

Polite Texting – 02/25/2023

This is one of a series of articles provided by the Oakmont Technology Learning Center on the use of technology by seniors.

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There are subtle rules in texting to which we need to pay heed. A little bit of courtesy goes a long way in texting as it does in real life. Take the time to be considerate of the intended recipient. Two particularly important rules are:

Do not expect an immediate response: Texting is subtle and doesn't require one's immediate attention; that is, it doesn't interrupt life and demands it be read. Let the recipient respond in their own time.

Do make it short and to the point: If you notice that your text is evolving into a tome, consider putting the information into an email message or calling the person. Also, by e-messaging rather than texting, you have more control over the content and can retain a copy for future reference.

Those are just a two rules to keep in mind. Other important considerations are:

Response Time: Remember that response time varies greatly. Keep in mind that the recipient may be otherwise occupied or even in a stressful situation. Depending on the content and the urgency, you may wait for from 1 minute to several days for a response. Because there is no set "required" response time, the best advice is, "Be patient." While some texts may take some time for "research" (calendar, family) before replying, on the other hand, certain texts don't require a reply, such as, "Will be there in 5."

The Recipient: Think about the recipient and their tastes, tolerances, situation, and abilities. Consider how they may perceive the text. Avoid ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, which are perceived as shouting and, thus, rude. Also be mindful that the recipient may have only limited texting. If the recipient doesn't have your phone number, be considerate and begin the text with an introduction; for example, "Hi, Matt! It's Mary from the Glee Club." Also note that not all people like "group" texts going to multiple recipients (along with every group reply going to every recipient).

Your Surroundings: Be mindful of where you are. Avoid being offensive by resisting the urge to view a text while conversing with another person. Put your phone into Silent mode and into your pocket to avoid texting at the movies or other performances (rude and annoying), or while driving, bicycling, or even walking (dangerous).

Consider the Information to be Shared: Avoid using text to inform someone of sad news or to end a relationship. These weighty news items are best given either in person or over the phone. Also avoid sharing private, confidential, or embarrassing information.

Mistakes: Watch for inadvertent mistakes. Choose a recipient carefully from your Contacts list. Otherwise, you may end up sending the "best roast recipe" to a vegetarian. On the other hand, if you receive a text that was misdirected to you, be considerate and reply with something like, "Sorry. Wrong number."

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