



How to cover “Texting While Driving”

Driven to Distraction

By Bobby Hawthorne, Austin, TX • 2010

- Identify a main source
- What happened?
- Nutgraph
- So what?
- Transition
- Secondary source
- Transition
- Closing quote

Universal example

- Kid who had an automobile accident while texting.
- Ask the obvious question.
- Describe the scene.

Anecdote/scene

Describe what happened.

Active verbs. Specific nouns.

Nutgraph

Is this a problem?

How big a problem?

Says who?

Is this person a credible source?

So what?

Police

Medical officials

Insurance officials

Statistics

Transition

Keep it as brief as possible.

Pack it with facts rather than opinion.

Source C

Officer on the scene.

Parent of lead source.

Another student who illustrates the point.

Transition

Keep it short.

Paraphrase first sentence of the
direct quote.

Closing quote

Bring the story full circle by closing with a statement from the universal example.

The quote should take the reader from the past into the present or the near future.

Everything in between is a blur

Senior Larry Grimes doesn't remember sending a text message to his best friend at or around 2:32 p.m. Friday, Oct. 23. But then again, Larry doesn't remember much of anything about the day he ran a stop sign and slammed his Honda Civic into an 18-wheeler.

"I remember driving," Larry said. "And I remember waking up in the hospital. Everything in between is a blur."

He suffered a broken leg, multiple lacerations and a head injury that almost killed him. He was in intensive care for three weeks and remains a patient at Brookline Medical Center where he's completing physical therapy.

Sadly, he's not the only teen there. Two other high school students who were texting while driving are also patients at the center, which means they're lucky. At least 40 fatal automobile accidents nationwide have been directly attributed to teens texting while driving, according to national insurance figures.

“It’s safer to drive intoxicated than it is to text while driving,” said local insurance agent Tom Addison. “At least, that’s what the numbers tell us. Kids who text while driving are going to have a wreck. It’s just a matter of how bad the wreck will be, how badly they’ll be injured or whether they’ll be killed.”

Junior Adam Glover smashed his father's Toyota Prius into a parked car last year while answering a text.

“It was stupid,” Glover said. “I should have pulled over or ignored it, but I chose to answer the text. I looked up right as my dad's car hit a car parked on the side of the road. It's a miracle I didn't kill myself or someone else.”

Grimes is equally as fortunate, police officers said.

“The 18-wheeler rolled over the back of the Civic,” officer Ted Stanton said. “Another foot or so and it would have crushed him. God was really looking out for the kid that day.”

Grimes said he expects to fully recover in a month or so.

“I had to learn my lesson the hard way,” he said. “I’m not sure my parents will buy me a new car now, and I really don’t blame them if they don’t. But I can assure you of one thing: I’ll never text and drive again.”

Dismissing the Risks of a Deadly Habit

Neither Drivers Nor Lawmakers Want
To Stop Cellphone Use Behind Wheel

On his 15th birthday, Christopher Hill got his first cellphone. For his 16th, he was given a used red Ford Ranger pickup, a source of pride he washed every week.

Mr. Hill, a diligent student with a reputation for helping neighbors, also took pride in his clean driving record. “Not a speeding ticket, not a fender bender, nothing,” he said.

Until last Sept. 3.

Mr. Hill, then 20, left the parking lot of a Goodwill store where he had spotted a dresser he thought might interest a neighbor. He dialed her to pass along news of the find.

Mr. Hill was so engrossed in the call that he ran a red light and didn't notice Linda Doyle's small sport utility vehicle until the last second. He hit her going 45 miles per hour. She was pronounced dead shortly after.

Later, a policeman asked Mr. Hill what color the light had been. "I never saw it," he answered.

Extensive research shows the dangers of distracted driving. Studies say that drivers using phones are four times as likely to cause a crash as other drivers, and the likelihood that they will crash is equal to that of someone with an .08 percent blood alcohol level, the point at which drivers are generally considered intoxicated. Research also shows that hands-free devices do not eliminate the risks and may worsen them by suggesting that the behavior is safe.

A 2003 Harvard study estimated that cellphone distractions caused 2,600 traffic deaths every year and 330,000 accidents that result in moderate or severe injuries.

The ending

Some drivers who caused accidents themselves have become activists too. Mr. Hill, as part of his misdemeanor charge, must devote 240 hours to community service — talking about the risks of distracted driving, as well as working with animals, as Ms. Doyle’s family said she would have liked.

He spoke to a classroom of fellow students about his experience, sparing no details.

“Their jaws just dropped,” he said. “They couldn’t believe they had someone standing in front of them who was talking on the cellphone and killed someone.”

— Matt Richtel, The New York Times