

# Text Messaging

Communicating on the move

*Expert knowledge means success*

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Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

## Introduction

Text messaging or SMS (Short Message Service) has crept into the vocabulary of communication of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The huge growth in mobile phones in Europe has spawned the incredible growth in text messaging from its simple beginnings as "teenage chat" to an invaluable communication tool.

Text messaging is sending short messages back and forth between one mobile phone and another:

- To send a message, you simply tap in what you want to say on your mobile's keypad (or via your computer);
- When you receive a message, it appears on your mobile phone's screen.

Text messaging allows you to send messages of up to 160 characters between mobile phones that use Global System for Mobile (GSM) communication. The 160 characters can be words, numbers or any combination you can make from the alphanumeric keys on your mobile phone. Note that the 160-character limit is not absolute. Length limitations may vary depending on the network, phone model and wireless carrier. Some phones don't allow you to keep typing once the 160-character limit is reached. You must send your message before continuing. However, some services will automatically break any message you send into chunks of 160 characters or less. So, you can type and send a long message, but it will be delivered as several messages.

Text messaging is similar to paging except that to send a text message it isn't necessary for the recipient's mobile phone to be active and within range. If the text message cannot be delivered immediately, it is held by the Message Centre (see below) for a number of days until the recipient's phone is switched back on and is within range - you can even set up your service to get confirmation when the recipient has received your text message.

Multiple Text messages can be stored on your SIM card, only limited by the capacity of the card. There are also services that allow you to archive your text messages for safe keeping.

## How does it work?

Text messages are delivered via a Message Centre, which is responsible for transferring digital messages. When a text message is submitted for delivery, the Message Centre locates the recipient before actually sending the message. The phone number of the sender is added to the body of the message and the date and time is added too.

Most modern digital handsets can receive text messages. Text messages can be sent to and received from digital phones on other networks including networks outside the UK with whom there are roaming agreements and who support text-messaging services.

You can even send text messages from your computer via the Internet to any phone network that supports text messaging - this is very useful since you have your computer keyboard available to tap out the letters etc. of your text message. Sites such as [Lycos.co.uk](http://Lycos.co.uk) in the UK provided free messaging in return for a short brand message ad at the end of your text.

Most mobile phone networks enable you to use text messaging without having to pay a special subscription. But you will pay for the messages you send - for example 10p per message - or you may send for free and pay to retrieve. Some operators offer reduced rates and free texting. On the subject of cost, text messages have the reassuring advantage of being fixed in price, whereas phone calls are usually charged by the minute. You'll never get cut off in the middle of a text.

Messages are usually delivered immediately if your phone is switched on, even if you're using your mobile. Most mobile phones will beep to let you know that you've received a text message as well as displaying 'Message Received' and/or an envelope icon on the screen.

## Predictive Texting

Predictive Texting is a facility built into many mobile phones that allows the phone to 'guess' the word you are trying to type.

Predictive Texting saves you having to press your mobile phone keys several times to get the letters and words you want. Instead you just press the keys once and then go on to the next letter. Your mobile phone will then fill in (or predict) the word you are typing.

## Text Messaging: Statistics

The UK text messaging total broke through the 4 billion barrier for the first time during December 2006, according to the Mobile Data Association (MDA). The overall figure for 2006 was 41.8 billion. But, according to an article in Forbes, the position is changing:

Text messages sent on Christmas Eve have traditionally created one of the busiest SMS days of the year. But in 2011, the SMS volumes of some of the major operators in countries such as Finland and Hong Kong plunged by double digits. Some industry experts still expect global text-messaging volumes to grow rapidly from 2011 to 2015 and beyond. But the messaging phenomenon has already peaked in selected countries, from Spain to Hong Kong; could the industry be too optimistic about the growth projections? A number of start-up companies such as WhatsApp are now joining Facebook and Twitter in undermining text messaging globally.

