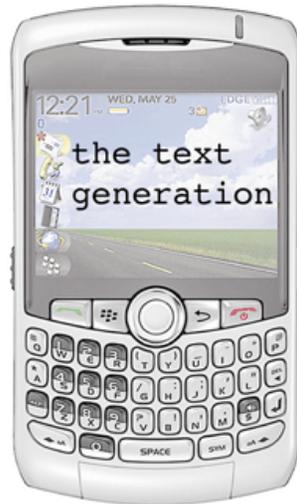


The text generation

By Tony Gutierrez: CNJ staff writer -- June 15, 2007



MCT/Freedom Newspapers illustration

Whether it's because it saves minutes or because kids say it's easier to express themselves, text messaging is the latest communication phenomenon gripping today's teenagers.

"Kids don't communicate verbally any more," said Dana Wright, whose 16-year-old son is entering his junior year at Muleshoe High. "He spends more time texting than he does talking on the phone."

Austin Wright said he sends at least 300 text messages a day and receives about 300.

"I finally gave in and did the unlimited texting because it's cheaper," Dana Wright said.

Tony Aburto, a senior wireless consultant at Alltel in Clovis, said teens from ages 13 to 18 average 10,000 text messages a month. Aburto said whenever customers go over their text limits, he encourages parents to switch to an unlimited plan.

"Lately, parents' reactions have been, 'Give it to them,'" Aburto said.

"At first, they wondered how a kid can text so much. But it's their generation."

Cody Helm and his girlfriend, Patrice Dykes, 17-year-old Clovis residents, said they text each other constantly.

"When he's scared to tell me something, he'll text me so he doesn't have to tell me or see my reaction," Dykes said. "I text because it's quicker than asking a question on the phone. I text family, friends, him. I also text to get my hair appointments done."

Helm said while he texts 50 times a day, Dykes texts close to 200.

"Some people are afraid to talk so they text messages," Helm said. "You can say more things on text messages than you can on the phone."

Aburto believes teens can express themselves better through text messages because they can think out what they're going to say.

"With talking, there's a lot of dead air between people," Aburto said. "With texting, they can express themselves in more words. People are shy in person. I had one friend text his girlfriend all day, but when he saw his girlfriend, it was silent."

Tonya Adrian, an assistant principal for Clovis High School, said cell phone use is not allowed during normal school hours.

If a student is caught, the phone is confiscated and released to a parent. Further offenses can result in detention, suspension or confiscation of the phone for the semester in extreme situations. Adrian said the

school averages three to five cell phone offenses per day.

"They may be texting answers back and forth in the classroom," Adrian said. "Kids are smart when it comes to technology, therefore we have to be diligent and not allow this misuse on campus."

Dykes said school policy didn't prevent her from texting.

"I can make eye contact and text at the same time," Dykes said. "People put it in their purse. It looks like you're having a conversation with them when you're actually texting. That's why I never got caught at school."

Understanding texting

A look at some of the common text message abbreviations.

<3: Heart

BB4N: Bye-bye for now

BBL; BRB: Be back later; be right back

BFF: Best friends forever

BTW: By the way

CUL8R: See you later

F2F: Face-to-face

G2G: Got to go

GOI: Get over it

IDC; IDK: I don't care; I don't know

JK; JP; JW: Just kidding; just playing; just wondering

LOL: Laughing out loud

MUAH: Kiss

N2MJCHBU: Not too much, just chillin', how about you?

NP; NW: No problem; no way!

OMG: Oh, my gosh

OTL: Out to lunch

P911; PAW; POS: Parent alert; parents are watching; parent over shoulder

PITB: Pain in the butt

RU; UR, U2: Are you; you're, your; you too

SLAP: Sounds like a plan

TLC: Tender loving care

THX, TY; YW: Thanks, thank you; you're welcome

WFM: Works for me

Source: NetLingo.com