do that is not for school, while 6% say it has made their personal writing worse. Some 77% believe this kind of writing makes no difference to their personal writing.

When it comes to using technology for school or non-school writing, teens believe that when they use computers to write they are more inclined to edit and revise their texts (57% say that). For more on teen attitudes towards technologies' influence on their writing, please see Part 7: The Way Teens See Their Writing and What Would Improve It, which begins on page 42.

Parents are generally more positive than their teen children about the effect of computers and text-based communication tools on their child's writing.

Parents are somewhat more likely to believe that computers have a positive influence on their teen's writing, while teens are more likely to believe computers have no discernible effect. 27% of parents think the internet writing their teen does makes their teen child a better writer, and 27% think it makes the teen a poorer writer. Some 40% say it makes no difference. On specific characteristics of the impact of tech-based writing, this is how parents' and teens' views match up: The Impact of Technology on Writing Do you think using computers makes students more likely to...?

Parents (responding in general)	Teens (responding about their children)	Positive Attributes	Negative Attributes
69%	54%	Write better because they can revise and edit easily	Take short cuts and not put effort into writing
54%	50%	Present ideas clearly	Use poor spelling and grammar
43%	45%	Be creative	Write too fast and be careless
45%	40%	Communicate well	Have a short attention span
40%	40%	Agree	Disagree
22%	22%	Agree	Disagree

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, September-November 2007.

Margin of error is $\pm 5\%$. Writing, Technology & Teens - vi - Pew Internet & American Life Project Summary of Findings For more details on parent and teens attitudes towards writing, please see Part 6: Parental Attitudes Toward Writing and Technology on page 36 and Part 7: The Way Teens See Their Writing and What Would Improve It on page 42. Teens enjoy non-school writing, and to a lesser extent, the writing they do for school. Enjoyment of

personal, non-school writing does not always translate into enjoyment of school-based writing.

Fully 93% of those ages 12-17 say they have done some writing outside of school in the past year and more than a third of them write consistently and regularly. Half (49%) of all teens say they enjoy the writing they do outside of school “ a great deal,” compared with just 17% who enjoy the writing they do for school with a similar intensity. Teens who enjoy their school writing more are more likely to engage in creative writing at school compared to teens who report very little enjoyment of school writing (81% vs. 69%).

In our focus groups, teens report being motivated to write by relevant, interesting, self-selected topics, and attention and feedback from engaged adults who challenged them. For more details on teen enjoyment of writing and writing motivations, please see Part 8: What Teens Tell Us Encourages Them To Write starting on page 51. Writing, Technology and Teens: Summary of Findings at a Glance Even though teens are heavily embedded in a tech-rich world, they do not believe that communication over the internet or text messaging is writing.

The impact of technology on writing is hardly a frivolous issue because most believe that good writing is important to teens’ future success. Teens are motivated to write by relevant topics, high expectations, an interested audience and opportunities to write creatively. Writing for school is a nearly every-day activity for teens, but most assignments are short. Teens believe that the writing instruction they receive in school could be improved. Non-

school writing, while less common than school writing, is still widespread among teens.

Multi-channel teens and gadget owners do not write any more -- or less -- than their counterparts, but bloggers are more prolific. Teens more often write by hand for both out-of-school writing and school work. As tech-savvy as they are, teens do not believe that writing with computers makes a big difference in the quality of their writing. Parents are generally more positive than their teen children about the effect of computers and textbased communication tools on their child's writing. Teens enjoy non-school writing, and to a lesser extent, the writing they do for school.

Source: Lenhart, Amanda; Arafeh, Sousan; Smith, Aaron and Rankin Macgill, Alexandra. Writing, Technology and Teens, Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, April 24, 2008. Writing, Technology & Teens - vii - Pew Internet & American Life Project Summary of Findings This Pew Internet & American Life Project study was done in partnership with the National Commission on Writing, an initiative of The College Board. This report is based on the findings of a national representative random digit dial telephone survey of teens 12-17 and a parent or guardian, and a series of focus groups with teens.

All numerical data was gathered through telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates between September 19 and November 16, 2007, from a sample of 700 parent child pairs. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is +/- 4. 7%. Eight focus groups were

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conducted by Research Images with teens 12-17 in four US cities in the summer of 2007. For more details on the methods used to gather the data in this report, please see the Methodology section beginning on page 65 of the full report.

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Washington, DC 20036 202-419-4514 <http://www.pewinternet.org> Writing,
Technology & Teens - viii - Pew Internet & American Life Project Contents
Summary of Findings Acknowledgements Part 1. Introduction Part 2. The
Lives of Teens and Their Technology Part 3. Teens and Their Writing Habits
Part 4. Electronic Communication Part 5. The Relationship between Writing,
Communication and Technology Ownership Part 6. Parental Attitudes Toward
Writing and Technology Part 7. The Way Teens See Their Writing and What
Would Improve It Part 8.