Ten years ago, text-messaging was hitting its stride - the global SMS volume topped 30 Billion a month and annual growth rate was running comfortably into triple digits. Back in 2001, the US consumers were lagging far behind their European and Asian peers. Fast forward to 2011 and the situation is radically different. American consumers are now sending more than 600 messages per month, whereas Asian SMS powerhouses have fallen behind. Nordic countries are lagging dramatically, at around 150 SMS/month level.

It seems that Facebook, Twitter and alternative messaging services are the root causes for the SMS volume declines setting in across several Asian nations. *Excerpted from:* [www.forbes.com/sites/terokuittinen/2012/01/03/text-messaging-drivers-of-the-deterioration/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/terokuittinen/2012/01/03/text-messaging-drivers-of-the-deterioration/)

For example, without predictive text, typing the word “here” would require you to press the collective alpha keys until the desired letter was reached: “gh”, “de”, “pqr”, “de”, a total of 9 presses. With predictive text, you simply press the alpha key that shows your letter and move to the next. In this case, “here” would be found after 4 presses. If an alternative word is needed that is formed using the same key presses (e.g. “herd”), you simply press the cycle key on your phone to cycle through any alternatives until “herd” is found. If the word you want is not in the alternatives list, you can spell the word out and it will be added to the alternative list for next time.

Just remember that it is usual to be unable to recognise the word you are typing until you've finished typing, as your phone may not be able to predict the word you are entering until the last button has been pressed.

## Texting Abroad

Texting is a quick and convenient way of keeping in touch with your business while in another country and is a relatively cheap alternative to airport payphones and hotel phones.

Before you go abroad, check the following with your network provider:

- that your phone has been enabled for use outside the UK (by default, your phone may have an international call bar);
- the call tariff in countries you are visiting; and
- the text services offered by your network provider or its partners in your destination.

When you arrive in another country, your phone will automatically search for compatible networks when you switch it on. Often, there will just be a default network provider but if there's a choice of providers, use the network selection menu on your phone to choose an alternative.

Check the telephone numbers you are likely to use before leaving the UK. To text a UK number from abroad leave out the zero at the beginning of the area code and replace it with the symbol '+' and UK country code 44. If you know that you will need to text a number regularly from both within the UK and abroad, add it to your address book with the +44 prefix and it will work in both circumstances.

To text a local landline number in the country you are staying you do not need to prefix it with an international code.

Most network providers organise charges into world zones, with different flat rate prices according to which country you're in. Rates vary significantly between providers and price plans so check with your network provider before you leave home.

You're also usually charged to receive a call from abroad. However, most operators don't charge you to receive a text from abroad.

Don't forget to pack your mobile phone charger, travel plug adapter and spare battery before you go abroad and remember to always switch your mobile phone off before boarding an aircraft.

## Why use Text Messaging?

Text messaging can be useful for both social and business reasons. Maybe the person you wish to contact is in a noisy restaurant where you know they wouldn't hear you, in the theatre where their phone is switched off or in a business meeting where they can't be disturbed. Text messaging is particularly useful in sensitive locations where a voice call could be intrusive. For example, you might want to send a text message when:

- You want to send a greeting or convey good news but don't want to disturb the recipient;
- It's difficult to talk;
- Privacy is important;
- You can't put what you want to say into spoken words.

### Making texting easier

There have been a number of changes to mobile phones in recent years to help those who struggle with the size or style of the alpha keys or the screen.

- Larger, separate keyboards can be attached to your mobile phone.
- Many smartphones have larger '13-line' displays.
- Innovative new display technology means that phones now have a sharper brighter screen image.
- Full 'qwerty' keyboards are available.

You can send a text message even if the person you are sending a message to is engaged or has switched off their mobile phone. The network will store the message and will automatically recognise when their phone is switched on again, and then deliver your message.

Although the most common way of using text messaging is from one mobile phone to another, the phone networks offer different specialist services which enable you to send messages. For example, you can send messages:

- From computer to mobile phone via the Internet.
- From a mobile phone to an SMS enabled fax machine.
- From a mobile phone to an SMS enabled landline. (The message will be read out by an automated voice).
- As a dictation through an operator via your landline which can then be sent as a text message to a mobile number. Check with your operator for availability.

