

## Be careful about abbreviating when texting

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As shorthand text-messaging become increasingly widespread in emails and text messages, many people are scrambling to decode it.

In many offices, a working knowledge of text-speak and messaging is becoming more and more popular. And at home, parents are always struggling to understand the lingo in order to keep up with and sometimes police their children.

This type of messaging technology is widely used among adolescents and the youth of today.

Almost every day, these age groups create a new shorthand text message, in most cases unaware. Most of them do this for various reasons.

One of the reasons for the surge in texting abbreviations according to NetLingo is that, in some social networks, sometimes messages are limited to 140 characters. Because of this limitation in length, users have developed an alphabet soup of shorthand abbreviations to save time, and their thumbs.

For many people, shorthand texting is quick, easy, and it's especially useful when making a phone call isn't an option (like at work or in class where you technically shouldn't be using your phone...or when you want to flirt with a guy without being too committal).

Kenneth Masilo, a student at University of Botswana noted that he at times uses shorthand text messaging as it is convenient and has also become so popular among his peers.

"I normally use it when sending a text message through my phone mostly to save airtime because there is a limit in our phones, once you write over a page, its double charge," he said. He explained that he never thought of the fact that his friends might not be able to decode the message.

"I think by now they all understand the way we chat and know all these words," he said.

However, not everyone (Read: crotchety old people) thinks it's so great; many critics claim that texting is contributing to the deterioration of the English language. Critics worry that the common practice of using abbreviations and shorthand in text messages will cause people to begin speaking in shorthand, too. They also claim that students are turning in papers riddled with text message slang. Some believe it is a total NO! in the workplace.

A worker at Barclays Bank of Botswana, Tshepho, noted that this type of texting should not be used in the workplace.

"It usually has mixed interpretations, the way I interpret it may not be the same way the sender does. I am also not likely to read hence missing out on a very important notice and if I do I might have wasted my time in doing so," he said. He explained that he personally doesn't use the language because he believes in clear and easy to understand communication.

Another interviewee, Andrew, noted that the language used is not communicative.

“Communication has to be easy to understand,” he said. He asserted that he believes the language or lingo as commonly known is for the youngsters. “Send any of these abbreviations to them, they are going to get the meaning immediately,” he added.

The consequences of misunderstanding the lingo can be mortifying. “Kate Washburn didn’t know what to make of the email a friend sent to her office with the abbreviation “NSFW” written at the bottom. Then she clicked through the attached sideshow, titled “Awkward Family Photos.” It included shots of a family in furry “nude” suits and of another family alongside a male walrus in a revealing pose. After looking up NSFW on NetLingo.com—a Web site that provides definitions of Internet and texting terms, she discovered what it stood for: “Not safe for work.”-WSJ.com.

“If I would have known it wasn’t safe for work, I wouldn’t have taken the chance of being inappropriate,” says Ms. Washburn.

The confusion has given rise to a number of resources that provide English translations for some of the terms like LOL (“Lots of love.”) and LOL (“Laugh out loud”) among them independent Web sites like NetLingo.com and UrbanDictionary.com and corporate ones like LG Mobile Phones’ DTXTR.com.

Taking time to learn the jargon may seem like a waste of time and brains to some people. But with over one trillion text messages sent and received, you run the risk of feeling out of it if you don’t learn and get to understand what the abbreviations might mean.

This type of communication is also increasingly becoming part of our everyday life and all we ought to do is embrace it and know where to get off with it. People need to understand that there are certain people you can communicate with, using shorthand text messaging and some you cannot.

Below are some of the abbreviations used and their meaning!

4evr..... Forever	99 . . . . . Parents are no longer watching
LOL.....“Lots of love.”	PCM . . . . Please call me
LOL.....“Laugh out loud”	IMS. . . . . I am sorry
OMG..... oh my God	TOY. . . . . Thinking of you
Bcoz..... Because	KUTGW. . . Keep up the good work
GBTW. . . . . Get back to work	CID . . . . . Consider it done
NMP . . . . . Not my problem	HAND . . . Have a nice day
PIR . . . . . Parent in room	NRN . . . . No response necessary
FYEO. . . . . For your eyes only	4COL. . . . For crying out loud
BI5 . . . . . Back in five minutes	WRUD. . . . What are you doing
DEGT . . . . . Don’t even go there	LMIRL. . . Let’s meet in real life
BIL . . . . . Boss is listening	^5 . . . . . High five
PAW. . . . . Parents are watching	