Does Texting Hurt Writing Skills?

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Texting is a common way to stay connected with friends, family, and others in social circles. While it can be a convenient way to communicate with others, there are concerns about how it might affect formal writing and conversational skills, especially for those who already have difficulty in these areas.

Abbreviations present in text messages are now showing up in more formal writing. A study by Pew Internet and American Life Project was initiated because of growing concerns over how texting affects writing skills of students immersed in electronic media.

There were 700 participants in the study, ages 12-17. Of these 700 teenagers, 60% said they didn't consider email, instant messaging, or texting to be formal writing; 63% said these messages have no impact on writing they do at school; and 64% reported using forms of shorthand in school similar to what they use in text messages.

Of the 64% of students who said they use shorthand, or textese, in their written school assignments, 25% said they used it to express emotion. Thirty-eight percent said they have used abbreviations such as “LOL” (“laugh out loud”) or “2morrow” (“tomorrow”) in their writings.

Research is fairly new in this area, and there are no studies yet that show how texting negatively affects students’ grammar and overall performance in school. However, there are many reports from teachers saying they see textese in their students’ assignments. It is important for teachers and parents to continue to teach the importance of proper grammar and spelling to students, and to keep textese out of the classroom and strictly in text messages.

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