What Teens Tell Us Encourages Them to Write Methodology Writing,
Technology & Teens - ix - Pew Internet & American Life Project
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Jessica Vitak, Pew Internet Research Intern.

About this partnership: In the Spring of 2007, the Pew Internet & American
Life Project and the National Commission on Writing joined together to
undertake a multi-modal study of the relationship between writing and

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technology for America's youth. Funds for this research were provided by The College Board and the Pew Internet Project provided support for staff time devoted to it. The National Commission on Writing and The College Board may make policy recommendations to legislators and educators based on these results. The Pew Internet Project is non-partisan and should not be considered an advocate for those recommendations.

The Project does not advocate for any policy outcome or policy change.

About the Pew Internet & American Life Project: The Pew Internet Project is a nonprofit, non-partisan think tank that explores the impact of the Internet on children, families, communities, the work place, schools, healthcare and civic/political life. The Project aims to be an authoritative source for timely information on the Internet's growth and societal impact. Support for the project is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The project's Web site:

<http://www.pewinternet.org> About the National Commission on Writing or

America's Families, Schools and Colleges: In an effort to focus national attention on the teaching and learning of writing, the College Board established the National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges in September 2002. The decision to create the Commission was animated in part by the Board's plans to offer a writing assessment in 2005 as part of the new SAT®, but the larger motivation lay in the growing concern within the education, business, and policy-making communities that the level of writing in the United States is not what it should be. <http://www.writingcommission.org/> About Princeton Survey Research Associates: PSRA conducted the survey that is covered in this report. It is an independent research company specializing in social and

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policy work. The firm designs, conducts, and analyzes surveys worldwide. Its expertise also includes qualitative research and content analysis. With offices in Princeton, New Jersey, and Washington, D. C. , PSRA serves the needs of clients around the nation and the world.

The firm can be reached at 911 Commons Way, Princeton, NJ 08540, by telephone at 609-924-9204, or by email at com Writing, Technology & Teens -x- Pew Internet & American Life Project About Research Images: Research Images conducted the focus groups that helped guide the development of the PRSA survey and were the source of the quotes noted in the report. Research Images provides independent research, evaluation, and strategic planning services to public and private organizations nationally and internationally.

It specializes in using qualitative methods to inform policy and has strong subject area expertise in social uses of technology in education and non-education settings. Contact Research Images at 202-321-0676 or com. Writing, Technology & Teens - xi - Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 1. Introduction Research in K-12 schools, colleges and universities has prompted concern among advocates, educators and policy makers that many young Americans do not possess strong writing skills.

Individuals with poor writing skills frequently face limited career options and lower earnings potential, and society as a whole pays a significant cost when growing numbers of students need additional writing remediation to succeed in the workforce. Some of the concern about the writing skills of Americans

focuses on university students and adults in the workplace. Up to two-thirds of salaried jobs at large American companies require writing of some kind, and a recent survey of American corporations and government entities found that good writing skills are vital to gaining a job and advancing in one's place of employment. Yet despite the widely acknowledged importance of writing in the job market, a recent National Writing Commission survey of deans, administrators and writing counselors at four-year public colleges and universities uncovered widespread concern that students at these institutions are failing to produce good writing defined by "clarity, accuracy and logical thinking," among other characteristics. ⁵ However, in the case of school-aged children, the most recent (2007) National Assessment of Educational Progress writing assessment found some modest progress.

The 2007 Nation's Report Card on writing showed that while there has not been any change in the number of students writing at the higher "proficient" level between 2002 and 2007, ⁶ a smaller number of youth were writing below basic levels of competence— 13% of 8th graders, and 18% of 12th graders scored below a basic level of writing proficiency, down from the 15% of eighth graders and 26% of twelfth graders in 2002 writing below the basic level. ⁷ Technology is also a major part of this picture.

As previous Pew Internet Project research suggests, technology is an integral part of the lives of teens today. Nearly all (94%) American adolescents use the internet, and those who go online tend to do so multiple ⁴ National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools and Colleges. (2004). Writing: A ticket to work or a ticket out. New York, NY. ⁵ National

Commission on Writing. (2006). Writing: The View From Campus, National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools and Colleges.

Note: the definition given to respondents contained eight elements of good writing: accuracy, clarity, conciseness, scientific precision, visual appeal, logic, documentation and support, and spelling, grammar and composition. 6 In the 2002 “ Nation’s Report Card” on writing, 31% of 8th graders wrote with “ proficiency,” as did 33% in 2007. Among 12th graders, 24% were proficient writers in 2002, as were 24% in 2007. 7 [http://nationsreportcard.gov/writing_2007/w0001. asp](http://nationsreportcard.gov/writing_2007/w0001.asp) Writing, Technology & Teens -1- Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 1. Introduction times throughout the day.

