

My daughter racked up 14,528 text messages in one month

January 19 2009, By Greg Hardesty

OMG!!! This isn't exactly proud papa news: My daughter, Reina, who recently turned 13, just racked up 14,528 text messages in one month.

Thank God she's too young to drive.

Given that she's had a cell phone for less than six months, and she is supposed to share the phone with her 14-year-old brother (and use it mainly for emergencies) _ well, I'm speechless.

Or should I say, textless?

Her mother, Manako, recently got the phone bill from AT&T. Only 23 pages of the bill came with the bill mailed to her home in Lake Forest, Calif.

Manako went online and looked at the PDF version of the bill. The PDF file, covering the period from Nov. 27 to Dec. 26, totaled 440 pages.

OK, the bill included charges for two other phones, including one belonging to Reina's 22-year-old sister, Hana, who accounted for a comparatively modest 7,101 text messages during the same period. Older sister Marina, 24, accounted for a measly (whew!) 700.

But still ... A 440-page phone bill? Thankfully, Manako signed up all of them for unlimited texting.

If not, the 20 cents per text for Reina would have totaled \$2,905.60.

That's a lot of house chores.

I'm no math whiz, but I did some quick calculations on Reina's thumb-numbing total.

Assuming my daughter slept an average of eight hours during the billing period (she usually sleeps more), that works out to 484 text messages a day _ or a text message every two minutes she was awake.

Could AT&T have made some mistake?

Wishful thinking. It's all true, based on the PDF file I reviewed.

I definitely am not LMAO (laughing my, er, butt off).

One small consolation: The 14,528 total includes text messages both sent and received.

Really, though. Is that any consolation?

Manako posted the fascinating (but disturbing) facts on her Facebook page. Comments ensued.

My daughter, Reina, felt compelled to respond on her mother's Facebook site.

She explained, "I just have a lot of people that I text all the time.

"Like, the first thing I ask after I get to know them is their cell phone

number, and if they have unlimited texting.

"I have like 4 close friends that I'm constantly texting. I don't really think there is a point. It's just fun to talk."

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Like, I contacted my text-happy daughter on her cell phone.

I sent her some questions via text message. This is the digital conversation that ensued:

Q. Are you nuts?

A. No, I just like to talk.

Q. Who are you texting, anyway? Your entire school?

A. Well, a lot of my friends have unlimited texting. I just text them pretty much all the time.

Q. You don't think 14,528 text messages in one month is excessive?

A. I do, but it's not all mine. I get a lot of annoying forwards and multimedia messages that I just delete because they're stupid, and the ones I receive are counted.

Q. What disciplinary measures are you prepared to accept, my dear loving daughter?

A. Umm...discipline?

Q. Am I a lame father to have allowed such a thing to happen?

A. No. Haha. I'm as surprised as you are. xD

The smiley face saved her.

—

I called AT&T Mobility. I wanted to see if the company kept records of such things.

"That seems a bit high," said Katie Keating, trying not to laugh and explaining that, for privacy, the company does not keep a tally of top texters.

"Texting is becoming more and more popular, and growing at a spectacular rate. Text-messaging is now hard-wired into our culture. It's in our DNA _ particular among young people."

Like, I figured as much, Katie.

Citing statistics from a Nielsen study done in the second quarter of 2008, Keating said teenagers ages 13-17 text more than any other demographic group.

The average texts per month for a person in this age group?

1,742.

Yes, Ms. Keating, 14,528 does seem a bit high.

The Nielsen study, of 50,000 cell phone users nationwide, found that people now use their cell phones more for texting than for talking. On average, each user sends 357 texts a month versus 204 voice calls a month.

Since getting the recent phone bill, Manako and I have restricted Reina's use of the cell phone.

The ghastly texting total happened over winter break. Now that school's back in session, we don't expect any more surprises of such magnitude.

Do we need to get a life? Does our daughter?

Go ahead. Text me your thoughts.

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Citation: My daughter racked up 14,528 text messages in one month (2009, January 19) retrieved 21 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-01-daughter-racked-text-messages-month.html>

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