## SMS Marketing

Text messaging enables information to be sent to groups of people quickly and conveniently in much the same way as email, making it an increasing popular e-marketing channel.

### Advantages of SMS marketing

- The personal nature of mobile phones makes SMS marketing a very powerful tool.
- Most people take their mobile phones everywhere - meaning they can be effective for time sensitive messages.
- People tend to read virtually every text they get - unlike junk mail, spam or adverts which can be ignored.

### Potential disadvantages of SMS marketing

- Your message has a maximum 160 characters - not much space to get your message over.
- People respond negatively to unwanted texts. Make sure you have their permission to send them texts and that your SMS marketing complies with privacy and data protection rules.
- 

People are wary of responding to SMS messages due to an increase in fraudulent messages. Under the E-commerce Regulations you are required to make it clear who the message is from and commercial communications must be clearly recognisable as such.



### Costs

You will need to employ a mobile phone agency to send out the texts for you. These work out at about 10 pence per text. The development of 3G (third generation) and smartphones, which have larger screens and can play music and video clips, has made multimedia messaging service (MMS) possible.

## Mobile Services

A whole host of services can now be provided through text messages. Banks such as HSBC allow you to conduct your financial affairs without leaving the house. Alerts such as medicine reminders can now be provided by text, as well as news alerts from sources such as The Guardian and Sky News.

Did you ever have the answer to a question on the tip of your tongue and nobody around you knew either? Now you can ask your mobile phone - simply send an SMS containing your question to companies like 'AQA' or '82ASK' and get back results likely to contain the answer from the Internet for free. There are even services that send text messages to your phone to let you know how long the next bus will be!

As more businesses make use of SMS, so additional services have appeared, including:

- Sky News - <http://news.sky.com/home/static-pages/sms-alerts>  
Breaking news, showbiz news, business news and weather forecasts sent to your phone. For example, get breaking news and weather updates from Sky News. Each message received will cost a maximum of 25p. On average there will be 1-2 messages per day, but this will vary depending on the day's events.
- First Direct - [www.firstdirect.com](http://www.firstdirect.com)  
First Direct, part of HSBC, provide a text message service to keeps you in tune with your money, so you always know what's happening. They'll automatically send you a free weekly mini-statement to your mobile showing your balance and last five transactions and for £2.50 a month you can have a personalised text message service with

mini-statements and texts for example when your salary's in or to warn you when you're close to an overdraft limit. Text message banking is free for firstdirectory customers or you can make individual requests for balances or mini-statements via their **MONILINK service**.

- Google maps - [www.google.com/gmm](http://www.google.com/gmm)  
Get detailed directions - whether you plan to walk or drive, your route is displayed on the map itself, together with step by step directions. Interactive maps let you zoom in or out, and move in all directions so you can orient yourself visually. Satellite imagery gives you a bird's eye view of your desired location. Charges from your carrier may apply.
- AA Travel Alerts - <http://www.theaa.com/travelwatch/roadwatch.jsp>  
Get a personal traffic information alert service. This can be for important one off journeys or for regular travel, such as the daily commute.
- Weathercall - Text Weathercall at any time of day to receive today's local weather or a five-day forecast by return from the Met Office. Forecasts cover over 500 UK towns, cities and locations and give max temperature, most significant weather, wind speed and direction, and likelihood of rainfall. Each SMS consists of two weather reports - the first is an overview of the current situation and the second is a summary of weather conditions for the same location in six hours time. Forecasts are based on the latest Met Office information and are updated on an hourly basis. For today's weather: Type WC TODAY plus the TOWN or CITY For a five-day forecast: Type WC 5DAY plus the TOWN or CITY Send to 83141

- Txtvault - [www.txtvault.co.uk](http://www.txtvault.co.uk)  
Forward all your text messages to txtvault for safekeeping, so whatever happens, your texts remain safe.
- SMS Diary - [www.handango.co.uk](http://www.handango.co.uk)  
The SMS diary application reads all your SMS messages in your phone and creates a diary out of them. The diary consists of three web pages (HTML files); one page with a table of contents and statistics on how many messages you have sent and received, one page lists all your messages sorted by date and the third page lists all messages sorted by name. The web pages are saved on the memory card if there is a memory card available, otherwise the pages are saved in the internal phone memory. After the diary has been created you can transfer the web-pages to your pc and store them for future use.