Moreover, technology is increasingly found in the classroom, and teachers and schools often expect students to have access and prior exposure to technology in addition to the training they receive in school. Personal computers and writing are inextricably linked, and many teens spend hours a day locked in textual communication with friend on cell phones, laptops, desktops and other mobile devices. To understand the state of writing today among youth, we must also understand the technological sphere than teens inhabit and where writing and technology intersect.

To fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of writing instruction today, we must understand the role that technology plays in this realm. Beyond an assessment of the influence of technology, what is largely missing from this research assessing the state of writing in the United States is the voice of students themselves. 8 To fill this gap, the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the National Writing Commission joined to explore

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young people's experiences with writing and technology. This research was motivated by a desire to answer several questions, including: How do teens define writing? How does writing fit into their lives? What role do electronic technologies such as computers and cell phones, or communication platforms such as email or online social networks, play in the writing process? Do teens consider their electronic communications to be writing, or think that they have an impact on the quality of their writing overall? What do teens find enjoyable about the writing they do for school and personal reasons outside of school? What are teens' experiences with writing instruction?

What suggestions do teens have for ways that schools could improve writing instruction and the experience of learning to write? To answer these questions, we constructed a multi-part research project using qualitative and quantitative methods. First, we conducted a total of 8 focus groups in 4 cities (Southwest, Northeast, Midwest, West Coast) with boys and girls ages 12-17. Two of these groups were mixed sex and age, while the other six groups were single sex (either all boys or all girls) for each of the 7/8th grade, 9/10th grade, and 11/12th grade age ranges.

We used the focus group findings to inform the construction of the second part of our study, a national telephone survey administered by random digit dial to a representative cross-section of 700 parent/child pairs during September, October and November of 2007. 8 An exception is “Technology and Teens: The Impact of High Technology on Learning to Writing” – which reports on focus groups among parents, teachers and students conducted for the National Writing Project in June 2006. <http://www.nwp.org/Writing>, <https://assignbuster.com/technology-a-bad-thing/>

Technology & Teens -2- Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 1.

Introduction

Conducting the focus groups revealed two particular challenges of this project. First, it is often hard to tease out what teens think about writing without imposing established definitions of writing upon the discussion. Second, it is also very difficult to talk with young adults about writing with technology because technology is often “invisible” to them in their daily lives. Despite these challenges, we were able to learn that teens’ experiences with writing are complicated, in part because the technologies available to them for writing have extended the range of writing genres in which they can participate on a daily basis.

We also learned that teens tend to uphold traditional definitions of writing such that the socially oriented writing they do using electronic devices is considered “communication” (and not “writing”) even though it is text-based. In the report that follows, we share the findings of our national survey with quotes from the focus groups interspersed to provide context and insight into the way teens experience writing and technology in their lives. The information is instructive. Writing today is not what it was yesterday.

New technologies and new job tasks have changed the meaning of what it means to write and write well. Our educational institutions know they must review what constitutes effective instructional practice to ensure that writing curricula and instructional methods support writing excellence, incorporate technology, and engage and motivate students at all ages. Writing,

Technology & Teens -3- Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 2. The Lives of Teens and Their Technology Technology suffuses the lives of teens.

Almost all American adolescents use the internet, and those who go online tend to do so multiple times throughout the day. Moreover, technology is increasingly found in the classroom, and teachers and schools often expect students to have access and prior exposure to technology in addition to the training they receive in school. In order to understand what it means to be a teenager today, one must understand the technological context of teens' lives, and this chapter charts some baseline dimensions of teens' technology ownership and use.

Nearly all teens use the internet. The internet is fully entrenched in the lives of young people—94% of teens now go online to use the internet or email.

While teen internet usage now approaches or exceeds 90% or more for nearly all demographic and socioeconomic categories, access is higher in some groups (such as whites and teens from higher-income families) than in others (such as Hispanics and those from lower-income households). Teen

Internet Usage who use the internet or email All teens Gender Girls Boys Age 12-14 15-17 Race/Ethnicity White Black Hispanic Annual Household Income Less than \$30,000 \$30,000-\$49,999 \$50,000-\$74,999 \$75,000+ 94% 95 93 92 96 96[^] 92 87[^] 86[†] 93 96[‡] 97[‡] Source: Pew Internet Project Teen/Parent

Survey on Writing, Sept. -Nov 2007. Margin of error is $\pm 5\%$. [^] indicates numbers are significant to each other in each section. The % with [†] is significant to all the other numbers with a [‡] in the column, but the other numbers with a [‡] in the column are not significant to each other. Writing,

Technology & Teens 4- Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 2. The Lives <https://assignbuster.com/technology-a-bad-thing/>

of Teens and Their Technology Teens go online from a wide range of locations. Schools and libraries play important roles in teen internet access. The location from which a teen uses the internet often determines the quality of his or her online experience. Factors that vary by location such as connection speed, hours of operation, and the presence of internet filters and other safety features often impact how long teens can spend online, which sites they can visit, and how easily they can access the technology.

