



Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

Does Texting Hurt Writing Skills?

by Natalie J. Dahl, M.S., CCC-SLP

Texting is a common way to stay connected with friends, family, and others in social circles. While it can be a convenient way to communicate with others, there are concerns about how it might affect formal writing and conversational skills, especially for those who already have difficulty in these areas.



“Textese” is a term used to describe texting language, and it includes codes and abbreviations that allow messages to be drafted quickly and sent immediately. There are many common hallmarks of textese, which include:

- **Initialisms:** SMH (shaking my head)
- **G-clippings:** R u laughin yet?
- **Contractions/consonant writings:** Txt me this wknd.
- **Regional/dialectal respellings:** Meet dat guy at da park afta skool.
- **Omission of unnecessary words:** Whatcha doing, im bored.
- **Letter/number homophones:** C ya l8r (later).
- **Onomatopoeic/exclamations:** Ugh! Hahaha
- **Lack of attention** to capitalization and punctuation
- **Use of emojis** to express emotions and attitudes
- **Use of GIFs and memes** to joke, chat, and support text



Abbreviations present in text messages are now showing up in more formal writing. A study by Pew Internet and American Life Project was initiated because of growing concerns over how texting affects writing skills of students immersed in electronic media.

There were 700 participants in the study, ages 12-17. Of these 700 teenagers, 60% said they didn’t consider email, instant messaging, or texting to be formal writing; 63% said these messages have no impact on writing they do at school; and 64% reported using forms of shorthand in school similar to what they use in text messages.

Of the 64% of students who said they use shorthand, or textese, in their written school assignments, 25% said they used it to express emotion. Thirty-eight percent said they have used abbreviations such as “LOL” (“laugh out loud”) or “2morrow” (“tomorrow”) in their writings.

Research is fairly new in this area, and there are no studies yet that show how texting negatively affects students’ grammar and overall performance in school. However, there are many reports from teachers saying they see textese in their students’ assignments. It is important for teachers and parents to continue to teach the importance of proper grammar and spelling to students, and to keep textese out of the classroom and strictly in text messages.

Resources:

“Does Texting Hurt Writing Skills?” Times Daily, accessed May 20, 2019, https://www.timesdaily.com/archives/does-texting-hurt-writing-skills/article_81445a80-781d-5f82-b7ac-00f951cf10bc.html

“IDK if U Can Read this: Handling ‘Textese’ in Treatment?” ASHA Wire, accessed 5/20/19, <https://leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/full/10.1044/leader.FTR2.24052019.52>

“The Influence of Texting Language on Grammar and Executive Functions in Primary School Children,” NCBI, accessed May 20, 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4816572/>

For more FREE Handy Handouts®, go to www.handyhandouts.com