



## txt2connect with Teens – A Parent's TXT Tutorial



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### CINGULAR TEAMS UP TO HELP PARENTS NAVIGATE TEEN COMMUNICATION

In the digital era in which we live, accessibility and constant communication are the norm. However, parent-child communication, particularly when a child is between the ages of 12-19, can still be a challenge sometimes. Kids want to express increasing independence with each passing birthday and parents want to rein them in until adulthood. Can parents keep the lines of communication open and foster a good relationship with their child during these sometimes cantankerous years? Cingular, and its partner, parenting expert Dr. Ruth Peters, believe that the answer is a resounding YES!

These days, cell phones, and text messaging in particular, have become a central force in the way tweens and teens connect with one another. A recent, national survey of cell phone owners by the Pew Research Center's Pew Internet & American Life Project, the Associated Press and AOL showed that cell phone and text messaging usage is greatest among those in the 18- to 29-year age range. Text messaging is the number one use of cell phones by young people

in this category. While the study didn't examine the cell phone habits of those younger than 18, it follows that usage for this group is also high. Text messaging usage drops off by more than half in the "parental" age range of 30-49 and even more in the next age category to which many parents belong.

To stay in better touch with their kids, parents need to get hip to the text messaging trend!

### WHY CINGULAR IS PARTNERING WITH DR. PETERS

Dr. Ruth Peters, a clinical psychologist, author and parenting expert on The Today Show and MSNBC, has advised parents for more than 30 years on how to stay on top of their kids' lives and activities. She is collaborating with Cingular, the nation's leading wireless provider, to assist parents in keeping in touch with their kids via cell phone and text messaging to ensure that kids communicate effectively with them and with others. She has been interviewed by most of leading women's and parenting magazines and frequently writes articles for Redbook magazine. She has also served as a Contributing Editor to Child magazine. Dr. Peters' books include *Who's In Charge? A Positive Parenting Approach to Disciplining Children* (Lindsay Press), *Don't Be Afraid To Discipline* (St. Martin's Press), *It's Never Too Soon To Discipline* (St. Martin's Press), *Overcoming Underachieving: A Simple Plan to Boost Your Kids' Grades and End the Homework Hassles* (Broadway Books), and *Laying Down the Law: The 25 Laws of Parenting to Keep Your Kids on Track, Out of Trouble, and (Pretty Much) Under Control* (Rodale).



## TEXT MESSAGING: A GREAT WAY TO CONNECT WITH YOUR KIDS

According to Dr. Peters, kids want to communicate—but on their terms. By appropriately using cell phone options and text messaging, parents can connect with their kids in more meaningful ways. Text messaging is a great option for parents and kids to stay in touch because:

- **Parents get a quick answer to their questions.** This is good for today's busy kids, who are often in between school and extra-curricular activities or hanging out with friends, and probably won't, or in some cases can't, take the time for a normal conversation.
- **Kids are more apt to respond to text messages when they are with their friends.** It is more discreet and their answers don't have to be as detailed as in a conversation.
- **You, or they, don't have to worry about tone of voice.** Some kids automatically get defensive when they hear their parent's tone of voice, which often results in delayed return phone calls or avoidance. Texting takes tone of voice out of the mix and can improve response times.
- **Texting allows you to enter your child's world.** By using text messaging, parents can communicate in the style their children are used to, and become more hip in their children's eyes. An example might be a parent who sends a text to her daughter on a blind date to ask her how the date is going. "Is he Mr. Wonderful?" or "Is he a frog or a prince?"
- **Text messaging allows parents to compose and edit a message before pressing send.** If there is a great deal of emotion around an issue, Dr. Peters often counsels parents to write things out before actually saying them to their kids to help edit their thoughts. By making parents think about it more, texting removes explosive emotions from potentially charged communications and situations.
- **Texting vs. calling gives kids more space but allows parents to keep in touch as often as necessary.** For instance, it is a good way to double check their child's whereabouts without nagging. Cingular, as a company, recognizes this and offers various simple messaging packages at a low cost.

- **Text messaging can also be used to strengthen parent-child bonds, and let kids know that their parents are thinking of them.** Send them a text wishing them good luck before the school play audition, or let them know you are thinking of them if there is something they were concerned about such as a difficult test or a grade.

## A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Additional fun and creative ways to use a cell phone to communicate with your kids involve the camera and video functions available on many phones today. For example, the first time you allow your child to visit the mall without an adult, ask them to send you a photo of them in front of their favorite store at an appointed time. Or, if you are allowing a group of older teens to attend a concert, have them shoot some video of the event to share with you at home.

Likewise, if you travel for your job, you can send a photo or short video of yourself via your cell phone to your kids. Features vary slightly from phone to phone but neither is difficult to master!

## TEXT MESSAGE PRIMER: THE BASICS

Dr. Peters and Cingular offer the following basic primer on text messaging, along with some specific tips which can help you connect with your kids on their level, while also increasing frequency of contact. Teens today like to communicate using short messages on their cell phones because it's a quick, simple and private way to stay in touch. In fact, for many parents, texting seems to be the only way to get their teens to respond to them.

### What is Text Messaging and Instant Messaging?

Ever wonder why your child is always typing feverishly on their cell phone keypad? It's highly likely that they are chatting with their friends using text messaging or Instant Messaging (IM). The difference between the two is virtually insignificant, although IM – which can be done on either a cell phone or personal computer -- utilizes a made-up, screen name vs. your child's phone number or email address, which makes it more discreet. For example, your child's IM screen name might be **Soccercrazy101** or **Dancegirl12**.

