



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

LEARNING LAYER

Multitasking: Is it a myth?

In 2009, Stanford University released a [study regarding the use of multitasking](#) among students. The primary researcher, professor Clifford Nass, found that people who regularly receive several streams of electronic information do not pay attention, remember things or switch mental tasks as well as people who complete one job at a time. Nass' conclusion? You accomplish more if you're focused on doing less. Yet [multitaskers are "environment scanners"](#) and there may be advantages of this, but researchers haven't found them.

Choose an assignment for students:

Flashlight: Turn off all other media. Scan the above study and then the report ["Generation M2: Media in the lives of 8- to 18-year-olds"](#) from the Kaiser Family Foundation. It says young people "media multitask" to the point where they consume almost 11 hours of media content into about a seven-hour period. Do you do this? Write a blog post analyzing your own media use – but do it in total silence, with no radio, no TV, no phone, not any media. What are your conclusions?

Spotlight: Test your class. Turn on a television, a radio, tell everyone to text their friends, pull up a homework assignment on a computer, if they have one. As they are doing all that, without making a fuss about it stand at the front of the class and read the following: Alexis-Charles-Henri Clérel de Tocqueville was a French political thinker, best known for *Democracy in America*, first published in 1835. He stated: "I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America." Stop all the racket. Ask students to write down what they heard you say. Discuss what you really said and what the quote means.