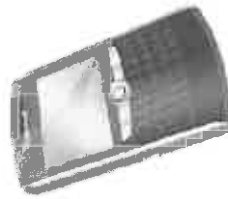


Texting Tips for Parents & Kids

Avoiding problems with texting is really about common sense, not so much about understanding technology. If you don't know as much as your child about texting and cell phones, don't worry about it! Here's a few practical tips and these can help avoid problems ranging from small to very serious.



<p>Sending text or images is a lifelong commitment. Once you send it, you can never suppress it or get it back.</p>	<p>Consider the age of the child when considering if, or when, to permit texting privileges. Texting is a very powerful technology to give to young children.</p>
<p>Children can have a cell phone without texting abilities; just call your cell phone provider to turn these off on your child's phone.</p>	<p>Talk with children about the permanence and the impact of what they text.</p>
<p>Texting is convenient and it's easy for it to become a habit. Every now and then, ask yourself: would it be better to talk in this situation?</p>	<p>It can be difficult to "read" emotions in a text, and that can make it easy to be misunderstood.</p>

<p>It is easy to say something in texting that you would not have the courage to say to a person's face. Sometimes, this means that it's better left unsaid. Think about that.</p>	<p>Don't go to your cell phone when you're angry. You may text something you'll regret later.</p>
<p>Don't let anyone ever pressure or force you into texting something. Go tell an adult - quickly!</p>	<p>Today's kids are used to being in touch 24/7. Being out of touch - putting away that cell phone - may actually make them anxious because they are so accustomed to that constant flow of information. Talk about this with your kids. Point out that you can't win - that that anxiety will always win, unless they decide to control the technology and not to let it control them.</p>

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Internet, Mobile Phones, and Texting Safety Tips for Kids

- Do not post personal information online (name, age, birth date, address, telephone number, or school name). This information can be used by others to find out where you and your family live.
- Do not post your picture or pictures of your family online – they can be copied or changed or used to find you.
- Do not send any inappropriate photo or message by email or text.
- Do not post your plans and activities in a chat room or on your personal website. Do not post entries that make it clear that no one is at your home.
- Do not communicate with someone who has made you uncomfortable or afraid. Tell your parents or a trusted adult if someone does.
- Do not join online groups or games without talking to your parents.
- Do not meet with someone you met online without first telling your parents or guardian.
- Do not post hurtful or inappropriate messages. If someone else posts hurtful or inappropriate messages -- do not respond, but do tell a teacher, parent or other adult.
- Do not click on any link that you do not know, and you are not sure is legitimate.
- Do not buy any “apps” or “in app” purchases without talking to your parents or guardian.
- Do not enable any location services without talking to your parents or guardian.
- Do remember that people can lie online and say they are something they are not. Someone who says they are a 12-year-old girl could really be an older man looking to harm you.
- Do save messages that upset you and show them to your parents.
- Do share your password with your parents.
- Do visit www.netsmartz.org to learn more about Internet safety.

Cell Phone Safety

Helpful tips for kid communications

By [Jennifer Dignan](#) | null null , null

Source: Scholastic News Online

Cell phones are useful tools, and they're lots of fun too. But cell phones do have risks. If you have a cell phone, it is important to understand these risks, and learn how to enjoy your cell phone safely.

Unwanted Communications

Texting can be a wonderful way to keep in touch with your friends. But bullies can send text messages too. They may send texts directly to their victims, or they may send texts about their victim to other kids.

If you receive a rude, mean, or threatening text, do not reply or forward it. This will only encourage the **cyberbully**—and could lead to your becoming a cyberbully yourself. Instead, save the text and show it to a parent or other trusted adult.

The same is true if you receive a call, text, or picture from someone you don't know.

Scammers, spammers, and predators are finding their way onto phones. Do not reply to their messages, even to tell them to go away. And of course, NEVER agree to meet anyone in person whom you have met through your phone, no matter who they say they are.

Think Before You Send

Sending pictures from a cell phone is fast, easy, and fun. But before you do it, think.

Pictures can be forwarded at lightning speed—from one phone to another, or from a phone to a computer. Your picture could end up on a social networking Web site, like MySpace or Facebook, or anywhere else on the Internet.

Send pictures to no one but trusted friends or relatives. And even then, make sure you send only pictures that you wouldn't mind other people seeing.

Walking and Talking

A recent study at the University of Alabama at Birmingham found that children who talk on cell phones while crossing the street are at a higher risk for injury or death. What can you do? Simple. End your conversation before you cross the street.

Your Parents Can Help

You don't have to take care of cell phone safety on your own. Your parents can help.


One option is a phone or monitoring service that provides parental controls. Parental controls let your parents control how and when you use your cell phone, and who is able to contact you. (You and your parents can determine the rules together.) With parental controls, you won't have to worry about receiving unwanted calls or texts—or the temptation to text during science class!

No matter what, keep your parents in the loop. Let them know who your friends are, and

when and where you use your phone. Again, if you receive any unusual, upsetting, or unwanted calls, texts, or pictures, tell your parents immediately.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Read today's story and answer the following question.

	<p>Do you have a cell phone? How old were you when you got it? If you don't have one, do you want one? Have you ever received an unwanted call, text, or picture on your cell phone? What did you do?</p> <p>Tell us what you think on the Scholastic News Online Blog!</p>
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