Among teenage internet users, 89% go online from home, 77% do so from school, 71% do so from a friend or relative's house and 60% do so from a library. Where Teens Use the Internet % of teens who use the internet from...

Location	All Teens	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Annual Household Income	School	Library
Home	89%	Girls 91 Boys 86	12-14 89 15-17 89	White 91^ Black 80^ Hispanic 85	Less than \$30,000 70† \$30,000-\$49,999 86‡ \$50,000-\$74,999 87‡ \$75,000+ 99‡	77%	60%
School	77%	76	78	71^ 82^ 78	83	69	75‡ 88† 72‡ 74‡
Library	60%	59	60	58	61	59	69^ 53^ 72† 63 55‡ 57‡

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, September-November 2007. Margin of error is $\pm 5\%$. ^ mean that the numbers are significant to each other in each column. The percentage with † next to it is significant to all the other numbers with a ‡ in the column, but the other numbers with a ‡ in the column are not significant to each other. Schools and libraries play a particularly important role in providing internet access to minorities and teens in lower-income households.

For example, 99% of online teens in households earning \$75,000 or more per year use the internet from home, while 74% go online from school and

57% go online from a library. By contrast, just 70% of online teens in households earning less than \$30, 000 per year go online from home, but 75% have access at school and 72% go online from the library. Writing, Technology & Teens -5- Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 2. The Lives of Teens and Their Technology For many minority and lower-income teens, schools and libraries serve as a primary source of internet access.

While 93% of teenage internet users go online from more than one location, schools and libraries serve as a primary source of internet access for many minority and lower-income teens. Among online teens living in households earning less than \$30, 000 per year, 56% go online most often from home, one quarter (26%) do so from school and 17% go online most often from somewhere else (such as a library or friend's house). By contrast, 87% of teens in households earning more than \$75, 000 per year go online most often from home, and just 11% go online primarily from school.

Just 1% of high-income teens rely primarily on somewhere other than school or home for internet access. Similarly, one quarter of online black teens use the internet most often from school, while 63% get most of their internet access at home. In contrast, eight in ten white teens (81%) go online primarily from home and just 15% do so primarily from school. Age also plays a role in where teens go online, as older teens are more likely to go online from school or from a friend or relative's house.

Our focus group participants indicated that where and how they use computers for their school work often depends on the requirements of their writing assignments as well as their access to technology: Yes, at my school

the library is open from like 6: 45 till the bell rings in the morning and then after school you can go in there for about an hour. – 9/11th Grade Boy, Southwestern City. I use my computer at home -- I usually don't use the computer at school.... Because sometimes our writing doesn't have to be typed so I usually just do it written.

And usually we don't have the time to type on the computer at school so I usually just do it at home. – 7/8th Grade Boy, Midwestern City. A majority of teens have access to a broadband internet connection at home. Previous research by the Pew Internet & American Life Project suggests that broadband internet access is qualitatively different from dial-up internet access, and fundamentally changes the way that the internet is used. 9 High-speed, always-on internet access allows the internet to serve as a go-to resource for information, where large files and multimedia websites and content can be seamlessly enjoyed, shared and received.

Conversely, dialup access can limit the utility of even relatively simple online applications, as noted by one of our focus group participants: I don't use email too much either, just because my computer is slow. I have dial up. – 11/12th Grade Boy, Northeastern City. 9 Horrigan, John. (2002) “ The Broadband Difference: How online Americans' behavior changes with highspeed Internet connections at home,” Pew Internet & American Life Project, Washington, DC. Writing, Technology & Teens -6- Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 2. The Lives of Teens and Their Technology

Two-thirds of teens (66%) live in households with high-speed internet access, although as with internet access in general home broadband access is

highest among whites and teens from higher-income families: Home Broadband Access % with broadband at home All teens Parent Education High school grad or less Some college College grad Race/Ethnicity White Black Hispanic Annual Household Income Less than \$30,000 \$30,000-\$49,999 \$50,000-\$74,999 \$75,000+ 56 67 82 70 56 60 48 54 69 81 66% Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, September-November 2007.

Margin of error is $\pm 5\%$. Bold indicates statistically significant difference between percentages in the column. Many teens go online daily. As highly interactive online activities such as blogging and social networking have grown in popularity, accessing the internet has become more and more a daily activity for teens—nearly two thirds of teenage internet users (63%) now go online daily, and more than a third (35%) of online teens use the internet multiple times per day. Whites and teens from higher-income households go online more frequently than minority and lower-income teens.

