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Texting... Anyone?

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Texting is probably more popular than email. Here are some texting statistics I've read from various sources, though I can't really attest to their veracity. From my limited experience, it seems that they are likely accurate. 96% of smartphone users text; Texting is the most widely-used and frequently used app on a smartphone; Over 6 billion texts are sent in the U.S. daily; Texting takes up almost 15% of a cell phone users time; 90% of all text messages are read in under 3 minutes; The average Millennial exchanges an average of 67 texts messages per day; Americans exchange twice as many texts as they do calls; Only 43% of smartphone users use their phone to make calls, but over 70% text (I'm not too sure about that one); It takes the average person 90 minutes to respond to email, but only 90 seconds to respond to a text; Worldwide people will send 8.3 trillion texts this year, that's almost 23 billion per day or almost 16 million per minute. A compelling summary of how smartphone users view texting - they love it. And what's not to love. Texting is a great way of keeping in touch with people in an un-intrusive way. The receiver of a message gets a notification that a message has been received and they can choose to read it or not and answer it if need be. The notification can be a ringer-like sound or as subtle as a vibration of the phone.

Texting and emailing are similar but very different means of communicating. Email tends to be seen as information that can be responded to at a later date. Texts seem to have a sense of urgency attached to them. Maybe it's the way the notification affects us whenever a message arrives. The notification seems to be a lot stronger than just "you've got mail". Watch someone who is really hooked on texting. See how they typically just can't wait to get that phone in their hands so they can answer the text. For some of them, it almost seems like an addiction. For those of us who started with email, long ago, you may remember that instant messaging grew out of email as a way of having the message sent immediately, rather than having it sit waiting for the recipient to collect it. (You may have used AIM, ICQ or MSN Messenger). Texting is today's Instant Messaging. But of course, today you are not sitting at your computer all day, you are carrying your phone with you (all day) so you can be instantly contacted by a text.

Texting is being used for many different purposes. It is being used for personal, family and social purposes among group members; and in business and government organizations for communications between colleagues. Texting originally referred to sending short (less than 160 characters) alphanumeric digital electronic messages using the Short Message Service (SMS), but it has been extended by the Multimedia Message Service (MMS) to include digital images, videos and sound, and now handles messages greater than 160 characters in length. So, texting is the use of these services to send and receive messages and attachments. And it's the texting app on your phone

that knows how to use these services to send and receive messages. “Android Messages” is the app that comes on many Android phones. On an Apple device, it is Apple “Messages”. But there are many texting apps available for both devices; just check them out at the Google Play Store or the Apple Store.

On the opening screen of your texting app of choice, there will be a way of starting a conversation. On Android Messages, you start by pressing the “+” to start a new conversation. Keep in mind, a text is sent to a phone number, not an email address. So, after your app is opened, you can begin a text, by typing the phone number of your intended recipient using the keypad, or you can find them in your list of contacts. Although there is no 160 character limitation to the size of a text anymore, the size is probably limited by the fact that you are using a smallish keyboard on the smartphone’s screen, where the keys are a lot smaller than the fingers that are poking at them, though I have seen some very fast and deft use of the keyboard with both thumbs moving swiftly across the screen.

Once the recipient’s phone number is established, a conversation screen will appear on your screen with the keyboard towards the bottom. (Android Messages also gives you the option to make a phone call from this screen. Why not, it now knows the phone number.) First you create the text by typing the message. Many apps include a feature, sometimes called “predictive text”, that attempts to help you with the words and spelling by showing you words it suspects you want. If the word you want shows up, you can touch the word and it will be included and you can go on to the next word. (If you must, special characters and emojis can usually be found somewhere on this screen.)

Once the message is complete, the last thing to do is send it. In this example, the Send command is shown as a paper airplane icon with SMS below it. A short time after your text is sent, if your recipient responds, you will hear your familiar text notification. When you go back into the messaging app you will see the response to your text, as well as your original text. As you continue to interact with the same recipient, the “conversation” will show each of the texts and text responses sequentially. An interlaced series of texts will show up for all the contacts that you have interacted with. You can review this conversation, or any conversation that hasn’t been deleted, at any time by choosing the appropriate contact after the app has been opened. You now have a history of all the text interactions with all your contacts that you have texted with. So, now as you have seen, texting is pretty easy to do, and is a great way to keep in touch, in real-time, with some of your favorite contacts. This is probably what has made texting such a popular way to keep in touch. So, maybe some of those surprising statistics are right, after all.