**INTRODUCTION**

- People often engage in task switching (e.g., reading a journal article and monitoring incoming e-mails or checking updates on social media).
- Previous researchers concluded that there is no cost to reading comprehension when participants periodically switched between reading a prose passage and completing a secondary task—an instant messaging task answering personal queries, for example, What’s your favorite movie? (Bowman, Levine, Wiene, & Cimprich, 2010; Fox, Rosen, & Crawford, 2009, Tran, Cunillo, & Subrahmanyam, 2013).
- Although task switching did not decrease accuracy, it increased reading time.

- Using materials and procedures similar to those in the studies discussed above, Pashler, Kang, and Ip (2013) likewise reported no detrimental effects of task switching (Experiments 1 & 2), including when the to-be-learned material was presented auditorily (Experiment 2).
- However, there was a numerical trend of increased reading time in the task-switching condition relative to the no-task-switching condition, $p = .07$; reading time was not reported in their other experiments.
- In Experiment 3 task switching impaired reading comprehension when the primary and secondary tasks occurred simultaneously (i.e., the presentation of the prose passage continued while participants were responding to a query).

**Present Study: Research Questions**

- Is there a cost (taking into account both speed and accuracy) associated with task switching in a reading comprehension task?
- Were the failures to observe a cost in previous studies due to using a secondary task that did not tax participants’ cognitive resources?
- In previous studies, participants answered only one question during an interruption period.
- Does task switching affect academic tasks differ differently?

**GENERAL METHOD**

- Participants read three unrelated prose passages at their own pace.
  - Experiment 1 (same materials as Pashler et al.): The History of Fiber, Franklin Expedition, and The History of Cheese (~1,500 words each).
  - Experiments 2 and 3: Bats, Typhoons, and Bread (~1,000 words each). Participants read a passage while being periodically interrupted by a secondary task or not (control condition); order counterbalanced across participants.
- Participants received a reading comprehension test after each passage.
- Questions assessed factual knowledge (all experiments) using true/false and multiple choice questions and conceptual knowledge (Experiments 2 & 3).
- Example of a factual question: Approximately how many bat species are there in the world?
- Example of a conceptual question: Which of the following is the most likely predator for bats?

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