**The Effects of Music on a Student's Schoolwork**

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*by Rudy Miller*



Studies show loud music can hinder a student's ability to study.

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Today’s teens find it hard to resist listening to music while doing homework. Those who choose to listen while they study could see grades dip as a result. Teens need to choose wisely if they decide to listen to music and study at the same time. Soothing music can help some students focus, while any choice of music can be a distraction for other students.

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**Trend**

Many teens listen to music while they study. In fact, many juggle their listening and studying with other tasks such as emailing, instant messaging and watching television. According to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll, 53 percent of teens 12 to 17 do something else while studying. At 87 percent, listening to music was the most popular side activity for those who balanced studying with another activity. This generation of teens is growing up multitaskers, and the lure of computers, televisions and iPods is too great for today’s teens to ignore even while doing homework.

**Distraction**

Trying to do more than one thing at a time means you’re not entirely focused on anything. A University of Toronto study found that fast, loud music hinders reading comprehension. The music agitates rather than focuses the studier, and researcher Glenn Schellenberg likened it to trying to learn while riding a roller coaster. A University College London study found that both introverted and extroverted undergraduate students performed worse on a reading comprehension test when pop music was played. A memory test for adult participants at the University of Wales met with similar results: Listening to music hampered the test takers.

**Mozart Effect**

But not all music is bad for all students. Sometimes, soothing music or classical music can help a student focus. One British study claims listening to Mozart for 10 minutes produced a “Mozart effect” where test-takers’ IQ scores went up 8 or 9 points. A Bulgarian psychologist employed the method of playing Baroque era music, which plays at a tempo of 60 beats per minute, to help students learn foreign languages. After the 30-day course, the average retention rate per student was 92 percent. Even four years later, when students had not reviewed the material, most remembered the foreign language lesson.

**Individual Predispositions**

The effect of music on students varies depending on the music and the student. The "Journal of Communication" studied whether listening to music affected eighth graders’ homework performance. The results were inconclusive. The U.S. Department of Education has concluded that quiet background music can help some children focus, but tells parents to turn off loud music from CD players, radios and televisions when their children study. The potential for distraction is too great from these music sources, according to government experts.

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