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Half of all teens cross the street while distracted by a device, according to Safe Kids Worldwide.

# Would You Ban Texting and Walking?

Honolulu is the first major U.S. city to pass a law against distracted walking. Should your town be next? **By Kristin Lewis**

**Y**ou're walking home when your phone buzzes. You look down to see that your friend just hearted that Instagram of your dog. You're scrolling through the comments when—

SCREECH! A car slams on its brakes. You had unknowingly wandered into a busy crosswalk.

Hopefully nothing this dramatic has ever happened to you. But walking while using a phone has become increasingly common, and it's causing accidents. In 2014, a 14-year-old was seriously injured after stepping off a bridge while on his phone. In 2012, a 15-year-old on her phone was hit by a car and killed. Between 2000 and 2011,

distracted walking led to more than 11,000 injuries in the U.S.\*

Last year, Taylor Fujimoto, 16, and her classmates at Waipahu High School in Honolulu, Hawaii, decided to do something about this problem. They conducted research, circulated petitions, and testified before the city council. Thanks to their efforts, last October, Honolulu became the first major U.S. city to pass a law against crossing the street while looking at a phone. (Taylor and her classmates helped write the law.)

Now other cities are considering passing similar **legislation**. Should yours be one of them?

## A Big Deal?

Distracted walking may not seem like a big deal. After all, you're

just glancing at your phone for a moment, right? You may think you can see what is going on around you with your **peripheral** vision.

But brain research says otherwise. Turns out our brains can't focus on our phones and our surrounding environment **simultaneously**. We also tend to walk more slowly or zigzag while using a phone. Unsurprisingly, people who text and walk are four times more likely to do something dangerous—such as crossing the street without looking.

## Common Sense

No doubt about it: Distracted walking is a bad idea.

But is outlawing it really the solution?

# What Do You Think?

## Should texting while walking be illegal?

Go back to the article to find arguments that support each side of this debate. Write the information on the lines below.



Some say we shouldn't need a law for something that boils down to common sense. On the other hand, wearing a seat belt is common sense too—but until laws were passed **mandating** that people wear seat belts, many didn't buckle up.

As Taylor points out, laws have the power to change people's behavior. In fact, many of her classmates admitted that unless a law was passed, they probably wouldn't put their phones away when walking around town.

Still, there are ways to deal with the problem of distracted walking other than making it illegal.

Engineers at Rutgers University are working on an app that would flash a warning to look up when you near a crosswalk. Last year, the Los Angeles Police Department launched a public-awareness campaign about the hazards of distracted walking. In London, England, some lampposts have been padded to soften the blow for walkers who run into them while staring down at their phones.

The effectiveness of such **measures**, however, is unclear.

Regardless of whether distracted walking becomes illegal in your town, it's still important to protect yourself. So here is a bit of advice: The next time you're walking down the street and your phone buzzes, resist the urge to look until you reach your destination. Or if you *really* can't wait, at least stop and move to a safe spot. ●

## YES

The world would be safer.

1 Laws can change people's behavior.

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

## NO

A law isn't needed.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Examine points on both sides of the debate—as well as your own beliefs**—and decide what you think. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can be your thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

\_\_\_\_\_

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