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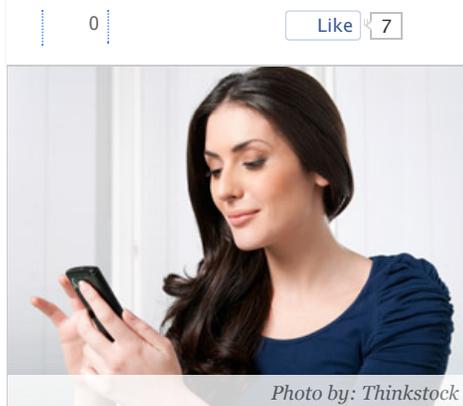
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7 Rules of Texting Etiquette

Avoid these gaffes when you send messages from your cell phone

By Marlis Cepeda



Speed plus convenience makes texting the go-to option for on-the-go conversation. In fact, over five billion messages are sent per day! While a text message may be more casual than a phone call or an email, texting whatever, whenever, to whomever has consequences. These seven do's and don'ts are definitely worth keeping in mind.

DO keep it brief. A text message should be two to three sentences tops, says etiquette consultant Jodi R. R. Smith, president and owner of **Mannersmith**. Had a great date last night and want to divulge the details to your gal pal? Consider your friend's phone screen size before you text her a novel. The text fitting in one message on your phone doesn't necessarily translate to a single, neat note for a friend who uses a different carrier. Lengthy texts sent from a Verizon phone to a Sprint one, for example, can get divided and sent as back-to-back messages. How long is too long? Most phones have a small character counter in the same box in which you're texting that says something like 160/1. That means if your text goes over 160 characters it

may carry over into a second text message, depending on the recipient's phone service provider. If you see your story turning into a multi-text saga, email or call instead.

DON'T keep texting until you get a reply. Even though everyone seems to be glued to their cell phones these days, you can't assume the people you text receive your messages right after you send them. As relationship expert April Masini, founder of **AskApril.com**, reminds, phones aren't *always* on (shocking, right?). And persistent texting to check if a friend's received your first message is just plain rude, says Kalin Kassabov, co-founder and CEO of **ProTexting**, a mobile marketing company that offers a text messaging platform to clients. When the recipient of your

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messages turns her phone back on, she'll be bombarded with your texts.

DO text to confirm plans. Meeting friends for dinner after work? Even if you made the plans over email or phone, sending a quick text to confirm is fine, says Masini. Since a simple "Still on for tonight?" requires a yes or no answer, the conversation is speedy for both you and the recipient. Last-minute change to plans? Although texting's the easiest option, Masini strongly suggests calling in this case. "Just because you change the venue or the meetup time and press send doesn't mean that the recipient has read your text." Texting also isn't right for casual party invites. An invite is a more appropriate invitation. Even for getting lunch with a colleague, Masini suggests calling or inviting her in person. But you can get away with texting to meet, say, your sister or best friend because you have a much closer relationship.

DON'T end a relationship with a text message. You'd think this would go without saying, but Masini says this offensive method is surprisingly common. No matter how many reasons you have for not breaking it off face to face, Masini insists that texting this info is bad manners. Another relationship you shouldn't end over text? One you have with employees, clients or vendors, so don't fire someone via text message, advises Kassabov.

DO use proper grammar and punctuation. It's true that texting's the reason we have so many new abbreviations. And with a limited amount of characters to get your point across, it's natural for periods, commas and question marks to disappear. Still, texts should include appropriate punctuation, spelling and grammar to make reading easier on the recipient, says Masini. Does that mean LOL or OMG are off-limits? Not at all, says Masini, who explains that shorthand language is fine for texts with one caveat: You shouldn't assume that someone you're texting for the first time is aware of even the common abbreviations, cautions Kassabov.

DON'T send too many attachments. Although text messages can feature photos, videos and audio, Smith recommends against texting more than one attachment or link. That's because sending large files via text clogs the recipient's inbox, preventing her from receiving other messages and files. "Texting isn't the place for volume," adds Masini. Instead, send multiple photos via email. It's a better viewing experience anyway.

DO text at the right time. If you know someone's too busy to pick up the phone, texting works because the recipient can read the message on her own time. But if *you're* too busy to pick up the phone, maybe you shouldn't text. For instance, Masini urges you to avoid sending messages while you're in a meeting, whether it's formal or informal. It's distracting to others in the room. Other times you shouldn't text: when your judgment's impaired (after a few drinks or when you're sleep-deprived), while driving (it can be deadly) and when your battery's running low (you may not be able to answer a recipient's questions).

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