NEWS LESSON

A Notification Can Make You Lose Your Place



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Which notification is genuinely worth interrupting you for?
2. Does a silent phone still tempt you to check it?
3. Would you prefer one daily update or messages as they arrive?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**notifications**	☐	A	a time when something becomes slower
2	**interruption**	☐	B	messages or alerts that appear on your phone
3	**slowdown**	☐	C	to think that something is important and not spoil it
4	**dozens**	☐	D	many, about twelve or more
5	**discipline**	☐	E	something that stops you while you are doing a job
6	**respect**	☐	F	one single, not a group
7	**individual**	☐	G	to think that something will happen
8	**expect**	☐	H	the ability to make yourself do the right thing

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

In a 2026 study, phone alerts slowed people's thinking for about seven seconds. Most of us get dozens of alerts every day.

1 You are reading a book when your phone makes a sound. You look at the screen, read a message and go back to your book. The interruption took only a few seconds. But did it affect your concentration?

2 Researchers studying phone notifications asked a similar question. In research published in 2026 in Computers in Human Behavior, people completed an attention task while receiving notifications similar to those from social media. The researchers found that the messages caused a short slowdown in thinking, lasting about seven seconds.

3 Seven seconds may not sound like much. But many people receive dozens of alerts during the day. They come from friends, shops, work chats, news apps and social media. We can start expecting another message even when the phone is quiet.

4 The study did not show that phones permanently damage our brains or make everybody less intelligent. It examined what happened during a particular task. The effect depended partly on how important the notification seemed and how often participants usually checked their phones.

5 Some interruptions are useful. We may need to answer an urgent family message or hear about a change at work. Phones also help us learn, find directions and keep in touch with people who live far away.

6 It can help to think carefully about which apps are allowed to interrupt us. A message from a family member may be important. A reminder that an online shop has a sale probably is not. Many phones let us turn off alerts for individual apps, or choose a special setting when we want to work or sleep.

7 We can also explain to friends that we may not reply immediately. Of course, this can be difficult in jobs where managers expect very fast answers. That is why workplaces should discuss sensible rules about messages, especially outside working hours. Good concentration is not just about personal discipline. It can also depend on whether the people around us respect the time we need to finish a task.

8 Still, we can choose when we want to be available. Turning off unnecessary alerts or putting the phone in another room may make reading or studying easier. The goal is not to live without technology. It is to decide when we want technology to have our attention.

Sources: Computers in Human Behavior. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The study came out in 2026. T F NG
2. Most participants were university students. T F NG
3. The slowdown lasted about seven seconds. T F NG
4. The study showed that phones permanently damage the brain. T F NG
5. The writer says every phone message is important. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

available	concentration	occasional	permanently	reminder	sensible	urgent

1. Call me if it is _____ , but send a text if it can wait.
2. Putting your phone in another room is a _____ way to study.
3. One day without a phone will not _____ change your brain.
4. Good _____ is hard when your phone keeps buzzing.
5. A small red number on an app is a constant _____ that you have unread messages.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. You are _____ a book when your phone makes a sound. (READ)
2. In research _____ in 2026, people completed an attention task. (PUBLISH)
3. The researchers _____ that the messages caused a short slowdown. (FIND)
4. Yesterday my phone _____ in the middle of a meeting. (RING)
5. I _____ three messages while I was cooking dinner. (GET)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some verbs and adjectives always take the same small word after them. Learn them together, for example worried about.

about	at	from	of	on	to	with

1. The slowdown depended partly _____ how important the message seemed.
2. Please reply _____ my message before lunch.
3. A long message arrived _____ my sister this morning.
4. He is worried _____ how often his brother checks the phone.
5. Many people keep their phone silent _____ night.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Who should decide what counts as an urgent notification?
2. What would you switch off if you could try it for only one day?
3. Should apps have to earn the right to interrupt you?

9 Role-play: the ten-minute reply rule

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the manager

You want your team to answer work messages within ten minutes, even in the evening. Explain why. Ask at least two questions, then decide: agree a rule, change it, or keep it.

Student B · the employee

You want to switch off work alerts after six o'clock because you can't concentrate or rest. Explain how it affects you and suggest a rule that works for both of you.

Useful phrases

I'd like to switch off alerts after six.
Which messages are really urgent?
I can't concentrate when my phone keeps buzzing.
We're a small team, so I need quick answers.
Could we agree a time to reply?
That's a fair compromise.

Afterwards, tell the class: what rule did you agree, and is it fair for both people?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 B · 2 E · 3 A · 4 D · 5 H · 6 C · 7 F · 8 G

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 NG · 3 T · 4 F · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 urgent · 2 sensible · 3 permanently · 4 concentration · 5 reminder

6 Verb forms

1 reading · 2 published · 3 found · 4 rang · 5 got

7 Language focus

1 on · 2 to · 3 from · 4 about · 5 at

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