

## Are digital gadgets hurting our brains?

Ten years ago technology writer Nicholas Carr published an article in the Atlantic entitled “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” He strongly suspected the answer was “yes.”

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Where does the idea that we are becoming “stupid” come from? It derives in part from the knowledge that digital devices capture our attention. A message from a friend, an anecdote shared on social networks or a sales promotion on an online site can act like a treat for the human brain. The desire for such “treats” can draw us to our screens repeatedly and away from other things we should be concentrating on.

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In 2009 Eyal Ophir, then at Stanford University, and his colleagues discovered that multitasking on the Internet paradoxically makes users less effective at switching from one task to another. They are less able to allocate their attention and are too vulnerable to distractions.

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In other words, digital multitasking does little more than produce a dangerous illusion of competence.

The good news is that you do not need to rewire your brain to preserve your attention span. You can help yourself by thinking about what distracts you most and by developing strategies to immunize yourself against those distractions. And you will need to exercise some self-control. Can't resist Facebook notifications? Turn them off while you're working.

**Read full, original post:** [Are Digital Devices Altering Our Brains?](#)