

(C)

### Do U want 2 meet us 4 a coke?

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A new study in the US shows that the use of cell phones by teenagers is increasing. More and more teens are communicating with their friends with text messages. Sending text messages – or ‘texting’ – is becoming more popular than emailing or talking on the phone or in person. The study found that:

- four out of five teens (80 per cent) in the US have a cell phone
- 52 per cent of US teenagers send text messages every day
- teenage boys send about 30 texts a day
- teenage girls send about 100 texts a day
- girls text more than boys for social reasons, privately and about schoolwork
- 34 per cent of teens admit to texting while driving
- 42 per cent of teens say they can text with their eyes closed

A 22-year-old British engineer called Neil Papworth sent the world’s first text message in December 1992. He sent the message ‘Merry Christmas’ from his computer keyboard to a colleague’s cell phone. Originally a message was called an ‘SMS’ – which means Short Message Service. Now in Britain and the US messages are called ‘texts’ and the people who send them are ‘texters’. [...] Companies use texts for marketing, parents use them to contact their children, or to organize carpools. And texting is fast. The world speed record for texting a 25-word message is 25.94 seconds!

Conrad Brace, a teacher at a school in Birmingham, allows students to text him questions during class if they are too shy to ask aloud. One of his pupils, Kay Brown, says she often texts other teens from her class after school hours to discuss homework. “If you phone,” she says, “it takes longer. If you send an email, it might take a while before you get a reply. Most people answer to a text immediately. That’s the great thing about it.”

But can cell phones be dangerous? Well, the World Health Organization (WHO) of the United Nations looked at 4,500 users and found a possible link between using cell phones and tumours. Research is going on.

Using a cell phone while driving is certainly dangerous – especially if you try to write a text! Even using one just to make a call can be dangerous. In some countries only hands-free phones are allowed, but studies show that it is the conversation itself that distracts, and hands-free phones do not mean fewer accidents.



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