This may occur in part because these teens are less reliant on locations outside the home for internet access and because they are more likely to have broadband access at home. Two-thirds (67%) of white teens who go online do so daily (versus 53% for black teens), while three-quarters (75%) of online teens from high-income families go online daily (versus 39% of online teens living in households earning under \$30,000 per year). Older teens also go online more frequently: 71% of online 15-17 year olds use the internet daily, compared with 54% of online teens ages 12-14.

Writing, Technology & Teens -7- Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 2. The Lives of Teens and Their Technology Home broadband access and usage of social networking sites are also closely linked to frequency of internet usage. Nearly three-quarters of teens with broadband at home (71%) and social networking teens (72%) go online once a day or more. Teen 1: I check [MySpace] like every day. Teen 2: I check it like three times a day. Teen 3: I check my Hotmail all the time. - Exchange in 7/8th Grade Girls Group, Northeastern City.

Seven in ten teens now have a cell phone, and six in ten have a desktop or laptop computer. Six in ten teens (59%) now have a desktop or laptop computer, but computers are not the only communicative technology at teens' disposal. Cell phone use has grown rapidly among teens in recent years: 71% of teens currently have a cell phone, up from 45% in 2004 and 63% in 2006. Overall, more than four in ten teens (45%) personally have both a computer and a cell phone with cell phone (81%) and computer (65%) ownership being particularly high among older teens. Teen Technology Ownership of teens who own... Cell phone All Teens Gender Girls Boys Age 12-14 15-17 Race/Ethnicity White Black Hispanic Annual Household Income Less than \$50,000 \$50,000+ 71% 75% 66% 61% 81% 72% 65% 71% 65% 75% Desktop or laptop computer 59% 64% 55% 54% 65% 63% 49% 53% 62% 60% Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, Sept. -Nov. 2007. Margin of error is $\pm 5\%$. ^ indicates statistically significant differences between the % in the column. Teens put their cell phones and computers to a wide range of uses, from keeping track of friends and family to playing games or researching for school. While cell phone use is

Writing, Technology & Teens -8- Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 2. The Lives of Teens and Their Technology lowest among younger teens, many of our younger focus group participants had a cell phone that they used for safety purposes or for family communication only. I also have to use my phone so one of [my parents] knows where I am at. - 11/12th Grade Boy, Northeastern City. I don't have a cell phone. I have one but it's not like a texting phone. It's just like an emergency phone like to call 911 and stuff. I don't really use my cell phone much. I use the internet, the phone like our home phone.

I use ... notes, like paper notes. I use the internet a lot. - 9/10th Grade Girl, Midwestern City. Writing, Technology & Teens -9- Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 3. Teens and Their Writing Habits A deeper understanding of teens' writing habits—both inside and outside of the school environment—is crucial for developing successful programs to improve writing skills and achievement. Today's teens engage in significant amounts of writing, particularly in scholastic settings. All teens say they write for school (half doing so just about every day), and most do at least some writing outside of school.

A majority of teens get some enjoyment from the writing that they do for school, although they get more enjoyment from the writing that they do for themselves outside of school. Yet in spite of recommendations from educators and researchers that students should write at length, do projects requiring research and analysis, and write across the curriculum in a variety of content areas, many teens report that they write mostly short pieces that

are not researchbased, and receive longer assignments primarily in English and language arts classes.

While teens' lives are awash in electronic communications technologies, they frequently turn to old-fashioned technologies like pen and paper when they write, particularly when doing so outside of school. And even with the promise that many believe technology holds for revolutionizing instruction and youth engagement with learning, teens still recognize the value of teachers and classroom instruction. Many teens feel that while technology can help them compose, edit and present their ideas, it cannot improve the quality of the ideas themselves.

Virtually all teens write, although scholastic writing is more common than writing done outside of school. In order to evaluate the prevalence and types of writing in which teens engage, we asked our survey participants whether they had done any of ten school writing activities (and eight non-school writing activities) over the past year. Their answers indicate that writing, whether done for school or for personal enjoyment outside of school, is deeply integrated into their lives. All but two of the teens in our sample engaged in some form of school writing in the past year.

Nearly as many (93%) say they write for personal reasons or just for fun outside of school. Of the ten types of writing we evaluated (see table below), the average teen has engaged in seven over the course of the past year for any reason. Teens tend to engage in a greater range of writing activities for school than for personal reasons—our respondents engaged in six types of school writing (out of a possible ten) on average in the past year, versus an

average of two types of non-school writing (out of a possible eight). Writing, Technology & Teens - 10 - Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 3.

Teens and Their Writing Habits Teen Writing In the Past Year % of teens who have done the following in the past year (note: school and non-school totals may add to more than 100% due to multiple responses) For personal Have done for For school enjoyment any reason Do short writing, from a paragraph to one page Take notes in class Write essays Do creative writing, such as plays, poetry, fiction or short stories Write notes or letters to other people Create audio, video, PowerPoint or multimedia presentations Write up sciencelab Write in a journal Write music or lyrics Write computer programs 92% 98 93 74 38 69 71 44 9 10 31% n/a 8 25 64 16 n/a 34 25 6 97% 98 95 81 78 73 71 65 30 14 Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project

Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, September-November 2007. Margin of error is $\pm 5\%$. The writing activities we evaluated fall roughly into three groups based on their popularity. The first group includes the most popular or common writing activities, and includes short writing, taking notes in class and writing essays.

