

DO IT!

Multitasking Mania!

Does multitasking with media distract you from homework?

To multitask or not to multitask, that is the question. Scientists are divided over whether multitasking is good or bad. Here is an experiment to test how good you are at Multitasking



You'll Need

- 1) Work Sheets (see smart start)
- 2) Pencils and Paper
- 3) Stopwatch or Clock
- 4) Cell Phone and/or Computer
- 5) Internet Access

SMART START

Compile several short worksheets in math, reading, science, etc., including the answers. There are many websites that have free printable worksheets if you do not have any on hand. If you have youth of differing ages, make sure to provide worksheets for each grade level.

- 1. Introduce multitasking.** Take a survey to see whether the group thinks they are good at multitasking. Ask youth how often they multitask while doing homework. Explain that questions exist about whether people can really multitask and if it is beneficial to multitask. Then, deliver the SciGirls Challenge: Does multitasking with media while working on homework affect your ability to successfully complete the homework?.
- 2. Brainstorm.** Break into small groups and ask youth to brainstorm media tasks (watching videos, playing on their phone, etc.) that they engage in while doing homework. At least one youth in each group will be tested on the worksheets, so you may want to make groups with you who are comfortable having their work "graded" with those who aren't. To gather ideas on possible media tasks, watch Multitasking Mania (Research).
- 3. Plan.** Ask the youth how they think homework completion changes with media multitasking. Each group should design their own experiment to test multitasking ability. Here are some things to consider:
 - Types of media task
 - Number of test to complete

- Homework Subject (youth should complete a new worksheet with each test)
- How many people will participate (sample size)
- How to measure success (for example, how many problems are correct, how long it takes to complete the worksheet).

Watch youth test multitasking on Multitasking Mania (Test).
Pointer: This is a great activity to point out the purpose of controls. A control serves as the standard by which to compare the multitasking results. In this experiment, the control is completing a worksheet in silence, with no media distractions.

- 4. Encourage predictions.** Predict which media tasks will be easy or hard to perform while doing homework, or rank media tasks from least to most distracting. Then, start testing!
- 5. Communicate results.** Have each group create a presentation of their data. How did results compare to predictions? Do results differ with worksheet subject? Discuss whether youth think it's helpful for them to multitask with media and homework
- 6. Continuing exploring.** How does multitasking ability change with age or gender? Create a survey to collect information and then design another experiment to find out!