Text messaging is done from cell phone to cell phone using cell phone numbers as the Send to address. Using the keypad on the cell phone, you and your kids communicate in brief messages up to 160 characters.

Instant Messages are short messages exchanged in real time using familiar screen names or IDs. With Instant Messaging, you can see who is online and available to chat, busy and offline. Cingular uses both AOL Instant Messenger and Yahoo! Messenger.

### How Do You Text with Other Mobile Phones and E-mail Addresses?

You can send and receive messages to other mobile phones and e-mail addresses. Sending a text message is simple: just follow these **four** easy steps:

- 1 Choose** the text option on your phone's main menu.
- 2 Type** your message (up to 160 characters) using the keypad on your cell phone. Most phones have a built-in dictionary that predicts the word you're typing, as well as templates of common messages, which can help you send messages even faster.
- 3 Enter** the 10-digit wireless phone number or e-mail address of the recipient
- 4 Hit** the send button  
It's that easy!

### The ABCs of Text Lingo

With the increasing popularity of text messaging, Instant Messaging and Internet chat rooms came the emergence of a whole new language tailored to the immediacy and compactness of these forms of communication. Since each text message can only contain up to 160 characters, users have developed an intricate, universal short-hand to allow them to say more in one message. One outcome of this practice is that punctuation is widely disregarded. So don't worry about those apostrophes, commas, dashes or proper capitalization! Below are more basic text lingo tips to help you get started on connecting with your tween or teen using their language.

- **Take Out Vowels** – A simple method of shortening words is to eliminate some of the vowels. For example, shorten 'TEXT' to 'TXT'.
- **Replace Words with Symbols and Numbers** – For example, instead of writing the word 'FOR', use the number '4'. Also, whenever the letters 'FOR' appear as part of another word like 'FORGIVE', substitute the number for the word and write '4GIVE'.

Other examples include:

- And = &
- AT = @
- ATE = 8
- ONE = 1
- TO/TOO = 2
- Percent = %
- Remove the End 'E' and Change 'O' to 'U'

Another method of shortening words is to remove the 'E' from the end of the word. In this instance, the word 'GIVE' would be written as 'GIV'. You can also remove the 'E' from words like 'SOME' and 'LOVE' and to make the words sound right, change the 'O' to 'U' to make 'SUM' and 'LUV'.

- **Replace 'I' with 'Y'** – For many words, it is possible to replace an 'I' with a 'Y' and remove some characters from the word. With the word 'RIGHT', replace the 'I' with 'Y' and remove the 'G' and 'H' to make 'RYT'.
- **Use Sounds to Represent Words** – For example, instead of writing 'YOU', replace it with the letter which creates the same sound, 'U'. For the word 'WHY', replace it with 'Y' and for the word 'ANY' replace it with 'NE'.

- **Use Known Abbreviations and Common Words** – There are some words that do not use the regular methods above but have become popular abbreviations or acronyms over time. Many of these have spread to text messages from their initial use in chat rooms over the Internet.

Some examples include:

- PEOPLE = PPL
- BY THE WAY = BTW
- SEE YOU LATER = CUL8R
- THANK YOU = TY
- PLEASE = PLZ
- BECAUSE = BCUZ
- IN MY OPINION = IMO

• **Combine all the Methods Above** – Combining methods is an important part of text messages. An example of combining words is the word 'ANYONE'. By using the method of sounds and the method of replacing words with symbols and numbers, the word 'ANYONE' becomes 'NE1'.

• **Don't Use All Caps, Unless You are Truly Mad** – TYPING AN ENTIRE SENTENCE IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS is the equivalent to SHOUTING! It is not proper 'netiquette' to TYPE IN ALL CAPS. Turn off the CAPS unless you're using an acronym or shorthand.



### Popular Text Messaging Lingo

If you have ever been in a chat room or received an instant message or text message from your teen that seemed to be in its own foreign language, this list will help you decipher the lingo and better reach out to your teen.

- AWGTHGTGTTA - Are we going to have to go through this again
- AEAP - As early as possible
- CYR MA – Call your mother
- CYR PA – Call your father
- CYT or SYT - See you tomorrow
- DBL84DNR – Don't be late for dinner
- EM? - Excuse me?
- GUDLUK – Good luck
- H&K - Hugs and kisses
- HAND – Have a nice day
- HF – Have fun
- IMNSHO - In My Not So Humble Opinion
- ILU or ILY - I Love You

- JstClI Me – Just call me
- KIT – Keep in touch
- MU – Miss you
- PTB – Please text back
- RINGL8 – Running late
- TTYL – Talk to you later

Teens may use text language to keep parents in the dark about their conversations by making their comments indecipherable to texting novices. Some text terms parents need to know to keep their kids safe include:

- POS - Parent over shoulder
- PIR - Parent in room
- P911 - Parent alert
- PAW - Parents are watching
- LMIRL - Let's meet in real life
- KPC - Keeping parents clueless

### COOL PARENTS, CONNECTED KIDS

It's easy to arm yourself with information and simultaneously raise your esteem in your children's eyes. Cingular recommends that you use cell phones and text messages to:

1) Get quick answers to important information, such as what time you need to pick your child up from soccer practice,

2) Help your child gain independence while still staying connected, and

3) Allow yourself to enter your child's world. You'll be a hipper, more "in the know" parent and you don't have to give up all your secrets to your kids!

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