How to Show Texting Manners

THE CHALLENGE

You are talking face-to-face with a friend when you receive a text message. What should you do?

A: Read the text message while still talking to your friend.

B: Say "excuse me" to your friend and read the text message.

C: Ignore the text message and keep talking to your friend.

Does it matter which option you choose? The answer is *yes!*

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Texting one friend while talking to another is like playing your favorite sport without adhering to the rules of the game. 'But these are my *friends,*' you might say. All the more reason to be mannerly. Not that you have to become straitlaced and formal. But here is a fact of life: *If you are unmannerly with your friends, sooner or later they will no longer be your friends.*

Why is that so? Because people do not like to be treated rudely. A young woman named Beth* says, "It's annoying when I'm talking to a friend who keeps checking her phone as if she's waiting for something better to happen!" How long do you think Beth will tolerate having a friend like that?

Considering your cell-phone manners, look back at the scenario under "The Challenge." Which option seems best to you? Likely, you realize that Option **A** is unmannerly. But what about Options **B** and **C?** Is it rude for you to interrupt a conversation just to check a text message? Or is it rude for you to ignore a text message just to continue a conversation?

As you can see, manners can get complicated. But the Bible can help. It says: "Just as you want men to do to you, do the same way to them." (Luke 6:31) You can apply that advice to texting. How?

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* Some names in this article have been changed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Text only at appropriate times. "Sometimes I receive a text message really late at night," says a young man named Richard. "It's not even for anything important, and it disturbs my sleep!" Ask yourself, 'Do I text people at times when they might be resting?'—*Bible principle: Ecclesiastes 3:1.*

Check your tone. Communication is carried by words, voice inflection, facial expression, and body language. Unfortunately, most of those elements are missing when you text. So how can you compensate? "Use common courtesy," suggests a young woman named Jasmine. "Ask, 'How are you?' and use words like 'please' and 'thank you.' "—*Bible principle: Colossians 4:6.*

Be discerning. Look again at the scenario under "The Challenge." If you are expecting an important message, it might be necessary to excuse yourself from a conversation. Often, though, the message can wait. "Your phone will still be there when your friend has finished talking," says 17-year-old Amy, "but your friend may not be there when you finish texting." You can use similar discernment when at a gathering. "Don't text the whole time," says 18-year-old Jane. "That tells people, 'I don't care about your company; I'd rather be somewhere else.' "

Think before you hit the send button. Might your text message be misunderstood? Would emoticons help convey the right feeling? "If you're joking about something, put a smiley face there," says 21-year-old Amber. "People get their feelings hurt—and fights can even start—because they take a lighthearted remark to be serious."—*Bible principle: Proverbs 12:18.*

Clearly, your cell-phone manners really matter!

To think about: Good manners are based on love. How is that quality displayed? The Bible states: "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous. It does not brag, does not get puffed up, does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked." (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5) Which aspect of love do *you* need to work on? ■

ELENA

"Young people tend to be risqué in their texts, thinking that they aren't actually saying the words. Really, off-color language shouldn't be part of *any* form of conversation—texting or otherwise."

EVAN

"Since you're not right in front of the person you're texting, you might let your guard down and say something hurtful. If you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it in a text."