



TEXT MESSAGING: A FAMILY AFFAIR

While text messaging is the No. 1 way young people communicate on their mobile phones, more and more parents are starting to get the texting bug as well.

Text messaging can help reduce the communication gap that sometimes exists between parents and their kids because:

- **Parents get quick answers to their questions.** This is good for today's busy kids who are often away from home – at school, extracurricular activities, part-time jobs or just hanging out with friends.
- **Kids are more likely to respond to text messages when they are with their friends.** Text messaging is more discreet and their answers don't have to be as detailed as in a voice conversation.
- **Tone of voice becomes a nonissue.** Some kids automatically get defensive when they hear their parent's voice, which can result in delayed return phone calls or avoidance. Text messaging takes tone out of the mix.
- **You can enter your child's world.** Parents can communicate in the style their children are more comfortable with and be more "cool" in their eyes.
- **You can take time to compose and edit a message before sending.** This is great because it provides the opportunity to suppress or remove emotions from potentially charged situations.
- **Kids feel like they have more freedom.** With text messaging, parents aren't constantly calling and forcing kids to have a full-blown conversation about their whereabouts, however, they still can easily keep tabs. It's all about perception.
- **Provides a way to strengthen parent-child bonds.** Parents can send kids a text message wishing them good luck before a big test or important audition, or just send a note letting them know they love them and are thinking about them.

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Highlights From AT&T's August 2008 Parent-Child Texting Survey

It's Text Time

- The top three occasions children are most likely to text their parents are to tell them when they're going to be home (88 percent), to tell them they are safe (78 percent) and to ask to be picked up (75 percent).
- The top three occasions parents send a text message to their child is to tell them to come or phone home (79 percent), work out logistical arrangements (76 percent) and to send them a loving message (74 percent).

Texting Rocks

- The top three things parents like best about text messaging are their children are easier to reach (58 percent) children are more likely to respond (56 percent) and they have more frequent communication with their child (55 percent).
- The top three things children like best about text messaging are the privacy (65 percent), the cool/hip factor (49 percent) and it's a better use of time than calling (48 percent).

Texting At Any Cost

- Forty percent of parents said they had been caught off-guard by a high wireless phone bill due to their child's text message use. However, the majority of parents shared that their child is on an unlimited text messaging plan (87 percent).
- Sixty-one percent of parents said that text messaging is the most cost-effective way to exchange messages with their child, compared with phone calls, e-mails and instant messages.

Texting Firsts

- Fifty-three percent of parents said their child taught them how to text. The high number of children said a friend taught them how to text (42 percent).
- The need to reach their child led many of parents to text for the first time (33 percent).
- Fifty-three percent of children said they sent a text for the first time because it was an easier way to stay in touch with friends.

The survey was conducted by Synovate. Respondents were composed of parents (age 30+), teenagers (13-17) and young adults (18-20); all were pre-qualified as wireless phone users and active texters.