

Understand what you are sending and receiving. Text message language consists of many shortcuts which appear as acronyms and/or symbols that, to the uninitiated, can be incomprehensible.

Such as, f U do not undRstNd DIS sNteNc U nEd 2 Lern txt lingo (If you do not understand this sentence you need to learn text lingo). There are obvious risks here, from danger or embarrassment in responding inappropriately to a message you do not understand.

Be aware of what your child is sending or reading. As a parent, learn what the acronyms and symbols mean. At the end of the day it could save vital time in the unthinkable event that something happens to your child and their cell phone or IM conversation record is your only clue.

## Cyberbullying

Cyberbullies are now turning to text technology to harass their victims.

- Text harassment is a crime and should be reported to the police.
- If you are receiving threatening or malicious messages by SMS (Short Message Service), report it to the police with all the messages you have received. They will then work with the networks to stop the problem.
- Register your phone to prevent nuisance calls and annoying text messages (SMS spam, cold calling and telemarketers). Register online with

the Do Not Call Registry online at [www.donotcall.gov/](http://www.donotcall.gov/).

## Use Common Sense

Be careful if you meet someone in real life who you've only "known" through text messaging. Even though text messaging is often the "next step" after online chatting, that does not mean it's safer. You still do not really know who you are talking to/text messaging with and they may not be truthful about who they are. With any face-to-face meeting, tell someone where you are going, take a friend with you and meet during daylight hours in a public place you are familiar with (like the mall).

Don't be a target. Wandering around with your phone in plain sight can be dangerous. If you are not using it, put it in your pocket, purse or backpack and only use it in public when necessary. Cell phone theft is a common crime and often, thieves will attack the owner of a phone.

When talking on your phone, be aware of your surroundings and who is coming and going. Concentrating more on your phone conversation than what is going on around you makes you more likely to become a victim of a crime.

Don't give out personal information (bank information, social security number, etc.) over the phone; you don't know who is listening to your conversation and they can use your personal information to steal your identity.

# Cell Phone Safety



Mesa Police Department  
[www.mesaaz.gov/police](http://www.mesaaz.gov/police)

Cell phones can be a great communication and safety tool. Not only can kids keep up with their friends, they can check in with parents, respond to their parents calls, and phone for help in case of an emergency. However, there are safety issues to be aware of. When you give a child a cell phone, you give them access to the world and the world access to them, including when they are away from home and from parental supervision. What's more, today's cell phones are also Web browsers and instant messenger and e-mail terminals. Just about everything you do from a PC, you can also do from a cell phone.

With a color screen, your child can view the same type of graphic material that is available on the Internet at home from their cell phone. A built-in digital camera means that your child can not only see inappropriate material, but can send it as well in the form of a digital photo or movie. Pushing a few buttons can send a child's image, phone number and mobile e-mail address to the wrong person. It is even possible to instantly post photos on the Web for all to see. Some gyms have banned cell phones in the locker rooms because of concerns about inappropriate photographs.



Predators now cannot only send kids messages, but they can also call them to arrange meetings. Because kids can access the phone while they're away from

home, they are particularly vulnerable because they are out of their parents reach. Predators can groom a child on the Internet and then contact the child via cell phone to arrange a face-to-face meeting.

## Protecting Your Privacy

- Only give your cell number out to people you know and trust.
- Never reply to text messages from people you don't know.
- Know how to block others from calling your phone.
- Know how to block your number when calling or text messaging others.

Most cell phones have caller ID on by default. That means when you call or send a text message to someone, you are giving that person your phone number, which can then be used to make harassing calls as well as to send unwanted instant messages and e-mail. It is not uncommon for bullies to use cell phones to harass other kids. If your child experiences harassing phone calls, text messages or any other type of problem, call the provider to see about getting the number changed. Make sure to guard the new number so the same problems will not happen again.

## Respect Others

- Keep calls short. Try sending a text message instead of calling.

- Set your phone to vibrate, not ring.
- Talk normally; there is no need to shout.



- Don't text and walk; if you are looking at the phone you are not aware of your surroundings.

Think about how a text message might read, before you send it. Just like e-mail, text messages can be taken the wrong way.

Don't give out anyone else's cell number without first getting their permission; you never know what it will be used for.

## Text and Instant Message Safety

- Make sure that online profiles do not contain any personal information.
- Avoid posting your cell phone number online. Once it has been made available, your number can be used by spammers, scammers, identity thieves, online predators and cyberbullies. There are directories which can reveal information about a customer when their phone number is entered.
- Never let someone you don't know use your cell phone. If it's an emergency, make the call for them.