This writing is typically performed in school or as part of a school assignment, although nearly one-third of teens (31%) write short pieces of one page or less in length for their own personal enjoyment outside of school. The second group of writing activities includes those that are slightly less common. Creative writing, notes or letters to other people, presentations, science lab write-ups and writing in a journal are all part of this “common but not universal” category. Writing music or lyrics and writing computer programs are the least common writing activities among <https://assignbuster.com/technology-a-bad-thing/>

teens. Nearly one in three teens wrote music or lyrics in the past year (most of them for personal enjoyment) and 14% wrote a computer program.

These activities' relative lack of popularity may be due to the fact that each requires specialized knowledge of a "language" other than written English and therefore has a higher barrier to entry than the other activities in our study. Writing, Technology & Teens - 11 - Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 3. Teens and Their Writing Habits Teens engage in a range of writing activities at school. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, writing for school is a near-universal activity among teens. The most common types of school writing (and indeed the most common types of writing teens do for any reason) are taking notes in class, writing essays and writing short pieces of a page or less in length. More than nine in ten teens have done each of these activities for school in the past year.

Writing computer programs and writing music or lyrics are the least common types of school writing—just one in ten teens did either of these activities for school in the past year. Most Common School Writing % of teens who have done each activity as part of their school work in the past year All teens (n= 700)

Take notes in class	98%
Write essays	93
Do short writing, from a paragraph to one page	92
Do creative writing, such as plays, poetry, fiction or short stories	74
Write up a science lab	71
Create audio, video, PowerPoint or multimedia presentations	69
Write in a journal	44
Write notes or letters to other people	38
Write computer programs	10
Write music or lyrics	9

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, September-November 2007. Margin of error is $\pm 5\%$. Socio-economic status,

age and race/ethnicity are only slightly correlated with the types of writing teens do for school. Ensuring gender, racial and socio-economic equity in writing instruction and achievement is a primary concern of educators and policy makers. While most teens do similar types of writing in school, we found some differences in school-based writing centering on race, gender, age and socio-economic factors. As teens progress in their academic careers, they tend to write more essays and create more presentations for school (whether audio, video, PowerPoint or multimedia).

Although essay writing is extremely common among teens of all ages, older teens ages 15 to 17 are somewhat more likely to do this type of writing than younger teens ages 12 to 14 (96% of older teens do this, compared with 90% of younger teens). Older teens are also much more likely to create presentations for school (76% of older teens have created presentations for their course work, versus 61% of younger teens). Beyond these two activities, younger and older teens do similar types of school writing. With some exceptions, racial/ethnic differences in teen writing for school are minimal.

Black teens are significantly more likely than white teens to maintain or write in a journal as part of their class work and to write music or lyrics for school. Nearly six in ten black teens (57%) write in a journal for school, and 17% write music or lyrics. In contrast, just four in ten whites (41%) write in a journal and fewer than one in ten (6%) write music or lyrics for school. White teens are significantly more likely than English-speaking Hispanic teens (but not blacks) to create presentations for school (72% of whites and 58% of Hispanics

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do this). Teens from higher- and lower-income families largely do the same types of writing at school, though some small differences do exist.

Teens from families earning \$50, 000 or more per year are more likely than lower-income teens to write up science labs (75% of higher-income teens do this, compared with 67% of lower-income teens) and to create audio, video or PowerPoint presentations (72% vs. 61% for lower-income teens). Finally, some gender differences exist with respect to the types of writing teens do at school, although these differences are generally quite minimal. Specifically, girls are slightly more likely than boys to write essays at school (96% of girls do this, compared with 91% of boys), while boys are slightly more likely to write computer programs (13% of boys and 7% of girls have done so in the past year).

Most teens write nearly every day for school, and the average writing assignment is a paragraph to one page in length. Half of all teens (50%) say that their school work involves writing something just about every day, and more than one third (35%) do school writing several times a week. The remaining 15% write for school several times a month (7%) or less frequently (8%). The frequency with which teens write for school exhibits little variation across demographic or socio-economic boundaries. Interestingly, 61% of black teens say their school work requires them to write something just about every day, significantly higher than the rate for whites (47%).

However, the percentage of teens who write for school several times a week or more is practically identical for whites (83%), blacks (87%) and Hispanics (87%). One high school-aged girl in a Southwestern city who reported writing

a great deal had this to say about the frequency with which she is assigned writing projects in school: Writing, Technology & Teens - 13 - Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 3. Teens and Their Writing Habits We do a lot of essays at my school particularly in English and history classes and we are writing an essay for a major grade probably once a week in one of the classes. So there is a lot of practice. While students write with great frequency at school, most scholastic writing consists of short pieces.

