

### Distracted Driving Solution

Think back to when you were sixteen -- newly licensed, ready to face the world, and probably a little overconfident in your driving skills. Now imagine combining that with the epidemic of technology that has installed itself into our lives. Suddenly, the dangers of teenage driving have increased exponentially. With technology now an undeniable part of our lives, how can we inhibit its control over our attention and reasoning, especially while driving? The answer, introduce new technology that will cultivate a widespread awareness for the dangers of texting and driving.

With 95% of Americans owning cell phones and 1 in 10 adults owning a laptop, this is the extensive platform that needs to be used to change perceptions on texting and driving (Mobile Fact Sheet). Teenagers are notorious for being addicted to technology, a fact schools need to exploit. Already, there are a multitude of simulations online that demonstrate just how dangerous it is to multitask while driving. AT&T currently has a program called, It Can Wait, which simulates driving on the computer while sending texts to your phone to illustrate our human inability to safely multitask (No Text).

Although online programs are a great introduction to a more realistic approach to texting and driving education, simulations used by organizations such as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration provide an immersive experience that makes the danger feel real. In a study focused on manual tasks while driving, the simulation apparatus “created a controlled visual and auditory environment... that had soundproofed walls... and real car parts.” (Distraction Effects) If such a program would become available to the public, the most effective way to use it would be to involve the entire community. According to a new study from AT&T’s It Can Wait Campaign, 49 percent of adults admit they text and drive, compared to only 43 percent of teens (Gross). These statistics prove that to solve distracted driving, communities need to educate drivers of all ages and introduce everyone to new technology that may change perspectives and save lives.

These immersive simulations may be up and coming supplements to driving education, but the lesson is not always applied when the student steps into the car. This is where technology comes into play again, but this time in a physical form. Simple technology, such as a sleeve that would cover the screen of a phone and mute audible notifications, may limit the diversion of attention due to our learned reflex to check our phones. To ensure the product would be actually be used by the driving population, adding technology such as charging cords and auxiliary cords may motivate the driver to insert their phone into a restrictive case.

To truly solve the problem of texting and driving, we have to hold everyone accountable. Simulations and apps can only do so much, but creating a realm of honesty in the community will keep everyone accountable and safer. To do this, we first need to break the stigma that kids can't correct adults. They need to feel comfortable speaking against their “superiors” when they witness them driving while distracted. We can start this process by having both adults and students use the same telling technology to prove that distracted driving is dangerous for *everyone*. Unfortunately, this problem is not going to be fixed tomorrow. It takes time for people to accept new standards and safer habits, but if we foster a community where safety and honesty is a priority, change will come. Conclusively, if we want this change to arrive as soon as possible, we will have to use our newest and most versatile resource, technology.

#### Citations

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