

# TECH TIPS

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## Using Text Messages and Dictation

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Text messaging on cell-phones, tablets and computers has become one of the preferred ways of communicating these days, even more than emails and phone calls. The younger generations clearly prefer text messages to phone calls, and will often respond quicker to a text message than they will to an email or phone call.

Knowing some of the options you have for quickly creating text messages can help you keep in touch with friends and family, and reduce the technical challenges of using tiny actual or “virtual” keyboards on your devices. The advances in speech-to-text technology make it easy to capture most of your message content by just talking to your phone and letting it do the bulk of the “typing” and editing.

Today’s text messages also allow you to include multimedia items like emojis, pictures, short videos, links to websites and YouTube videos in addition to the text.

### Advantages of text messages over phone calls and emails

**General advantages of texting:** 1) Texts go through faster than emails do; 2) According to Forbes Magazine, 95% of text messages are read within three minutes, while an email message can sit for days in an inbox without being read; 3) You don’t need internet service to send a text message; 4) When you answer or initiate a phone call, your talking can disturb others or be heard. Sending or receiving text

messages is less likely to be noticed or disturb others, so they are often used in classrooms or meetings to communicate discretely.

**Advantages in large-scale disaster situations:** 1) Text messages will go through when phone calls and email are blocked because of overloaded cell towers and networks. This is because text messages use a different system, and are automatically resent when the traffic clears or when the receiver’s phone comes back online, whereas phone calls that don’t go through need to be resent manually. 2) Text messages without pictures and videos take up much less bandwidth and may go through when phone circuits are overloaded.

Article on the advantages of texting (December 2020): <https://tinyurl.com/advantages-of-texting>

### How to create and send a text message

The process is similar for Apple or Android phones, but the detailed steps and icons are slightly different. In both cases, the icon for text messages looks like a speech bubble that shows up in the comics in a newspaper. Then you need to add the recipients in the TO field using either a phone number or an email, type your text in the MESSAGE field, and click on the icon to SEND your text message that looks like a triangle-shaped paper airplane. The links below give more detailed instructions with pictures for Apple and Android phones.

From Apple support: <https://tinyurl.com/apl-how-2-message>

For Android phones: <https://tinyurl.com/andr-how-2-message>

### Using the microphone instead of the virtual or actual keyboard

When you click into the “message” field to input the text of your message, a “virtual” on-screen keyboard will pop up. That keyboard includes a voice input microphone icon that you click on to start dictating your text. The same kind of voice input will show up in any phone app that has a text input field, such as on websites or emails. Remember to proofread your

text before hitting Send, as all of the voice-recognition systems often make mistakes that will need to be edited.

Here are some articles with more detailed instructions:

Use Dictation on your iPhone, iPad or iPod touch (Apple support): <https://tinyurl.com/dictate-on-apl>

How-to-Geek article “Use Voice Dictation to Save Time on Android, iPhone and iPad”: <https://tinyurl.com/dictate-on-mobile>

### Type faster using abbreviations, suggested text and keyboard strokes

Most people are familiar with a few text-messaging abbreviations that have made it into everyday speech, like LOL (for laughing out loud), OMG (for oh my god) and BFF (best friends forever). However, there are lots more that you could start using, such as 143 (I Love You) and 1432 (I Love You Too).

You can also do less typing by inserting emojis like a heart symbol, a smiling face or a thumb’s-up graphic. The links below give you more options to speed up your texting experience.

Faster texting tips (wikiHow): <https://tinyurl.com/text-faster>

100 abbreviations for text messaging: <https://tinyurl.com/text-abbreviations>

100 abbreviations parents should know (from the Utah Daily Herald):

<https://tinyurl.com/abbreviations-4-parents>

### Dictating text in Microsoft Office and other applications

Here are two articles that address the use of dictation in other applications besides messaging:

PC magazine article: <https://tinyurl.com/dictate-in-office>

Best Dictation Software (2021): <https://tinyurl.com/2021-best-dictation>

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