



Text Messaging
and Your Family

Teaching Responsible Text Messaging

THE FACTS ABOUT TEXTING

- ▶ Texting is the #2 reason for using a mobile phone after checking the time.
- ▶ Teens send an average of 3,146 texts per month, and kids ages 9 to 12 send 1,146 (Nielsen, 2010).
- ▶ 75% of 12 to 17 year olds own cell phones and 88% of them use text messaging (Pew, 2010).
- ▶ 64% of parents check the contents of their child's mobile phone and 62% of parents have taken away mobile phones as punishment. (Pew, 2010).
- ▶ 43% of teens who take their phones to school say they text in class at least once a day (Pew, 2010).

WHY UNDERSTANDING TEXTING MATTERS

Texting is totally portable, private and immediate. In other words, children have no boundaries unless parents help establish them. Kids text because it lets them feel connected and feel as if they can have a private moment with a friend, no matter where they are or what else they're doing. With texting, kids can't see the reaction of the person receiving the message, so their actions can be separated from the consequences. Young people can be cruel, and their judgment and impulse control are not yet fully developed. If a text exchange becomes unpleasant, it can be very hurtful or even dangerous to their well-being.

As with any powerful tool, texting can be used to bully or humiliate people. An embarrassing

or upsetting image or video can quickly be transmitted or uploaded to an online video sharing site. Sexting is a form of texting where kids send or receive graphic images or messages. The use of texting in school to cheat on assignments and tests is also on the rise as answers can be swiftly passed from student to student. For these reasons and more, kids should know that abusing the privilege of texting has consequences.

ADVICE FOR PARENTS

- ▶ **Evaluate whether or not your kids need to text.** Just because other kids have it doesn't mean your child should, too.
- ▶ **Make rules for when and where kids can text.** Firm rules about this will ensure their safety as well as their social skills.
- ▶ **Limit texting when they should be concentrating on something else.** This can include walking, spending time with family, during homework or while having a conversation with someone else.
- ▶ **Establish consequences for misuse.** Cheating, sending inappropriate messages and any sexual communication should all have serious consequences.
- ▶ **Watch your own behavior.** If you text your child when you know he's in class and then turn around and tell that child that he can't do that, you're sending mixed signals.
- ▶ **Check their messages.** What feels like snooping will actually help ensure kids use powerful technologies safely and responsibly.