

But what ever happened to talking on the telephone?!

(excerpts from "Middle Schoolers, Letting Their Fingers Do the Talking" by Ellen Edwards, The Washington Post, May 14, 2003)

Parents of middle school aged kids say they have been waiting for them to talk over the phone line and buzz away, but it's not happening and it looks as if it may not happen at all.

In what maybe a permanent shift, kids are communicating online rather than by phone. And as they get older, when they do use the phone, it's more likely to be a cell, and even that may be for text messaging rather than talking.

The computer gives kids scope—they can talk to 20 friends at the same time. As they get older and more independent, the cell will give them mobility.

But what about social skills?

"When I come home from school, I get on the Internet right away," says Lucy Bascom, a seventh-grader at Bethesda's Westland Middle School. "There are usually 10 to 20 people online and we talk all at once. We talk about school, friends." Girls need to talk," she continued.

But what about private matters?

"Sometimes things come up that we don't want to say online," Lucy says. That's when she uses the telephone. But basically she prefers the computer to the phone. "It's really convenient to say things you wouldn't have the confidence to say on the phone. There are no long awkward pauses when you are trying to think of a word."

"Also, if you are having a fight with someone, and you didn't know what to say," she says, "you just send out copies of the conversation to friends and ask them how to respond."

Is IMing just a girl thing?

Ben Liroff, a 10-year-old fifth grader at Arlington Traditional School, says he IMs both boys and girls and doesn't see much difference between that and talking with them. Still, he prefers IMs "You can send out a feeler to a person of the opposite sex without committing too much."

Echoes Vicky Rideout of the Kaiser Family Foundation, who researches how kids get their information these days, "that transition to using the phone is not as easy for boys as it is for girls. With an instant message, there is no such thing as a long awkward silence. For boys especially, that can be a comfort."

I'M Info Ming!



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What is IM?

What is this IM thing that everyone is hyped up about? Well, IM is short for **“Instant Messenger,”** which was originally launched by America On Line (AOL).

How do you do IM?

IM actually is a way to carry on conversations in writing while on the internet.

IM is used by kids and adults alike, and is becoming a substitute for the telephone.

Each IMer is identified by a screen name of their choosing from their internet provider.

Most IM users know and understand a separate “language,” which consists of abbreviations of English words and phrases.

The IM Language

IMers like to write as fast as they talk, so an abbreviated language was created. Here are some examples:

brb=	be right back
LOL=	laugh out loud
g2g=	got to go
ROTF=	rolling on the floor laughing
nvmnd=	never mind
nm=	not much
ttyl=	talk to you later
tfn=	tata for now
sry=	sorry
bb=	be back later
j/k=	just kidding
w/e=	what ever
u=	you
ur=	your, you're, you are

Additional Features

Just because you can't see your IM partner or partners doesn't mean that you can't express your emotions. Emoticon symbols help you to convey your feelings. Here are some of the more common emoticons:

: -)	smiling; agreeing
: -D	laughing
;-)	winking, just kidding
8 -]	WOW, maaan!
: -o	Wow!!
: -(sad
: '(crying
> :-<	angry
: -@	screaming
;*	kisses
: { }	blowing a kiss

