

Read and Analyze a Community Problem

Promote pedestrian and driver safety with a real-world discussion about the hazards of texting, headphones, and more.



Objective

Students will participate in a range of discussions about distracted walking and driving, and identify responsible and safe alternatives to risky behaviors.

Standards

CCSS ELA, Grs. 6–8

RI.2 Determine a central idea of a text and summarize
SL.1 Engage in collaborative discussions on texts and issues

C3 Social Studies, Grs. 6–8

D4.6 Analyze a problem at local, regional, and global levels (causes, challenges, and opportunities)

Time

40 minutes

Materials

- Attention, Please! reading passage
- Exit ticket (online at [scholastic.com/arrive-alive](https://www.scholastic.com/arrive-alive))



1 Hook students by asking them to name things in everyday life that are distractions (examples: television on while they're doing homework, a phone ringing in a movie theater, etc.). Collect a list on the board. Remind students that the word *distracted* means being unable to concentrate or give attention to a task because your mind is preoccupied with something else.

2 Facilitate a conversation about distracted walking and distracted driving, and why it can put pedestrians and drivers in danger. Ask whether the people in the following scenarios are distracted or not. Are there disagreements among students or gray areas? Why could this behavior be dangerous? Discuss.

- Your aunt is sipping coffee while driving to work. (*distracted*)
- You're walking to the bus, but you need to send one quick message to let your mom know you've got practice after school. (*distracted*)
- You look both ways before you cross the street. (*not distracted*)

3 Distribute the Attention, Please! reading passage. After students read, have them respond to reflection questions in small groups.

4 Point out that it can be easier to respond to unsafe situations when you've thought out a plan beforehand. Share the following scenarios and discuss what students can do or say to defuse a distracted walking or driving situation.

a. Your older sister is driving you to soccer practice while trying to find a song on her playlist. (*Possible answers: Tell her you'll find the song so she can concentrate on the road, or say, "Hey, let's wait till you're done driving, OK?"*)

b. You're standing on the corner with a friend who's posting a picture on social media. He steps into the street and a car beeps and swerves around him. (*Possible answers: Say, "Whoa, that car almost hit you! You've got to pay attention!"; offer to stop for a minute so he can finish his post, etc.*)

5 Wrap up by asking why it might be difficult or uncomfortable to start a conversation like that. Is it worth the discomfort? Why or why not? Then, distribute the exit ticket (online) for a quick, informal assessment.

STUDENT ADVOCACY CONTEST

Teachers:
Chance to
Win
\$100!

- **Continue the unit** with a lesson on **analyzing strategies from real news articles**, plus a **statistics/advocacy** lesson.
- **Use our online graphic organizers & entry template** to guide your students in creating advocacy magazines.
- **Submit the magazines** to the Heads Up, Stay Safe! Contest by **Jan. 14, 2022**, for a chance to win student and teacher prizes. Get details at [scholastic.com/arrive-alive/contest](https://www.scholastic.com/arrive-alive/contest).

Name _____

Attention, Please!

Distracted walking and driving are a real—and dangerous—problem. Get the facts, then brainstorm what you'll do to stay safe.

Have you ever walked down the street, checking your phone, when all of a sudden you literally bumped into someone? Then you know what it's like to experience the effects of distracted walking, which, along with distracted driving, are serious problems in the U.S.—and often have deadly consequences for both drivers and pedestrians.



DISTRACTED WALKING

includes being on your phone or having earbuds in while walking.



DISTRACTED DRIVING

is doing something else while at the wheel: texting, scrolling through a playlist, listening to a group of friends being loud in the back seat, or even eating.

How big is the problem? It's big. In the U.S., pedestrian deaths rose 27 percent from 2007 to 2016, and many experts say distracted walking is a factor. Some places, like Honolulu, Hawaii, and Stamford, Connecticut, have passed laws against distracted walking. And every day, nine people are killed and 1,000 people are injured in crashes involving distracted drivers.

Even scarier: Research shows that drivers talking on a phone are up to four times as likely to crash. Those who text behind the wheel are up to eight times as likely to crash.

In Georgia, the Hands Free state law took effect on July 1, 2018, and prohibits drivers from holding their phones, including viewing social media, texts, emails, and videos while driving. And for good reason: Drivers using handheld or hands-free cell phones are four times as

likely to crash. The National Safety Council puts it like this: You can't be on your phone and read a book in the same moment, because your mind can focus on only one thing. So why would anyone think they can safely drive while on a phone?

Even though you don't drive yet, you can remind the drivers in your family to use their phone's "do not disturb while driving" mode so they won't be tempted to look at a text. And you can definitely reduce your own risk of getting hit by a car by being **alert when you walk—that means no texting, scrolling, or listening to loud music with your earbuds in.** Plus, remember that crossing the street in the **crosswalk**, instead of in the street, *significantly* reduces the risk of being hit by a car. Bottom line for both drivers and walkers: Nothing is ever so important that it can't wait.



REFLECT AND REACT

- What's the problem? Why might it be getting worse? How does it affect your life?
- Make a plan: What specific actions can you take, starting today, to protect your life and the lives of those around you from distracted walking and driving?