



Write to Educate

Scholarship Contest Winner

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Essay Topic: Examine the role of technology in your own life: Does technology have a positive or negative effect on personal safety? How would you handle texting and driving, whether yourself or others?

In the world which we live today, technology abounds. It is truly hard to imagine going a day without the convenience and connections it has brought with it; whether it is waking up in the morning to the sound of my phone's alarm, using the Keurig Machine to make a coffee to help me get through the day, or communicating with my friends over social media, technology has truly revolutionized the way I go about my daily life. Most importantly, it has given me peace of mind while doing so.

I remember starting middle school and, like every other eager young boy or girl, begging my parents for a phone because it was "cool". Now, my phone is something that I always carry with me because it is an asset to my safety. As a female teenager, I can't begin to list the many times when I have been somewhere and have begun to feel uncomfortable or uneasy about my surroundings. Carrying a phone allows me to get helpful information and reach out to a trust adult or friend when needed. Despite the inconvenience, I find myself even bringing my phone on runs in the neighborhood because it comforts me to know that, should something happen while running, whether with my health or from an outside source, I would have a reliable way to get the assistance I need. My parents can even track my location through our phones so they can always find their way to me in the case of an emergency.

But the safety that technology provides goes far beyond the features on a phone. At a recent meeting for the Peer Assisted Leaders that I am a part of at school, our team wanted to find a way that students could reach out for help with personal issues by completing a form and submitting it to our advisor. I recommended an online setup as it would allow students to make their requests known without having to do so in front of others or find their way to our advisor's classroom. This method has been approved and will be running soon within our school! Our hope is that students can report tips about themselves or others so that trained personnel can intervene when a student's safety is at risk. In this way, technology has made this support service more accessible and has helped to prioritize the safety of all students.

These examples prove that, when used properly, technology can be life saving. Unfortunately, when misused, negative consequences may not be far behind. One of the issues most pertinent to teens is that of texting and driving. Although I personally put my phone away while driving because I know that no text, email, or notification is more important than the lives that surround me on the road, I have found myself in the uncomfortable situation where, as the passenger in the car, I have had to give the driver a gentle reminder that their text could wait or suggest that I type the message for them. On one occasion where the texting was important, I found myself offering to drive so that the driver could handle the situation from the passenger seat. It is never easy to speak up, but I remind myself that it is always better to do so than to later regret not having said something. The lives in and outside of the car are much more valuable than a text. Using technology appropriately has complimented my safety in many ways; putting it away while driving has most certainly done likewise!

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