Eight in ten teens (82%) say that the writing assignments they do for school typically range from a paragraph to around one page in length. Just over one in ten (12%) say that most of their writing involves longer pieces of 2-5 pages. A very small minority (3%) of teens say that most of their school writing involves major writing assignments of 5 pages or more in length. This trend is even more sharply delineated outside of English courses. In classes other than English, 78% of students say they usually write shorter pieces of a page or less, and 7% say they do no writing at all in these courses. This general reliance on short writing assignments is consistent across all major demographic and socio-economic groups.

Notably, older teens are no more likely to write longer pieces at school than younger teens. As one high school girl said of her writing for school, " Well, we don't really do a lot of long research stuff. We have done one research paper this whole year. " The internet is a primary source of research for school writing assignments. The internet is not just a near-ubiquitous technology in the lives of American teens; it is also their primary method for conducting research for school. Fully 94% of teens use the internet at least occasionally to do research for their school writing assignments. Nearly half <https://assignbuster.com/technology-a-bad-thing/>

(48%) do so once a week or more, while one quarter (26%) do so several times a month.

For one in five teens, using the internet to research for their writing assignments is an occasional activity that occurs fewer than several times a month. Teens in our focus groups discussed the ease with which they answered their questions using internet resources. Well I'm on like Google or Google images like at least everyday. I use it for everything.... [S]chool or like if somebody is talking about something and you have no idea what's going on so you'll go home and you'll Google it. And you'll be like oh, that's what they're talking about. -9/11th Grade Girl, Southwestern City. You will find something and be like oh yea I want to learn more about that. Rather than drive down the library and find a book, you can research right away on different programs.

It is easier to share information with people. I think it makes it better. - 11/12th Grade Girl, Pacific Northwest City. Using the internet to research school writing assignments is most common among older teens and those from higher-income households. Writing, Technology & Teens - 14 - Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 3. Teens and Their Writing Habits Using the Internet for School Research % who use the internet at least occasionally to research for school assignments... All teens Gender Girls Boys Age 12-14 15-17 Race/Ethnicity White Black Hispanic Annual Household Income Less than \$30,000 \$30,000-\$49,999 \$50,000-\$74,999 \$75,000+ 95 94 87 85† 96‡ 94‡ 96‡ 91^ 96^ 96 92 94%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, September-November 2007. Margin of error is $\pm 5\%$. ^ mean that the numbers are significant to each other in each section. The percentage with † next to it is significant to all the other numbers with a † in the column, but the other numbers with a † in the column are not significant to each other. Teens use longhand most often for school writing, although computers are common as well. One of the major questions animating this study was whether and how teens use technology in their writing. While most teens have at least limited access to technology, teens generally report that they still primarily do both school and non-school writing longhand.

Despite widespread technology ownership and usage among teens, almost two-thirds of teens (65%) say they usually do their school writing by hand, compared with 16% who usually use a computer. The remaining teens say that their choice of writing instrument Writing, Technology & Teens - 15 - Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 3. Teens and Their Writing Habits depends on the assignment (4% of teens say this), or that they rely equally on longhand and computer writing (14%). However, the vast majority of teens do at least some of their writing with the aid of a computer. Among teens who primarily write by hand, 86% write using a computer at least occasionally. Taken together, this means that just 9% of all teens write only by hand and never use a computer.

As befits their higher rate of computer ownership, white teens are more likely to rely on computers for their school writing than their black and Hispanic counterparts. One in five white teens (19%) typically do their school writing on a computer, compared with one in ten blacks (11%) and English-speaking <https://assignbuster.com/technology-a-bad-thing/>

Hipics (9%). Older teens also tend to rely more heavily on computers when writing for school. One in five (21%) 15-17 year olds usually use computers for their school writing, compared with 12% of younger teens. Students whose parents have high levels of education (college degrees and above) are more likely to say they usually use computers for school writing more than parents with lower levels of education.

Almost a quarter (24%) of teens whose parents have a college degree say they usually use a computer for school writing, compared with 10% teens with parents who have some college education, 15% of teens whose parents are high school graduates, and 10% of teens whose parents have less than a high school education. Teens in our focus groups pointed to a diverse array of reasons for using one writing method over another, and reflected extensively on the place of handwriting and computer use in their composition and writing processes. Many teens told us that they appreciated the speed and neatness with which they could compose and edit on the computer, while others felt it was easier to organize their thoughts and unleash their creativity when composing by hand. These statements highlight the thoughtfulness with which many teens engage in the writing process, although some participants pointed out that the decision of whether to write by hand or by computer is decided by their teacher and not the students themselves. I like handwriting. I don't know, I feel more organized writing by hand especially with outlines and drafts and stuff. - 9/11th Grade Girl, Southwestern City. I find it hard to think creatively when I am typing so I like to handwrite everything then I put it on the computer. I don't know that is just how I am. - 9/10th Grade Boy, Pacific Northwest City.

