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Everything you need to know about the SMS successor

By Jackie Dove

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Text messaging — the communications tech we've used since the 1990s — is showing its

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characters. Despite those restrictions, old habits die hard. Text messaging, or SMS (Short Message Service), still gets plenty of love from the public. The number of SMS and MMS messages sent in the United

sent 2.2 trillion SMS or MMS messages during 2020, up from 1.5 trillion messages in

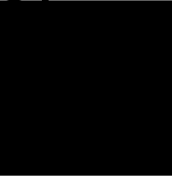This video file cannot be played. (Error Code: 224003)

The text messaging backstory

What is RCS?

Chat is a protocol

Who supports Chat?

Despite the popularity of SMS messaging, some people need more than it's capable of

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designed as a modern take on texting that rolls features from [Facebook Messenger](#), [iMessage](#), and [WhatsApp](#) into one platform. The protocol allows the exchange of group chats, video, audio, and high-resolution
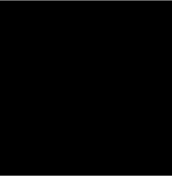
viewing, and looks and functions like iMessage and other rich messaging apps.

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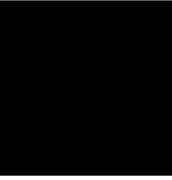
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Using RCS

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Google currently offers RCS chat worldwide

app. With Google's rollout of RCS as Android's primary texting platform for

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also go to the [Google Play Store](#) to download Messages yourself.
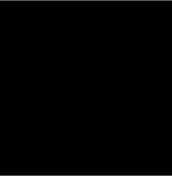
The text messaging backstory

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The invention of text messaging predates the [iPhone](#), BlackBerry, and Palm Pilot. SMS was first proposed in 1982 for the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM),

by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI).

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and modular enough to support carrier management features like real-time billing, message rerouting (routing messages to a recipient other than the one specified by the user), and message blocking.
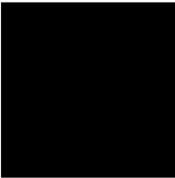
After nearly a decade of tinkering, SMS was deployed commercially in December 1992 —

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trillion messages.

Despite the explosive growth of SMS, the tech didn't evolve all that much from the 1990s. Even as phone form factors changed

remained the same, right down to the 160-character limit.

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Rich Communication Services (RCS) has been promoted as a replacement protocol

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worldwide to adopt RCS. The result is Chat, a protocol based on the RCS Universal Profile — a global standard for implementing RCS that lets subscribers from different carriers and countries communicate with

Chat has evolved to visually resemble iMessage and other commercial messaging

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allowing customers to select airline seats from within Android Messages. Chat is hardware agnostic, designed to work across multiple devices. Chat could also work on iOS, but Apple, which accounts for half the

24, does not support the protocol despite increasing pressure from Google to do so.
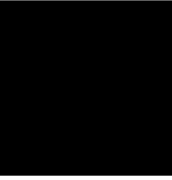
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two apps: Google's Messages and Samsung Messages. While this may seem restrictive, most Android-based [smartphone manufacturers](#) ship with this default messaging app. There are a few moving parts required for Chat to work as designed.

app that supports Chat. Recipients need to support Chat too; otherwise, Chat messages

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data, name group chats, and add and remove participants from group chats. You can [enable RCS by launching the Android Messages app](#) and switching on the chat features in the settings. Text messages will

Who supports Chat?

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There are about 60 RCS Messaging supporters, split among 47 mobile operators, 11 OEMs, and two OS providers. Carriers like

requires both a software and a network update, many manufacturers didn't want to
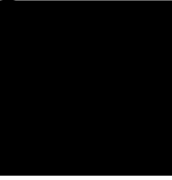
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for mobile virtual network operators to implement the standard.

Cross-carrier initiative blues

and Sprint — formed the Cross Carrier
Messaging Initiative, a joint venture to
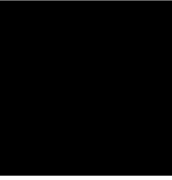
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experience for customers including growing
the availability of RCS." T-Mobile and
Verizon did keep their hats in the ring, and in
March 2021, T-Mobile inked a deal with
Google to make Messages the default

Where we are now
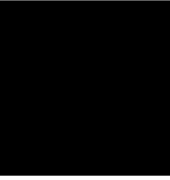
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The RCS standard lets Android users share high-quality photos and videos, and now Google has folded its own Photos app into Messages. You can send your videos as

conversation, and soon you'll be able to send photos the same way.

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phone numbers.

Outside of the United States, many worldwide telecom companies have joined the RCS universal profile model, including

Australia, Canada, and Latin America. Along with the U.K. and French carriers. Google
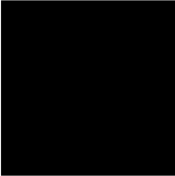
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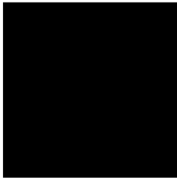
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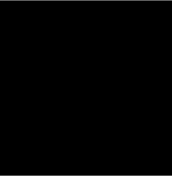About Us

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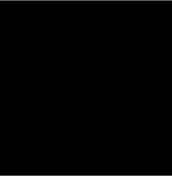This video file cannot be played. (Error Code: 224003)

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