

Some parents are fine with texting their kids instead of talking to them

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Texting at home may be a prelude to a deeper conversation. However, a dependence on devices may also impede learning social interaction and how to read body language, experts say. Photo by: FatCamera/Getty Images

Dinner is ready. Parents have a choice. They can yell out to kids to announce it. Today, though, many are texting their kids instead.

Is this good or bad? In texting kids at home, are parents encouraging kids to stay addicted to smartphones?

Some parents shared their opinions. Many are cool with same-home texting.

Wendy Anton is a Michigan nurse. She texts with her kids at home. The adults text each other too, she says.

Yelling may actually have negative effects anyway, says Dr. Pamela Rutledge. She is an expert on how people use technology and how it affects them. She says yelling covers up details that are heard in a regular talking voice. There's no "benefit of adding an emoji for clarification," she says.

Humans respond without even thinking to certain behaviors, she says. Yelling makes people defend themselves right away. It might make you feel like you are in trouble.

Trying To Avoid Trouble

Dr. Nancy Mramor is a psychologist in Pennsylvania. She is an expert in how people behave. She says that, actually, we often turn to technology when we think we are in trouble. People of all ages do this. We want to avoid long conversations, she says.

Texting can sometimes lead to longer talks.

Tamra Forsman is a mother of three. She lives in Washington state.

She often lets her kids communicate in "their way" – text – first. Then she does it her way – conversation. This hopefully strikes a balance, she says.

"Communication is so important, especially in the teen years," Forsman says. "I am thankful for a text because a lot of teens would never text their mom."

Kelli Jones Geiger is a mom in Houston. She agrees. Texting allows her to carefully craft her words before "blurting them out."

Kids may also see texting as a more comfortable way to start certain conversations.

Short Messages Have Replaced Conversations

Amy Wing lives in Chandler, Arizona. Her 12-year-old daughter Erin explains to her mother why she texts her. "I text you when there's something difficult for me to talk about straight to your face, or if I'm tired or doing something, or if I'm with friends and don't want to go and talk to you. If you call me to come talk to you, I'll go. But if I need something and it doesn't have to be straight away, I'll text you."

Still, some parents are against the practice.

Katie May is a mother of six. She does not allow texting in the house. Instead she requires talking to each other in real life.

So, we often talk by text instead of in person. Will this create lasting brain problems?

Today, says Mramor, people depend on phones. Phones let us respond quickly. Often it is with short messages. She says this is a shame. Instead, we could be "really talking something through." By having conversations, she says, we learn social skills. We learn how to read others' reactions.

Rutledge does not agree. She says things haven't changed all that much. Before texting, kids still did not always "happily come downstairs" to chat in person, she said.

Quiz

- 1 One main idea of the article is that some parents think it is OK to text their kids instead of talking to them. Which key detail from the article supports this MAIN idea?
- (A) Yelling may actually have negative effects anyway, says Dr. Pamela Rutledge. She is an expert on how people use technology and how it affects them.
 - (B) Kelli Jones Geiger is a mom in Houston. She agrees. Texting allows her to carefully craft her words before "blurting them out."
 - (C) Katie May is a mother of six. She does not allow texting in the house. Instead she requires talking to each other in real life.
 - (D) Today, says Mramor, people depend on phones. Phones let us respond quickly. Often it is with short messages.
- 2 What is the MAIN idea of the section "Trying To Avoid Trouble"?
- (A) Some people say texting helps them to communicate better.
 - (B) Some people yell to talk to their kids instead of texting.
 - (C) The short messages in texting let people respond quickly.
 - (D) The technology behind texting has changed over time.
- 3 What information will readers find in the introduction [paragraphs 1-6]?
- (A) reasons why some parents dislike texting
 - (B) reasons why teens are texting more now
 - (C) how texting at home compares with yelling
 - (D) how many people now text instead of talking
- 4 What does the section "Short Messages Have Replaced Conversations" show the reader?
- (A) ways that texting affects family dinner conversations
 - (B) reasons why technology can get people into trouble
 - (C) problems caused by yelling at kids instead of texting them
 - (D) different opinions about texting instead of talking in person