

Just Google It

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When school started in August, my 7-year-old son came to me with a very funny question: "Dad, did they have Google when you were young?" I replied, "Of course not. Google is only about 10 years old." Then he goes on to ask, "Why do we need school if we can Google everything?"

I started thinking about his question. That same week, my brother, who is a high-school teacher, told me about how Google is helping teens cheat on tests. When testing, they use their iPhone or Blackberry to Google the answers. It gets even better (or worse, really): Teens are taking tests and then texting the questions to their friends before they take the test, so they are prepared in advance. Some kids are even taking two phones to class—one to intentionally get caught with, so that the teachers think they have already confiscated the phone and that student isn't a risk anymore.

Think about how Google and technology is changing our lives. I have noticed myself changing my vocabulary to short form letters instead of words. I am struggling to write this letter without using my new "text vocabulary." Even our President struggled with giving up his Blackberry, but was allowed to keep a special version at the White House.

My friends who have always loved to read books now seem to read fewer novels because our attention span is shrinking. And another thing we notice here at the magazine is that more and more people trust Google so much that they are not thinking outside the box anymore: whatever shows up on the first Google search page, they go with. Google is making us lazy. How did this happen? What will it lead to?

This month, on our own Web site, Arizona Foothills Magazine is launching the first annual "Best of Our Valley" poll, an extensive online voting system, where our readers can share their picks on the best things this town has to offer. We came up with a list of more than 100 categories ranging from the people who move the Valley to the best places to live. We arrived at this list after months and months of real research, not Google research. We had focus groups and we asked friends and readers and used our own editorial team to come up with the list. I encourage you to log onto AZFoothills.com to see if your friends or family made the list—you can vote for them too. We want the people who live here everyday to decide what truly is the Best of Our Valley, - not Google.

-Michael S. Dee President and Publisher

