

Text messaging is E123

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Sure, you have the basic text messaging abbreviations down.

How ru?

LOL

But how about "IMNSHO"?

NALOPKT. Er, not a lot of people know that.

Text messaging almost requires knowledge of another language. It's the memorization of dozens of acronyms, some obvious, and others not so obvious.

There are even text message translation programs online in case you receive a particularly cryptic message.

And the acronyms are growing.

Erin Jansen, founder of NetLingo.com, an online resource for Internet language, says every day she receives at least one suggestion to add to the site's text message dictionary.

Some of the more well-known acronyms were first used in the early days of the Internet and made their way into e-mail messages and chat rooms. Jansen wrote a 500-page dictionary of Internet lingo in 2000. Now she said her Web site has 5,000 pages of terms, abbreviations and acronyms.

The acronyms started out as a way to save time while text messaging, Jansen said, but now there's more to it than that.

Knowing the lingo, especially the obscure acronyms, makes people feel cool. After all, why else would people use certain acronyms that take longer to type than spelling out a message, she said.

It's like speaking a secret language, Jansen said.

"You're in the know," she said.

But you can't just make up any acronym you want. There has to be a common understanding with whomever you're text messaging. Different parts of the country and different circles of friends have their own acronyms that wouldn't mean a thing to another group, she said.

Her relatives in Davenport, for example, type "GSYJDWURMNKH" meaning "Good Seeing You, Just Don't Wear Your Monkey Hat."

Jansen, who lives in California, said she still doesn't really understand it but her family members insist they use it all the time.

"It depends on who you're friends with," she said.

Parents are concerned about the lingo because they don't know what their kids are typing, Jansen said. She created a Top 20 list of acronyms on her site to get them up to speed.

She also encourages parents to talk openly with their kids about texting instead of taking drastic measures, such as banning text messaging.

Will texting replace English as we know it?

In some ways text messaging has already influenced the English language, Jansen said, but she doesn't think it's anything to fear.

Text message lingo won't replace English entirely, but some acronyms and abbreviations are becoming more mainstream, she said. It's a reflection of the culture, she said.

"The English language evolves," Jansen said.

Bob Alsop, an English professor at Waldorf College in Forest City, said his students are able to separate text message lingo from the writing used in assignments.

"I guess I would have to say at this point that I have not seen its influence in academic papers," Alsop said.

The casual language of e-mail has had more of an effect on papers, he said. He talks with students about using a more formal style when writing to certain audiences.

Text messaging has influenced his classes in more obvious ways, such as using the phones during class.

"My response was, 'You can take notes with that thing now?'" Alsop said.