

## 5 Tips on Professional Communication in the Text-Chat Age

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Do you know what LOL, BTW, and TTYL stand for? If you're younger than 20 or you have a kid who is, you may have some insights into the acronymic language that is chat and text message shorthand.

According to a [Pew Research Internet Project report](#), 90% of American adults own a cell phone and 81% of those surveyed send or receive text messages with their phones. Given these statistics, it's no surprise that the chat/text code has seeped into the professional world.



This is the age of abbreviated communication, emails, texts, and instant messages are widely accepted substitutes for in-person meetings and phone calls. Yet this trend toward abbreviated correspondence has made proper professional communication more important than ever. Complete sentences, grammar, and punctuation are still important, even if there's a lot less of them.

How do you stay professional when texting and instant messaging? In honor of National Speak in Complete Sentences Day on May 31, here are a handful of tips to help you balance the two.

- 1. Don't text or message important, confidential, or urgent information.** If you're late for a meeting or you have to give someone the company credit card number, call or deliver the information in person. Not everyone checks his or her phones on a regular basis, and even the best security software can't prevent every information breach.
- 2. Be aware of auto-correct.** A lot of smart phones and tablets now automatically correct spelling or complete words as you type a text message or email. While this is a great feature for the spelling-challenged or those with wide fingers, it can lead to embarrassment if auto-correct changes or inserts the wrong word. Google "common autocorrect mistakes" and learn from other people's mistakes.
- 3. Add a disclaimer to emails sent from mobile devices.** "This message was sent from my iPhone; please excuse any typos." Chances are you've seen something along these lines in an email. A disclaimer isn't an excuse for carelessness, but it can help explain the occasional typo.
- 4. Don't over text.** Not everyone has unlimited text messages, and an astronomical phone bill doesn't help any relationship -- professional or personal.
- 5. Watch your tone.** It's so easy for someone to misunderstand the tone of a text or message. Refrain from using either to deliver information that could be misinterpreted, and leave texting/messaging for simple communications, such as confirming an appointment or sending a non-urgent reminder.

Texting and instant messaging are quick and easy ways to communicate with your colleagues, managers, clients or other work associates -- provided that you use them in a professional manner.

Be cognizant of what you're saying, don't type anything you wouldn't say in person, and text/message AYOR (at your own risk).

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