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Get hip to 'IM' lingo

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When Terry Booker, a junior at Corning East High School, needs to cut an online chat short, she types "G2G," a quick way of saying "got to go."

The phrase is part of instant messaging dialect, an abbreviated language that's used to communicate online and in phone texting. "It's really popular (and) I know exactly what my friends are doing," says Booker, who started instant messaging when she was in the sixth grade. "It's mostly kept on the computer screen, it's not like we do it in person."

Booker says she enjoys the current exclusivity of the screen language. "It's something we can go to, it's privacy," she says.

Some parents may not have a clue what instant messaging is about, but that may soon change. That's because more adults are comfortable using the Internet, according to the latest survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Seventy-three percent of respondents (about 147 million adults) are Internet users, a figure up from 66 percent (about 133 million adults) in a January 2005 survey.

But just in case you're not too knowledgeable of instant messaging terms, here are some familiar phrases that Booker says she uses, as well as some examples from www.netlingo.com. Of course, Two Minutes chose the more benign phrases. Parents should be aware that there are many inappropriate or explicit terms out there.

- BRB - Be right back.
- TTYL - Talk to you later.
- CUL8ER - See you later.
- LOL - Laugh out loud.
- B4N - Bye for now.
- BAK - Back at my keyboard.
- BBT - Be back tomorrow.
- BWDIK - But what do I know?
- BW - Best wishes.
- DBEYR - Don't believe everything you read.
- YHM - You have mail.
- YR - Yeah right.

Booker says she doesn't think parents have much to worry about, such as online predators, if their child takes the proper precautions when they're instant messaging.

"You can take someone off your buddy list," Booker says. "You can keep them on the list but click on block so they can't IM you."

"Some people are smart enough to do a new screen name, but there's a feature to block all names that are not on your buddy list."