

# English 102

Technology, Mobile Phone



English 102 29 March 2012 " Texting While Driving: To Ban or Not to Ban? "

Adults and teenagers are making a choice everyday to take their eyes off the road, their minds off of driving, and their hands off the wheel when they text and drive. The dangers of texting while driving are known nationwide, but the numerous deaths and accidents don't seem to be stopping anyone from texting while behind the wheel. Several major corporations have launched campaigns to educate the public about the dangers of texting and driving. Many states have enacted laws against texting while driving. Will making laws and educating the public stop this dangerous and deadly distraction?

Technology has steadily grown and made advancements since the Industrial Revolution. One new technology that has become very popular in our society is text messaging. In the United States, over 700 million text messages are sent every year, and the numbers are growing rapidly with more competent cellular telephones. (" Learn About the Dangers of Text Messaging. Texting Dangers and Statistics. ") The first text message " Merry Christmas", was sent in 1992 by Neil Papsworth. (Shannon, Victoria) This was the beginning of the texting phenomenon that would alter communication forever. Text messaging allows people to communicate quickly, easily, and it can be a replacement for phone calls when calls cannot be made or are unwanted. However, there is a negative and dangerous side to all the convenience of texting while driving. I will admit that I have fallen into the temptation of texting while driving, and I am not proud of making such a dangerous choice. Teens, in general, are very proficient when it comes to texting and they tend to believe that it has no impact on their driving skills. Many people tend to focus the texting while driving issue on teens; however, teens aren't the only

ones texting behind the wheel. One can easily do their own study by just observing other drivers while on the road. This observation will clearly reveal that numerous people are texting while driving, and not everyone will be a teenager. “ Adults may be the ones sounding the alarm on the dangers of distracted driving, but they don’t always set the best examples themselves”, according to Mary Madden, a senior research specialist at Pew. (Basquez, Eva) The most likely group of adults to text and drive is between the ages of 18-34 and 59% of them have admitted to texting behind the wheel.

(Basquez, Eva) We live in a multi-tasking modern day world and today time in the car is used to accomplish much more than just getting to a desired location. Eating, drinking, inserting a CD, and adjusting the radio volume are types of distractions that can impair driving. Texting while driving is considered to be the most serious distraction because it requires visual, cognitive, and manual attention from the driver. A study done by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute reveals some shocking statistics relating to texting while driving. The risk of accidents is 32. 2 times greater while texting and driving. Texting while driving reduces reaction time and results in longer response times than even drunken driving. Texting while driving has been shown to be equivalent to drinking four beers and driving. Drivers normally spend nearly five seconds looking at their mobile devices in the moments right before crashes, or near crashes. That is enough time traveling at a standard highway speed, to cover the length of a football field. When teens text and drive it results in lane weaving and speeding up or down, increasing the likelihood of accidents. Texting while driving is also the number one reported distraction by teen drivers. Even though 95% of drivers

surveyed said texting while driving was unacceptable and unsafe, at least 21% admit to doing it anyway. (Hagerman, Penny M.) Alex Brown, age 17, died in a rollover accident on her way to school. She was texting and driving at the time of the accident. Her parents have started the Remember Alex Brown Foundation in order to warn people about the dangers of texting while driving. Many high schools across the United States have signed the Remember Alex Brown pledge. The Brown family continues to travel and spread the word about the dangers of texting while driving. Many companies, such as AT& T and Allstate, have launched campaigns to help inform people of the dangers of texting while driving. Taylor Sauer was a bright, outgoing, college teen that committed a fatal mistake. Sauer was driving from Utah State University to Caldwell, Idaho to visit her family. She spent the trip messaging a friend on facebook about the Denver Broncos. Her last message was, " I can't discuss this now. Driving and facebooking is not safe! Haha!! " Several moments later, Taylor, going 80 mph, slammed into the back of a tanker truck that was traveling up a hill at 15 mph. She was killed instantly and the investigators found no indication that she applied the brakes before the crash. The police obtained her phone records and discovered that she was sending messages approximately every 90 seconds during her trip. Idaho is one of the thirteen states that have no texting while driving laws. Sauer's parents have become lobbyists in the Idaho legislature to pass a ban on texting while driving. Texting while driving is responsible for 1, 600, 000 accidents per year, 330, 000 injuries per year, 11 teen deaths everyday, and nearly 25% of all car accidents. (" Texting and Driving Statistics") In December, the National Transportation Safety Board

encouraged all U. S. States to ban drivers from using electronic devices when driving. NTSB chairman Deborah A. P. Hersman said in a statement " It is time for all of us to stand up for safety by turning off electronic devices when driving. No call, no text, no update, is worth a human life. " (Khan, Huma)

Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia ban text messaging for all drivers. An additional seven states prohibit text messaging by novice drivers. In 32 of the 35 states, texting while driving is a primary offense. (" Cell Phone and Texting Laws") In most states if you are texting while driving and cause an accident that kills someone, the punishment can simply be a fine. In the state of Utah, the penalty for texting while driving is much tougher. A texting driver who causes a fatality is punished as harshly as someone who is drinking while driving, and can face up to 15 years in prison. In West Virginia, text messaging while driving could soon be against the law. Legislation was recently approved that would prohibit texting while driving on July 1, 2012. Texting while driving will be a primary offense and fines will be \$100 for a first time offense, \$200. 00 for a second infraction, and \$300. 00 for a third violation. Governor Tomblin is expected to sign the bill into law. Opponents against texting while driving laws think that these bans will be very difficult to enforce. They also believe drivers are faced with many types of distractions, not just texting. How is a police officer on the side of the road supposed to tell if someone is looking down to push buttons on their phone or adjusting the radio volume? A recent study conducted by the Highway Loss Data Institute implies that laws aimed at curbing texting while driving accidents do not reduce texting related accidents, but actually increase the number of accidents. " The institute hypothesizes that the increase in claims

may be due to drivers hiding their cell phones out of sight, while still using them to text, causing them to take their eyes off the road. " The HLDI also suggest that " public policy that focuses on only one source of distraction may fail simply because it doesn't recognize that drivers always are subject to distraction". (Mitchell, Anne P.) In the United States, seat belt laws are in effect all across the nation. These laws are designed to protect each one of us individually. It is time for legislators to also put into effect laws regarding texting while driving. Texting while driving is occurring in epidemic proportions and it is claiming many lives. When we make the choice to text and drive, we are not only putting ourselves at risk, but we are also willfully endangering others. I agree that drivers today are faced with many distractions when they drive, however, texting and driving is the most dangerous. When you text and drive, you have to take your eyes off the road, mind off of what you are doing, and your hands off the wheel. I feel that all states need to enact laws against texting while driving and I think that these laws need to be strictly enforced. I agree that the law may be difficult to enforce, however, if an officer suspects you are texting, the proof will be in the phone records. If we punish texting while driving as harshly as drunken driving, I believe that we will see a decline in this dangerous behavior. I also feel that education is an important part of changing this dangerous behavior. AT& T, The Alex Brown Foundation, and many other organizations are working to inform the public of the dangers associated with texting while driving. My last text message was " LOL"; imagine dying or killing someone over a message like that! Be smart and play it safe, don't text and drive. Works Cited " Cell Phone and Texting Laws." Governors

Highway Safety Association. Mar. 2012. Web. 8 Mar. 2012. . " The Dangers of Texting." Learn About the Dangers of Text Messaging. Texting Dangers and Statistics. Mobile Spy, 1997. Web. 27 Feb. 2012. . Hagerman, Penny M. " Drivers: 7 Important Facts about Texting That Could Save Your Life." Free Insurance Quotes. Web. 15 Mar. 2012. . Inbar, Michael. " Today." TODAY. com. 5 Mar. 2012. Web. 08 Mar. 2012. . Khan, Huma and Lisa Stark. " NTSB Recommends Banning Texting, Cell Phones While Driving." Abcnews. go. com. 13 Dec. 2011. Web. 8 Mar. 2012. . " Learn About the Dangers of Text Messaging. Texting Dangers and Statistics." Mobile Spy. Web. 08 Mar. 2012. . Mitchell, Anne P. " Study Finds That Texting While Driving Ban Does Not Reduce Incidence of Accidents by Anne P. Mitchell, Esq. - Last Updated 09/30/2010 - 3, 642 Views since Last Count." Study Finds That Texting While Driving Ban Does Not Reduce Incidence of Accidents. ISIPPI Publishing, 30 Sept. 2010. Web. 15 Mar. 2012. . Shannon, Victoria. " 15 Years of Text Messaging, a 'cultural Phenomenon'" The New York Times. 5 Dec. 2007. Web. 8 Mar. 2012. . " Texting and Driving Statistics." Texting and Driving Safety, No Texting and Driving. 2012. Web. 15 Mar. 2012. .