'Don't call me before you text': The new rules of communicating in the digital era

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Connecting with people has become so much easier with advancing technology. Tasks that once required an operator, postage stamp or carrier pigeon are now as simple as tapping a name or even a face on

your screen, and, voila, you're connected.

But also easier is unwittingly getting caught up in a major disconnect by violating a tangle of new rules for communicating. A big one for some: Don't call until you've texted to confirm it's OK to call. But that's just the beginning.

"I'm usually pretty chill and not much bothers me," said Mark Angiello, a 29-year-old office manager from White Plains, New York. But the one thing that really gets under his skin, that he "hates more than anything else in life" is the horrendous one-word message—"K."

"At the very least reply with, 'Got it.'" Angiello said. "At least give me the courtesy of a few words here. You're not that busy."

Ramoan Bruce, a 29-year-old DJ from the Bronx said his personal list of digital interaction rules runs long.

"Don't text me and say, 'Hey, did you get my last text?' You know that I got it," Bruce said. "I get kinda annoyed when I text someone and then they respond by calling me, and I hate when people FaceTime me out of nowhere. Like, don't do that."

There are hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of others who have taken to [social media](#) to express their detest for people who don't follow the unwritten ground rules of digital communication.

Twitter user @Zelvel writes: "It's an unsaid rule in texting if you weren't the last person to send a text before you fell asleep, you should be the first to send one in the morning."

"Doesn't everyone know the unsaid rule? You have to send at least 3 texts pretending to be friendly before you can ask for a favor." writes

Twitter user @Tforace.

Twitter user @Kassmori writes: "Okay rule #1 if I unadd you on anything, do not ask me why on something else. Especially if I don't know you?"

Other examples include don't leave a message after the beep, don't send too many texts in a row, and don't just start a conversation with "Hey." If you decline incoming phone calls just to text the caller "What's up?" then you, too, have adopted some informal protocols.

Have you ever wondered where these seemingly innate communication subtleties come from?

"These rules are simply a new manifestation of a phenomenon we've seen in the past," said James Ivory, professor of communication at Virginia Tech.

Ivory said that the same way that generations and small groups of friends have their own slang and customs, internet culture has given birth to technology-dependent beings that have their own unique set of correspondence rituals.

So, not everyone gets the memo.

Unlike formal language, which can be taught with practice using an online subscription to Rosetta Stone, digital communication can be laced with cryptic clues that the person on the other end of the call, text or email may or may not easily understand.

"As soon as people aren't talking face to face, the first thing that gets lost is some of the richness of the nonverbal communication," Ivory said. "People immediately fill that gap by trying to approximate it," either by

using emoji, adopting informal etiquette or sending gifs—those animated images that seem to sum up a sentiment in seconds.

Etiquette and lifestyle expert Elaine Swann said that it's perfectly natural for the social manners to change as formats for chatter evolve.

"We used to pick up the phone and say happy birthday, happy New Year's and Merry Christmas to each other. Nowadays, it is appropriate and in good form to send those via text," the founder of a nationwide etiquette training institute said. "We are evolving with the way we communicate using electronic (devices). The guidelines of etiquette must evolve as well."

Ivory said that the only way to adapt to the techno-talk rules is to fully immerse yourself in the culture, but there are inherent drawbacks to over-adopting "chillaxed" methods of communication.

"There's great potential for danger," Ivory said. "What's considered polite in one form might be inappropriate or rude in another scenario."

Still, some communication rules should stand the test of time, Swann said.

"If I call you and you cannot talk at the moment, please don't answer your phone. Don't cut me off mid-sentence to tell me you are busy," Swann said. "First of all, it's rude to answer your phone in the presence of the folks you are with. Second of all, you are inconsiderate of my time."

15 unwritten rules of communicating in the digital age, according to people on Twitter

1. Don't randomly FaceTime people. If you want to Facetime, shoot

them a text or call first.

2. One word texts like OK and LOL are conversation killers. Don't respond with one word, unless you don't want to talk anymore.

3. If someone you know comments on a photo or video you posted, you should respond.

4. If someone communicates to you using a certain form of communication, e.g. e-mail, then you are expected to respond using the same form of [communication](#).

5. Don't like your own posts. People see that, and it makes you look weird.

6. Don't ask for likes, comments or shares.

7. Don't take hours to respond without an excuse.

8. You don't actually have to leave a voice message.

9. If someone asks you multiple questions via text, don't just reply to part of the message.

10. Don't post dozens of photos of cheezy quotes back to back.

11. It's OK to text Happy Birthday, Merry Christmas, etc. You don't have to call.

12. Don't have one-on-one's in the group-chat, better yet, rarely send group chats. They're mostly annoying and usually avoidable.

13. Try not to deliver bad news via text. Don't deliver bad news via DMs.

14. If you don't get a response, you don't have to get angry. It's not always that big of a deal.

15. If you have time to post on Snapchat, you have time to respond to [text](#) messages.

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