We're required to type almost all of our papers. - 9/10th Grade Girl, Midwestern City. I type so much faster than I write. But, if I want to make a paper much better I have to type it out first, then hand write in the changes, then type the good copy. And it makes it easier to think things through if I can handwrite it. And I think my worst work is when I just type it and don't handwrite it. - 11/12th Grade Girl, Pacific Northwest City. Writing, Technology & Teens - 16 - Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 3. Teens and Their Writing Habits I usually type because I do have messy handwriting. So I like typing and I find it easier to collect my thoughts.

I don't have to worry about the spelling and I can worry about the creativity of the story rather [than] if I spelled it right. - 7/8th Grade Boy, Midwestern City. Compared with the writing they do for school, teens engage in a narrower range of writing activities in their personal time. In addition to asking about writing for school, our survey also asked teens about the writing they do for personal reasons or just for fun. 10 While this type of writing is not as widespread as the writing teens do for school, teens do engage in a wide range of writing outside of a school setting. More than nine in ten teens (93%) say they have written something for themselves or just for fun in the past year. Most Common Non-School Writing of teens who have done each activity just for themselves or just for fun in the past year All teens (n= 700) Write notes or letters to other people Write in a journal Do short writing, from a paragraph to one page Do creative writing, such as plays, poetry, fiction or short stories Write music or lyrics Create audio, video, PowerPoint or multimedia presentations Write essays Write computer programs 64% 34 31 25 25 16 8 6 Source: Pew Internet & American Life

Project Teen/Parent Survey on Writing, September-November 2007. Margin of error is $\pm 5\%$. Note: respondents were not asked about writing up a science lab or taking notes in class outside of school. Notes and letters to other people are by far the most common type of non-school writing.

Nearly two thirds of teens (64%) have written a note or letter to someone in the past year, making this activity roughly twice as popular as writing in a journal or doing non-school short writing. One-quarter have done some sort of creative writing or written music or lyrics, and a slightly smaller number (16%) have created a presentation for personal reasons. Fewer than one in ten write essays or computer programs during their personal time, making these among the least popular non-school writing activities. 10 The personal/non-school writing category includes eight total writing types, since survey respondents were not asked whether they take notes in class or write up science labs outside of school. Writing, Technology & Teens - 17 - Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 3. Teens and Their Writing Habits

Gender and race/ethnicity are somewhat correlated with teens' nonschool writing. As with the writing they do for school, most teens have similar writing habits outside of school regardless of their demographic or socio-economic characteristics. However, some teens are more likely to engage in specific writing activities outside of school than others. For instance, black teens are more likely than whites to write in a journal and to write music or lyrics in their personal time. Nearly half of black teens (47%) have written in a personal journal in the past year, and nearly four in ten (37%) have written music or lyrics. This compares with 31% and 23%, respectively, for white teens.

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Boys and girls have similar habits with respect to the writing they do for personal enjoyment with two major exceptions: girls are significantly more likely than boys to write letters or notes to other people (77% of girls have done so in the past year, compared with 52% for boys) and to write in a journal (49% of girls keep a journal, compared with 20% of boys). Older girls are particularly avid letter writers and journalkeepers. Fully 81% of older girls write notes or letters and nearly six in ten (57%) keep a journal. One early high school girl noted the importance of journal writing in her life: It's just like a pastime. People...write stuff in their journals. [It's a form of] expression. Like if you have too much stuff on your mind you can just write it out on paper.

Among all demographic groups, boys are the least likely to write outside of school. One quarter of teenage boys (26%) say they have done no writing for their own personal use or enjoyment in the past year, a rate that is consistent for both younger and older boys. Yes. I like to express myself through my writing. But I don't do it too often. If something happens in my life, I write it down – if something big happens. – 11/12th Grade Boy, Northeastern City. I just write when I have to for like school. I do texting but I don't do like full papers. – 9/10thth Grade Boy, Pacific Northwest City.

Compared with school writing, teens write less frequently outside of school.

Outside of a relatively small group of intense writers, non-school writing is something teens do infrequently. Among teens who ever write for personal reasons or just for fun, 13% do so just about every day, and an additional one quarter (23%) do so several times a week. Taken together, this means that 36% of teens write consistently and regularly outside of school—less

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than half of the 85% of teens who write several times a week or more for school. An additional 24% of teens write for personal enjoyment several times a month, and roughly two in five (39%) do so even less often. Writing, Technology & Teens - 18 - Pew Internet & American Life Project Part 3.

Teens and Their Writing Habits Minority teens and girls are among the most