

Text Etiquette

Remember text-message etiquette is up to personal preference. You hope that people have a basic etiquette and common courtesy concerning texting, but not everyone will.

Below are a few do's and don'ts for texters:

Do's:

Do keep it light and simple. No one wants to read long messages on a text device. No one wants to have an entire conversation with you by texting when you could just call him or her instead. The medium is meant for short and sweet, so keep it that way. Verizon states that anything over 160 characters should be an email or a call.

Do check the recipient's number before you hit "send". It's very easy to dial the wrong number or select the wrong phone book entry.

Do use texting for messages that cannot be misinterpreted.

Do an impulsive check. Are you sending a text impulsively without thinking why you are sending or worse you are emotional or under some duress.

Do respond if you receive a text message that was sent to you by mistake. Reply by explaining that you aren't the intended recipient. You don't have to respond to anything else in the message.

Do respond to all text messages when you have a chance. Respond to a text message with a text message, email or a phone call.

Do let someone know who you are if they don't have your phone number. Start your text-message by stating who you are: "Hi—it's John (gym). Dr's number is: 1-800-555-1111. Good luck."

Do be aware of your tone. It is extremely difficult to discern tone in text messages, just as in e-mail. What seems to you to be a completely innocuous message may be grossly misinterpreted by the recipient, causing certain discomfort if not irreparable harm.

Do remember that common courtesy still rules. For example, composing an SMS (or text message) while you're in a face-to-face conversation with someone is just as rude as taking a voice call.

Do remember that texting is informal. It shouldn't be used for formal invitations or to dump your girlfriend or boyfriend. The casualness of texting diminishes the strength and meaning of the message.

Do be conscientious of others' schedules. Don't assume that because you are awake, working, or not busy that the person you're texting is as well. Many a pleasant sleep have been interrupted by recurring "beep-beep...beep-beeps" of incoming messages.

Do spell correctly. Texting allows for some great cheat words, but overdoing it can lead to confusion and extreme annoyance.

Do remember who you are sending the text message to when using text abbreviations. You shouldn't expect your stodgy superiors at work to be hip to the text/SMS lingo. Also don't expect to win points with your kids by trying to be cool, either.

Don'ts:

Don't replace all communication with texts. Texting cannot communicate those subtle nuances that accompany face-to-face meetings or even phone calls.

Don't deliver bad or sad news by text. Texts should be short and sweet. You shouldn't use text messaging when informing someone of sad news, business matters, or urgent meetings, unless it's to set up a phone call on the subject.

Don't expect your text to get to your recipient the minute you hit "send". Remember that as with email, you can't know for sure when the recipient is going to read his or her message. If the message is time sensitive you should call.

Don't get upset if you don't get a reply. Before you text someone and get frustrated at the lack of a response, be sure that they're familiar with how to use the service, and that their carrier will accept messages from yours.

Don't send texts while under the influence. You shouldn't drunk dial and you shouldn't drunken text.

Don't send texts to friends when you are with someone else. Reading and sending texts when with someone else (while on a date, for example) tells the one you are with they are less important than the one you are texting. This doesn't apply when just hanging out with others.

Don't text while driving.

Don't have three espressos and then start sending messages like crazy. Think before you hit send. Not only will you possibly send the wrong feeling to someone — you may send it to the wrong person, altogether!

Don't rely on text messaging. It's a great medium for communicating to others, but it's not enough to sustain a relationship.

Don't rely on text messaging for your day's communication. You might want to also call. Remember that text messaging is a strictly casual affair—usually used as a prelude to a call. If you really have something important or substantial to say, say it over the phone.

Don't text message in class, meetings, movies, church etc. People can hear you clicking away or see the light from your screen. This is just rude.

Don't text-message anything confidential, private, or potentially embarrassing. You never know when someone might be looking over your significant other's shoulder—or worse yet, when your message might get sent to the wrong person.

