Cracking The Code Behind Your Kids' Secret Online Language
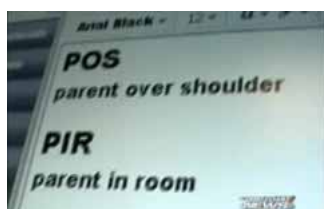
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First Coast News

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JACKSONVILLE, FL -- "G2G" "P911" Do you know what these cyber terms stand for? Teenagers certainly do. First Coast News breaks down the online language many children don't want you to know.

When you're typing out a text message or an e-mail, sure, it's faster to punch in the letter "B" and the number "4" than spell out the word "before." But there's more to those odd abbreviations teenagers use than just the need for speed.

At the Bolles School in San Jose, it's not strange to find students learning a foreign language. But how about a whole new lingo based on abbreviations of good old English?

"LOL is 'laugh out loud.' JK: 'just kidding.' And W is always 'with,'" a half-dozen students rattle off the abbreviations they type to each other every day. They grew up in the computer and cell phone age, and they'll text message, instant message, and e-mail everything from quick notes to whole conversations -- spelled with a jumbled mix of letters and numbers that stand for words or even entire sentences. And it's leaving their parents in the dust.

"My Dad, he hates text messages, because when his friends text him, he can read them, but he doesn't know how to reply," said Caroline Calhoun, one of the students who sat down with us. "And my Mom, if I ever sent her [a text messages], I don't think she even knows how to open it."

You may know a few of the most common abbreviations, most are easy to decode. "BTW: 'by the way.' TY: 'thank you,' I use that one a lot. TTYL: 'talk to you later,'" the students list some of the most obvious and often-used shorthand. BF means "boyfriend," while GF stands for "girlfriend," if you see G2G the person on the other end has "got to go," and CYA is a handy way to say "see ya." One phrase even pulls from Winnie the Pooh's pal Tigger. TTFN translates to "ta ta for now."

Those may be easy to follow, but do you know these? GYPO stands for "get your pants off." IWSN is the more jarring "I want sex now."

"It may have to do with sex. It may have to do with drugs. If a child can't explain it, or becomes too embarrassed, or doesn't want the parent to know, it's the parent's responsibility at that point to stop the child's computer use," explained child protection expert Stefanie Campbell.

Even the kids we sat down with -- who don't mess with drugs -- know the codes. Do you? Try 420. "420 is National Marijuana Day. 420 is always said "four-twenty" -- never "four hundred twenty," and thirty years ago, it caught on as supposedly the perfect time of day to get stoned. Now it's everyday shorthand for marijuana.

And here's another set to watch for: POS: parent over shoulder, PIR: parent in room, P911: parent emergency. If it starts with a "P," kids are probably talking about their parents. One of the students in our group, Scooter Cecere,

even has his own mom-and-dad code worked out with a buddy, "'The bat is in the cave.' That's what we say. 'The bat is in the cave.' And we know that our parents just walked in, so we don't say anything bad."

Another student, Kathryn Winslow, said no code word would stop her mom from finding out what's going on. "Whenever I'll be downstairs on the computer or something, my Mom will go upstairs and she'll say she's doing something, but I know she's really checking out my text messages in my phone," Winslow said.

Yes, it may feel like you're sneaking a peek at your kids' digital diary. But experts say even if you don't read the messages on those tiny screens, you should talk about them. And now you can ask all the right questions, because you speak the language.

Below, you'll find a series of links to more information about online chatting and internet safety.

The NetLingo Top 20 Internet Acronyms Every Parent Needs to Know:

1. POS - Parent Over Shoulder

2. PIR - Parent In Room

3. P911 - Parent Alert

4. PAW - Parents Are Watching

5. PAL - Parents Are Listening

6. ASL - Age/Sex/Location

7. MorF - Male or Female

8. SorG - Straight or Gay

9. LMIRL - Let's Meet In Real Life

10. KPC - Keeping Parents Clueless

11. TDTM - Talk Dirty To Me

12. IWSN - I Want Sex Now

13. NIFOC - Nude In Front Of Computer

14. GYPO - Get Your Pants Off

15. ADR - Address

16. WYCM - Will You Call Me?

17. KFY - Kiss For You

18. MOOS - Member(s) Of the Opposite Sex

19. MOSS or MOTSS - Member(s) Of The Same Sex

20. NALOPKT - Not A Lot Of People Know That

Edited by Grayson Kamm, Reporter