For a wider list of available services visit [www.text.it/text/messaging\\_info.cfm](http://www.text.it/text/messaging_info.cfm)

## Busy Texting Days

### 1. New Year's Day 2007

214 million messages sent - the highest daily total ever recorded by the Mobile Data Association.

### 2. New Year's Day 2006

165 million messages were sent

### 3. World Cup 2006 - 1st July England v Portugal

140 million messages sent

### 4. World Cup 2006 - 15th June England v Trinidad & Tobago

140 million messages sent

### 5. August 17th 2006 - A Level Results day

137 million messages sent

Source: *The Mobile Data Association*

## The Language of Text Messaging

Text Messaging is a quick and enjoyable way to communicate with other people. Because messages have to be limited to 160 characters - about 30 or 40 words - text messaging has created a whole new language (sometimes called "phrase craze") to save time when keying in a message. Here's a brief list of the language in use.

@	"At"
A?	"Eh?"
ATB	"All the best"
B	"Be, Bee"
BCNU	"Be seeing you"
BWD	"Backward"
B4	"Before"
C	"See" or "Sea"
CU	"See you"
CT	"City"
CUL8R	"See you later"
D8	"Date"
DNR	"Dinner"
DOIN	"Doing"
EZ	"Easy"
F2T	"Free to talk"
F2C	"Fantasy"
F8	"Fate"
FWD	"Forward"
FYI	"For your Info"
GONNA	"Going to"
GAL	"Get a life"
GR8	"Great"
H8	"Hate"
L8	"Late"
L8R	"Later"
LUV	"Love"
M8	"Mate"
MOB	"Mobile"

MSG	"Message"
NE	"Any"
NETHNG	"Anything"
NE1	"Anyone"
NMP	"Not my problem"
NO1	"No-one"
OIC	"Oh, I see"
OvR8d	"Over-rated"
PCM	"Please call me"
PLS	"Please"
PPL	"People"
Q	"Queue" or "Cue"
QT	"Cutie" or "Quiet"
R	"Are"
R8	"Rate"
RUOK	"Are you okay?"
RGDS	"Regards"
SUM1	"Someone"
SPK	"Speak"
STRA	"Stray"
T	"Tea"
THNQ	"Thank you"
T&	"Tanned"
THX	"Thanks"
TH@	"That"
U	"You"
UR	"You are"
W	"With"
WAN2	"Want to?"
WRK	"Work"
W/O	"Without"

WKND	"Weekend"
WOT	"What"
W% D	"Would?"
XLNT	"Excellent"
XOXOX	"Hugs and kisses"
Y	"Why"
UR	"Your"
Z	"Said"
1	"One, Won"
2	"Too, To, Two"
2B	"To be"
2DAY	"Today"
2MORO	"Tomorrow"
2NITE	"Tonight"
3SUM	"Threesome"
4	"For, Four"
8	"Ate"
: -)	"I'm happy"
: -))	"I'm very happy"
: -(	"Not at all happy" or "Sad face"
: D	"Great joy"
: -O	"Surprised" or "Shocked"
d:)	"Baseball cap "
; -/	"Confused"
; -)	"Nudge, nudge, wink"
: -*	"Kiss"
: -!!	"Angry"
<^))>><	"Fish" or "Goldfish"

## Web-based Text Messaging

If you want to send text messages from your computer (to a phone, computer or other device), the following web sites are worth a visit:

### AOL Instant Messenger

Web address: <http://info.aol.co.uk/aim>  
 Operating system: MS Windows/Linux/Mac OS  
 Language(s): English and another 5 languages  
 Description: Enables alerts from stock market, check your e-mail. Also enables voice chat. Auto update.

