

Warning! Teen chatting

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PORTSMOUTH — Much has been made of the new teen language — text.

Forget four-hour telephone calls, or chats at the local burger joint, today's teens are talking digitally, and while topics like gossip, dating and love remain the same, the lingo is lost on most adults.

For instance, P911 means "parent alert," and MOS means "mom over shoulder." They are no surprise coming from teens seeking to establish a bit more independence, say experts like Dr. David Finkelhor, professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire and director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center there.

"It is a normal part of adolescence to begin to develop autonomy and independence, and to define an area of privacy that parents don't have access to," Finkelhor said. "The fact that young people do that should not, in and of itself, be a cause for alarm. But how that goes on is important."

But phrases like GNOC, IWSN and LMIRL should set off alarms, say police.

They stand for "get naked on camera," "I want sex now," and the one police are often most concerned about, "let's meet in real life."

To prevent those phrases from flying, Finkelhor and Portsmouth police Lt. Tim Brownell recommend something that might come as a surprise in this information age — good, old-fashioned parenting.

"Be involved. Know who their friends are. Know what they're up to. Talk with them," said Brownell, who also serves as commander for the New Hampshire wing of the national Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. "It's just like parents looking out for who kids are hanging out with at the street corner, now it's online."

The two have somewhat divergent views on child oversight.

Finkelhor, a sociologist, sees the situation in terms of cultural divides.

By his view, the Internet generation has more in common than children of the roaring 20s or late 1960s did with their parents.

"All of these things have been generational divides," Finkelhor said, noting that he actually believes the generational divides created by today's electronic technologies are not as great or dramatic as prior generational divides, despite the anxiety provoked. It's much more of a change in medium than a change in values."

By his reckoning, parental discomfort with the Internet and cell phone texting leads to much of the angst. Despite any discomfort with chatting or texting, he suggests approaching the situation like an anthropologist, not an interrogator.



John Huff/Staff photographer

Text messaging has spawned a new language used by teens nationwide, although parents still need to stay "hip" on the lingo.

From a police perspective, Brownell suggests brushing up on computer lingo — like the text shorthand used in chatting — and programs that allow parents to monitor and regulate what their children do on the computer, and when they do it.

"If they suspect kids are hiding things from them, there are several products out there that will monitor what children are visiting, who they are talking to and whatnot," Brownell said. "One of those controls is softwares that will prevent computer logons except during specific times."

It's particularly good for parents whose children arrive home before them, he added.

Brownell also stressed a few key points all parents should know.

Never let children post their address, cell phone number or Instant Messenger username on a page that is publicly viewable.

"Predators will use that information to groom that child, to shape them into someone who will give them what they want," he added.

Ultimately, both stressed that being involved in a child's life will have a greater affect than simply monitoring, or setting rules.

Lay a good foundation, said Finkelhor, and the structure built on it will have the best chance of being sound.

Learn lingo of texting and IMs

Police suggest that parents who want to learn the lingo of online and text chatting visit netlingo.com, a website dedicated to breaking down the basics of shorthand text chatting.

Included below are selections from the site's top 50 "Internet Acronyms Parents Need to Know," as recommended by Internet crime specialist, Portsmouth police Lt. Tim Brownell.

- * 8 - it refers to oral sex
- * 1337 - it means elite
- * 143 - it means I love you
- * 182 - it means I hate you
- * 1174 - it means nude club
- * 420 - it refers to marijuana
- * ASL - Age/Sex/Location
- * banana - it means penis
- * kitty - it means vagina
- * CD9 - it means Code 9 = parents are around
- * DUM - Do You Masturbate?
- * DUSL - Do You Scream Loud?
- * FB - "Sex" Buddy

- * GNOC - Get Naked O* Cam (webcam)
- * GYPO - Get Your Pants Off
- * IMEZRU - I Am Easy, Are You?
- * IWS* - I Want Sex Now
- * KPC - Keeping Parents Clueless
- * LMIRL - Let's Meet In Real Life
- * MOOS - Member(s) Of the Opposite Sex
- * MOSS or MOTSS - Member(s) Of The Same Sex
- * MorF - Male or Female
- * MOS - Mom Over Shoulder
- * NIFOC - Nude In Front Of Computer
- * NMU - Not Much, You?
- * P911 - Parent Alert
- * PAL/W/IR - Parents Are Listening/Watching/In room
- * PRON - Porn
- * RU/18 - Are You Over 18?
- * RUH - Are You Horny?
- * TDTM - Talk Dirty To Me
- * WYCM - Will You Call Me?