



Understand Your Teen's Text Lingo?

Online Dictionary Expert Helps Crack Code

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Kids these days have more ways of communicating with their friends than ever before. And unlike phone calls, some modes of communication are taking on a whole new language.

"Teens have always wanted to have their own funky way of expressing themselves, so this is another extension of their individuality and the evolution of the English language," said Dan Wilton, founder of [TransL8it!](#), a web portal that makes sense of SMS, text messages and chat lingo.

Erin Jansen, founder of [Net Lingo](#), the Online Dictionary, said that part of the reason kids love chat lingo is because it's a code.

"It makes them feel empowered, like they are in the know," Jansen said.

But while kids might feel empowered, parents might feel like they're losing control on what their children are talking about -- and to whom.

Parents Can Understand

Parents' fears about this code are understandable, Jansen said.

"The greatest reason for parents' resistance is that there is so much of it," said Jansen. "Most parents weren't part of the [Internet](#) or computer revolution and there's a high learning curve."

The bottom line, she said, is that parents feel they can't catch up with what kids already know.

"There's a bit of a fear factor," Jansen said. "Parents aren't as comfortable with the Internet as their kids are."

The easiest way to get started is to realize that you'll never know all the lingo that your teen or child will know. Choose bits and pieces of lingo then turn to a guide or lingo dictionary for guidance.

Some terminology is common sense, some is completely unnecessary and some is a way to hide information. Check out resources available to educate yourself on chat lingo and decide if you want the necessities or more of the whole picture.

Should You Worry?

Sending text messages and sending instant messages are two different things. Texting to friends is pretty common and fairly harmless. IM can be a different story.

"When you're IMing, people you don't know can ask to chat," said Jansen. "IM, chat and social networking sites should be a cause of concern."

Most teen interaction on IM, chat and social networking sites are completely harmless, but some is not. Many IM services allow parents to log conversations. Make it a habit to understand how to do this. Keep in mind that having a log of conversations doesn't replace your presence or common sense.

Jansen suggested that parents set their [computer](#) up in an area in which your child can't shield their interactions, such as a living room, kitchen or other common area.

"Parents need to set up some parameters," Jansen said. "It comes back to basic family parenting, let your kids know that you'll be monitoring their correspondences, to a degree."

The irony about Internet acronyms is that adults make up most of them -- not kids, Jansen said.

"Things like tdtm (talk dirty to me) were developed by adults, and kids are learning these inappropriate acronyms from adults," she said.

Benefits Of Learning

"Parents should be aware of the [Top 20 Acronyms Every Parent Should Know](#)," said Jansen. "Knowing them, you can infer when something bad or inappropriate is happening."

Not only is it important to be cognizant of potential dangers -- web stalkers, inappropriate teens or adults -- it is important for parents to make sure to keep communication open with their child. Expressing concern over texting and continuing to communicate can go a long way toward preventing or deterring these negative web influences.

Learning more about chat and messaging can also help relieve some anxiety about allowing your child to chat online. Some parents may perceive all chatting as negative when the majority of it is simply friends conversing. Knowing who your child is chatting with and what they are saying can improve trust and your personal relationship with your child.

Knowing chat lingo can also help you seem in the know with your child. Text messaging is an easy way to communicate quick messages with your child and can even make them think that you're cooler than other parents.

Common Text Terms You Can Use

- CU (see you)
- l8r (later)
- LOL (lots of love or laugh out loud)
- LMK (let me know)
- 2MORO (tomorrow)
- 404 (I haven't a clue)
- J/C (just checking)
- ADR (address)
- AEAP (as early as possible)
- TBC (to be continued)
- TMI (too much information)
- YTTT (you telling the truth?)
- LYL (love you lots)

Why Messaging Isn't Like Passing Notes

Jansen said that the world of instant messaging is a far cry from the days old method of passing messages along.

"Kids need to understand that instant messaging and social networking are completely different than when we passed notes in school," said Jansen. "They are literally interacting with the world. Kids need to be reminded that they can't blindly trust anyone they are interacting with."

She added that you should remind and continue to remind your child about things they should never share with a stranger. "Never post your address, sports squad or school on your IM or social networking profile," said Jansen. "There are predators out there."