### FireTalk

Web address: [www.firetalk.com](http://www.firetalk.com)  
 Operating system: MS Windows  
 Language(s): English, also in French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Italian, Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, Chinese, Japanese  
 Description: Designed mainly for voice chat. Allows text chat and instant messaging as well.

### ICQ 2000

Web address: [www.icq.com](http://www.icq.com)  
 Operating system: MS Windows  
 Language(s): English and another 11 languages  
 Description: The classic text messaging and chat, voice messages, now supports also high internet telephony, cell phone SMS messaging, multiple e-mail account checking (pop). File, URL, sending.

### MSN Messenger Service

Web address: <http://messenger.msn.com>  
 Operating system: MS Windows/MAC OS  
 Language(s): English and almost 50 national versions  
 Description: Auto update, Hotmail e-mail incorporated.

### Yahoo! Messenger

Web address: <http://messenger.yahoo.com>  
 Operating system: Win95/98/2000/NT  
 Language(s): English and another 21 languages  
 Description: Enables voice chat and file transfer. Alerts for the stock quotes, Yahoo! Mail messages, and Calendar appointments.

## Other Messaging Services

Mobile messaging has moved beyond text from SMS (Short Message Service) to EMS (Enhanced Messaging Service and then to MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service).

### Short Messaging Service

SMS allows text messages to be sent to and received from mobile phones (and some other devices). The text can include words or numbers or an alphanumeric combination. SMS was created when it was incorporated into the Global System for Mobiles (GSM) digital mobile phone standard.

### Enhanced Messaging Service

EMS allows the sending of a combination of simple melodies, pictures, sounds, animations, modified text and standard text as an integrated message for display on an EMS compliant mobile phone. There are many different potential combinations of these media formats. For example, when an exclamation mark appears in the enhanced message, a melody could be played. A simple image could be displayed along with some text and this sound effect.

### Multimedia Messaging Service

MMS enables messages to be sent and received using several types of media including text, images, audio and video - images from digital cameras, mobile pictures, mobile screensavers, mobile greeting cards, mobile maps and business cards as well as moving images, cartoons and interactive video are supported by this service.

Over time, the nature and form of mobile communication is getting less textual and more visual. The main features of this transformation are shown below.

Type	Characteristics	Content Reformatting For Mobile Necessary?	Applications	Support	Availability
Text Messaging	Usually 160 characters	Yes	Simple person to person messaging	All phones	1990s
Picture Messaging	Simple rudimentary images	Yes	Simple person to person messaging with a visual feel	Most networks phones	2000- 2001
Enhanced Messaging	Text messages plus sound, animation, picture, text formatting enhancements	Yes	Simple person to person messaging with a visual feel	EMS standards expected to be widely adopted	2001 onwards
Multimedia Messaging	Messages in multiple rich media formats e.g. video, audio plus text	No	Simple person to person messaging with a visual feel	MMS standards expected to be widely adopted	2002 onwards

## Useful Links

[The Mobile Data Association](#)

The Mobile Data Association (MDA) is the non-profit global association for vendors and users of mobile data and their advisors.

The MDA acts as a focal point for its members, (vendors and users) and outside parties interested in knowing more about the industry. For more information visit [www.themda.org](http://www.themda.org)

For information on messaging, in its various forms, visit the MDA's messaging website at [www.text.it](http://www.text.it).

[The Mobile Marketing Association](#)

The Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) is a global association that strives to stimulate the growth of mobile marketing and its associated technologies. It has 400 members representing over twenty countries. MMA members include agencies, advertisers, hand held device manufacturers, carriers and operators, retailers, software providers and service providers, as well as any company focused on the potential of marketing via mobile devices.

More information is available at:

<http://mmaglobal.com/main>

[160 Characters](#)

160 Characters claims to be the leading membership forum for the mobile messaging industry. Members receive free access to information, research and case studies about mobile messaging from around the world.

For more information visit

[www.160characters.org](http://www.160characters.org)

[Mobile Network Operators - worldwide](#)

A list of mobile network operators worldwide is provided by Wikipedia at:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_mobile\\_network\\_operators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mobile_network_operators)

## Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues. We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

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