

Attention span crisis: In a world of 10-second videos, are we losing our ability to read complicated texts?

Professors Espen Ytreberg and Arne Johan Vetlesen, both associated with the University of Oslo, claimed early this year in articles in two Norwegian newspapers, Morgenbladet and Klassekampen, that today's students lack the ability to read longer, complicated texts.

But what does the research say? Have we really become worse at reading than we were before? And is it really that important to be able to concentrate without being distracted, in order to understand what we read?

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The results from the PISA survey carried out in 2018 have been regularly referred to in the debate on digitization and reading skills.

In a summary of the results from the PISA surveys from 2000 to 2018, it appears that Norwegian pupils' reading skills have remained stable during the period. However, the international average has decreased.

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Pupils read less in their free time than they did in 2000, and they read long texts less often.

At the same time, online reading has increased.

It appears that students who answer that they chat with others several times a day score better than other students on the reading test. The same applies to those who more often than others search for information online or read online newspapers.

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