

Sign parents up for Tweeting 101

Text and instant messaging lingo: Parents should learn it to keep kids safe

By Heidi Stevens, Tribune Newspapers



Teens are texting and messaging more and more these days. Maybe it's time for parents to learn to decipher the lingo. (Tribune file photo / February 1, 2011)

February 1, 2011 - Your tween has an entire language of symbols and abbreviations that she texts and tweets and posts. Is there any way for you to decipher it?

Parent advice:

It is vital for parents to be aware of technology and how it affects their child. Ask them to teach you about texting lingo and their experiences. If you talk about these things during a family meal or a car trip they will feel like an expert and open up about what they know. The key is tone. If you only converse with your children in a parental, judgmental tone, they will not open up to you.

— Dawn Lantero

Expert advice:

"Your children's safety may depend upon you knowing their text and instant messaging lingo," says Mary Jo Rapini, author of "Start Talking: A Girl's Guide for You and Your Mom About Health, Sex or Whatever" (Bayou Publishing, \$14.95). "Kids want to fit in and feel good, and there are people who do not have your children's best interest at heart — people who are available at all times via the Internet and texting."

Rapini likes **netismartz.org**, a website run by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, for its tips on recognizing cyber risks and how to approach the topic with your kids. She says to be on the lookout for bullying behavior.

"Bullying is no longer the bullying you grew up with," she says. "It is constant torture, and it happens at a time your child's sense of self is not fully developed. This is part of the reason it can have disastrous effects on children."

NetLingo.com is also a good source for decoding acronyms and texting jargon. The site lets you search individual terms and also sells downloadable guides, including "The List: A Parent's Guide to Internet Lingo" and "Top 50 Internet Acronyms Parents Need to Know."

"It takes your involvement to keep your child safe," Rapini says. "Blaming the schools, churches or wherever else your child encountered a harmful person will not help if your child is hurt."

Decode this

Author Mary Jo Rapini offers the following primer on messaging lingo and urges parents to commit the terms to memory.

One to one: **121**

I love you: **143**

I hate you: **182**

Too cool for you: **2c4u**

Too hot to handle: **2H2H**

Too much to handle: **2M2H**

Mom: **303**

Marijuana: **420**

Forgive me: **4GM**

Parent in room: **CD9**

Parent has left: **99**

Anyplace, anywhere, anytime: **A3**

Address: **addy**

At home: **AH**

Compiled by Heidi Stevens, Tribune Newspapers

Got a solution? Your kids think potty talk is hilarious and every tactic you've tried — ignoring it, punishing it, politely asking them to stop it — fails. Help! E-mail us your thoughts at parenthood@tribune.com.