

Mobile Phones: Reading

I don't have one, and if I can help it, I won't ever get one in the future. And I hate the assumption that I need one, or that I'm strange not having one. I opened a new bank account the other day and the woman who was helping me (and this is a true story) asked me if I was serious when she found out I didn't have one. She simply couldn't see how I could live my life without one. I don't see why – I can be contacted at home, or work, so what's the problem?



Yes, I have a laptop computer and instant access to the Internet; yes, I have a digital camera and yes I have a microwave oven and an i-Pod but I absolutely refuse to get a _____!

Of course I can see how useful they *could* be, and that if there was a *real* emergency they could come in handy, but that's not always the case. There was a story of a guy who had a parachuting accident and found himself on top of a cliff with two broken legs. He had his mobile with him but – guess what? He wasn't able to use it because he was in a remote area! So, in great pain, he had to pull himself along the ground with his elbows until he got to a road and could stop a motorist. So not much help for him then, was it? And once when I very reluctantly rang a friend on her mobile (from a telephone box on the platform) because she was very late arriving at a train station she didn't answer it. Why? Because, she said (when she eventually arrived) that the battery was flat! So what's the point? (And calling mobiles is so expensive!)

Other times they create the emergency themselves. Remember that awful story of the Kenyan student? She dropped hers into a pit latrine while 'answering a call of nature'. So she offered the equivalent of \$13 to anyone who could get it for her and what happened? Three men died, intoxicated by the fumes because they were so desperate for the money. That's awful. And don't they cause cancer? Apparently, the general scientific opinion at the moment is that the benefits seem to outweigh any known dangers but it's best to use a hands-free kit. I'm not sure about that. An independent report recommends that under-16s use theirs only for essential calls – ha! Try telling that to a teenager!

And no gentle burr burring either but we have to listen to the theme tune of a soap opera, or a national anthem, or ringing bells while the owner rummages in the bottom of their bag to find the offending item.

But these aren't my main bugbears. No, what I hate is how my daily life is affected negatively by other people using theirs. Take a restaurant – I really, really hate it when friends arrive and the first thing they do is put their mobiles on the table so that, in the (likely) event of it going off they stop talking to you and start ignoring you. Are they doctors? Are they giving advice on open-heart surgery? Are they talking to long-lost friends? Sick relatives? NO! It'll be their mother who they saw recently, or other friends they're going to meet soon. For me it's the height of rudeness. And of course I also have to put up with the same happening on the next-door table too. And how inept and pointless the conversations! 'I'm with Jenny and we're having Dim Sum.' The person

needs to know that? 'Hi, I'm on the train now and will be there in about 10 minutes.' So? Are they not expected? Can't they just turn up in 10 minutes and say 'I'm here.'? I don't want to know what strangers did yesterday, what they plan to do tomorrow or what they're doing now (I can see what they're doing now!).

I'm also affected by the light – do the owners really not realize how bright they are? OK maybe the stupid thing is on vibration but when it's opened in the cinema, or at a concert the owner is all lit up and then I can't concentrate on what I'm watching. I was at a concert not long ago, up on the balcony, and looking down on the audience there were always at least five people using their mobiles. Why didn't they switch them off? Why are they going tappety tap tap instead of watching the show? It drives me so mad! The mate of mine sitting next to me actually answered his and started whispering loudly – but when he saw the look on my face he instantly apologized. 'Sorry – it's my sister.' So?

Finally, it's an excuse to be late. If the waiting friend can be contacted 'Just to let you know I'm going to be half an hour late', then somehow being late is therefore OK. No! Just make an effort to arrive on time! Sometimes friends even blame *me* for sitting alone for twenty minutes when it was *they* who were late because, they insist, I couldn't be contacted! No – I'm *never, ever* going to get one!