

HUFFPOST TECH

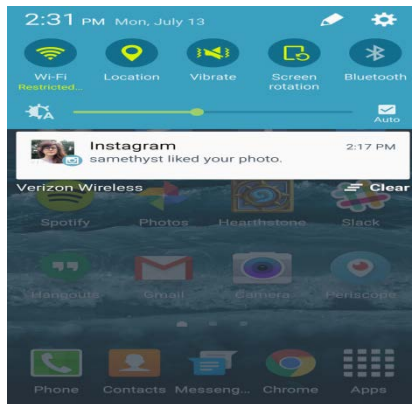
Turn Off The Notifications On Your Phone. They're Ruining Your Life! Just feeling your iPhone vibrate can impair your ability to focus.

Emily Peck Executive Editor, Business and Technology Posted: 07/13/2015 | Edited: 07/13/2015 04:45 PM EDT

You know that texting or talking on your cell phone while driving or walking is dangerously distracting, but new research finds that simply hearing your phone ring, ding or vibrate can destroy your focus. Even if you don't pick up or look at the phone, you'll start to think about who was trying to reach you, what they wanted and whether it was important, a new study from researchers at Florida State University found.

The level of distraction from simply hearing the phone ring was comparable to the effects of texting while driving, Cary Stothart, a doctoral student in cognitive psychology who led the research, told The Huffington Post. "We didn't expect to see such a large magnitude in distraction," said Stothart. The research was published late last month in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*.

Push notifications are the hot new plague in smartphones -- from a "news" alert when Donald Trump enters the presidential race to a notification from LinkedIn that someone you've never heard of wants to "connect" to a notice from Farm Heroes Saga that you have five new lives. Here's one from Instagram, informing our tech editor that someone liked one of his photos.

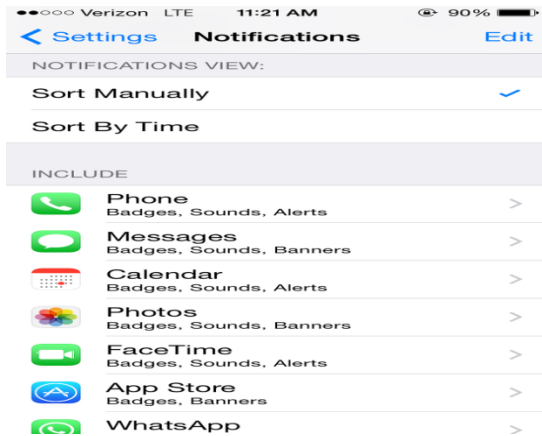


These are not important events!
For the study, some 150 undergraduate students from Florida State University

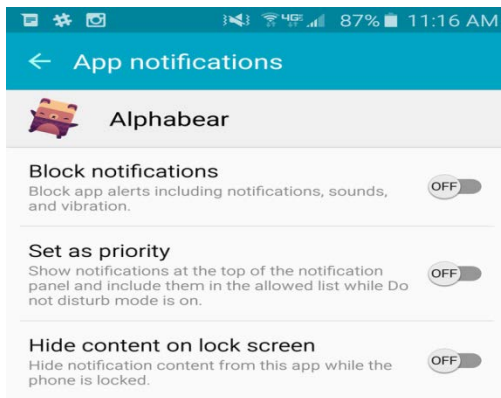
were asked to perform a simple task -- looking at numbers flash on a screen and pressing a button when they saw a "3." During their second run through the task, they were split into three groups: One group was called on the phone, the second received a text and the third was not interrupted. Researchers obtained participants' phone numbers off a questionnaire, and participants didn't know they were being contacted as part of the study.

The phone calls were the most distracting, the study found. Those who received a call were 28 percent more likely to mess up the task than they were during the first round, those who received a text were 23 percent more likely to screw up, and those who received neither were 7 percent more likely to do worse (just due to general boredom, said Stothart). It's worth noting that almost all of the students had their phones set to vibrate and didn't take them out or look at them during the study. Calls were likely the most distracting because they're increasingly rare, especially among undergrads, Stothart said. "If they receive a call, it might be an emergency."

So, there are two solutions to this problem. First, when you're driving or doing something else that needs your full attention, you could truly silence your phone by setting it to "Do Not Disturb," which is available for iPhones and some Android devices. Second, you could be a little more selective about which apps are allowed to notify you. You can do this on your iPhone by going to Settings >> Notifications and then selecting the apps that you wish to interrupt you.



For Android, it's pretty similar -- just go to your Settings and hit Notifications. It'll look something like this, from a Samsung Galaxy S6.



Good luck and drive safely.