

Examples from students using incorporated quotes from [Steven Pinker's "Mind Over Mass Media."](#)

The text used in activity follows the examples.

Pinker admits that the “constant arrival of information packets” can still be problematic, for some people more than others, but also that “distraction is not a new phenomenon.” So the solution is not to criticize technology, but rather “to develop strategies of self-control” (Pinker 200). He offers several suggestions, but the idea of unplugging our devices is not new and has been gaining popularity. Now you can find bars where cellphones must be turned off or you won't be served, or find friends who will unplug for the weekend or a day.

Pinker claims that human abilities have not changed a lot, but “knowledge is increasing exponentially.” So, people need help with “our collective intellectual output at different scales.” Thus, media as he claims is “far from making us stupid,” but rather “are the only things that will keep us smart” (Pinker 200).

Pinker states that “knowledge is increasing exponentially”; nevertheless, people are not. People get the information from electronic and online media in order to “manage, search and retrieve our collective intellectual output at different scales.” He concludes that we will be smarter due to these technologies, not dumber (Pinker, 2010, p 200).

Pinker asserts that the use of electronic media will not be as bad as the panic created by comments from critics of technology. He provides an example of traditional people thinking that eating strong animals will make them strong, and how technology critics claim that watching the “quick cuts” of films and videos will make us think in a short and choppy manner.

Using “a heavy encyclopedia” and having “access to information to the internet” are not helpful in creating “intellectual depth” (Pinker, p 200)

As Steven Pinker states that habits of deep reflection through research and rigor(ous) reasoning must be acquired in specific methods of thought, such as “analysis, criticism, and debate,” which are maintained by university culture (Pinker, p 200).

## Text Used

The effects of consuming electronic media are also likely to be far more limited than the panic implies. Media critics write as if the brain takes on the qualities of whatever it consumes, the informational equivalent of "you are what you eat." As with primitive peoples who believe that eating fierce animals will make them fierce, they assume that watching quick cuts in rock videos turns your mental life into quick cuts or that reading bullet points and Twitter postings turns your thoughts into bullet points and Twitter postings.

Yes, the constant arrival of information packets can be distracting or addictive, especially to people with attention deficit disorder. But distraction is not a new phenomenon. The solution is not to bemoan technology but to develop strategies of self-control, as we do with every other temptation in life. Turn off e-mail or Twitter when you work, put away your Blackberry at dinner time, ask your spouse to call you to bed at a designated hour.

And to encourage intellectual depth, don't rail at PowerPoint or Google. It's not as if habits of deep reflection, thorough research and rigorous reasoning ever came naturally to people. They must be acquired in special institutions, which we call universities, and maintained with constant upkeep, which we call analysis, criticism and debate. They are not granted by propping a heavy encyclopedia on your lap, nor are they taken away by efficient access to information on the Internet.

The new media have caught on for a reason. Knowledge is increasing exponentially; human brainpower and waking hours are not. Fortunately, the Internet and information technologies are helping us manage, search and retrieve our collective intellectual output at different scales, from Twitter and previews to e-books and online encyclopedias. Far from making us stupid, these technologies are the only things that will keep us smart.