

The Ultimate Guide to Text Messaging and Phone Etiquette



10 Simple Rules for Text Messaging and Etiquette

1. Texting does not replace talking. Children should understand that texting shouldn't take the place of one-on-one interaction with their family or friends. If you want your child to bond with his or her friends, encourage that they spend time together.
2. Keep it short and sweet. Text messages should be kept short and to-the-point. If a "conversation" goes on for more than a few minutes, encourage your child to pick up the phone and continue the conversation that way.
3. Don't text while someone is talking to them – unless it's an emergency. Children should understand that they should never, ever text another person while they are having a face to face conversation with a friend or family member. It's extremely rude at any age and can hurt feelings. It sends a message to the other person or people that they aren't important enough to have your full attention. Text messaging and phone etiquette requires children to think about how their actions make other people feel.
4. Think before you text. Teach your child to refrain from texting a friend if they are in a fight or are angry with one another. Ask your child to wait until they have calmed down, and then encourage them to work things out in person or over the phone.
5. It's all about context. Children should know that sometimes text messages are misunderstood because of a lack of context. The text message recipient cannot see the sender's facial expressions or hear their tone of voice. Jokes and sarcastic comments may cause hard feelings if they are passed along in a text message.
6. Keep content in mind. Teach your child that they should never deliver bad news in a text message, i.e. "I heard our soccer coach quit!"
7. Be kind. Children should understand that they are responsible for what they text to other people. Teach your child to refrain from gossiping about others, being a bully and being unkind in general.
8. Don't text and drive. It may be a few more years before your child is behind the wheel of a car, but teach them that they should never text and drive. In the meantime, your child should also know that he or she shouldn't text while engaged in other activities that require full attention, such as riding a bike, skateboarding or any situation in which they need to be aware of what is going on around them.
9. Text at the right time. Your child should refrain from texting during class, at church, dinner, the movies, a friend's birthday party, a funeral or in other public settings. The same applies if your family is going out for a nice meal or enjoying an activity together.
10. Texting is a privilege, not a right. Texting should be regarded as a privilege, and your child should know that bad behavior will result in the loss of that privilege, meaning you will take the phone.

Phone Etiquette for Kids

With kids getting phones at such a young age, we thought we would include some general phone etiquette tips that all kids should know, regardless of whether it is using a land line or a cellphone.

What may seem like common sense to us parents, is normally not to our kids. Unfortunately, these basic skills are not taught in school. Many times, how kids and young adults communicate on the phone can have an impact on their future. Including the first impression to a future employer.

1. If you are calling from a cell phone, make sure that your mouth is close to the speaker. When using a cellphone if you are holding the phone above or below your mouth instead of directly by your mouth the person on the other end cannot hear you clearly. You sound muffled.
2. Always begin with “Hello, my name is...” and the reason for calling. (“I’m calling to schedule a doctor’s appointment” or “I’m calling to speak to Mrs. Doe.”)
3. Remember that you are speaking to another human being. Be polite, but don’t worry if you make a mistake or fumble your words. You can laugh it off and try again – it’s likely the person on the other end has had moments like that too! (“Sorry, let me say that again...”)
4. If you don’t understand what the other person said, ask “Can you repeat that?” or “Sorry, what was that again?” Do NOT ask, “What?” – it’s rude and unclear!
5. Address people as “Mr. [Last name]” or “Mrs. [Last name]” unless they have specified that you can call them by their first name.
6. Speak clearly and slowly! It can be difficult to hear over the phone, especially names and addresses. If the person you are speaking to asks you to spell out a name, address, etc., do so clearly and slowly. You may also want to clarify letters that sound alike (such as B and D.) For example, you can say “B as in Boy” or “D as in Dog” – this helps the person on the other end know exactly which letter you are saying! It’s extremely helpful to know the phonetic alphabet, where B=Bravo and D=Delta.
7. You may get asked a few questions if you are scheduling an appointment or something similar. If you aren’t sure of the answer and need to call the person back, let them know! It’s better to call back with the right answer than to make something up or be unsure. End the conversation with a “Thank you!”
8. Leave enough detail for the other person, but don’t ramble on and on. Leave your name with a phone number they can reach you at. (“Again, this is John Smith, and you can reach me at 123-456-7890.”) End with a “Thank you!”

General Phone Etiquette

1. If you need to take a phone call while in a public place (or on public transportation), keep the call quick and be as quiet as you can. Let the other person know (“I’m at the store so I can’t talk for very long”) and then wrap up your conversation. The rest of the world doesn’t need to hear your business – and they probably don’t want to either!
2. Do not use the phone while waiting in line at a store, bank, etc. and especially once you are being served at these establishments. Nothing is more annoying or rude to an employee than a customer who is on their phone during check-out.
3. Don’t use the phone or text when spending time with someone. It’s rude and makes the other person feel unimportant. If you are expecting a text or call that you need to respond to, simply let the other person know. When you respond, be quick and polite. Otherwise, let the call go to voicemail or ignore the text – you can get back to them later.
4. Think of texting as an alternative to calling someone on the phone – when you wouldn’t call, don’t text. For example, you wouldn’t call someone in a movie theater, so don’t text during the movie either. You wouldn’t call someone during class, so don’t text either.