

# Read Between the Lines

## Q & A

with Shawn Marie Edgington



• First of all, what prompted you to write a book on texting?

There were a few Ah-Hah! moments that inspired me to write *Read Between the Lines*. One of the key moments for me was when my mom asked me why her grandkids (my teens) don't respond to her emails or voice messages. What I knew—and she didn't know—was that teens communicate differently than we do, and that it's up to us to learn how to communicate the way they do, which is by text.

I taught my mom how to send a text within three minutes, and when she sent her first text to her granddaughter, she had a response in just a few seconds! Now, my mom texts me several times a day just to check in, which I love. At sixty-four, she also texts her husband, her colleagues, and her grandkids . . . she's officially hooked.

My goal is to inspire communication across three generations. I felt like I had a duty to educate people who want an alternative way to communicate (and even those who don't) just in case their standard modes of communication aren't working. I'm betting that in most cases, a text message will.

• *Read Between the Lines* addresses topics from teen communication to emergency applications and even conducting business effectively through texting. Where do you feel text communication has had the most dramatic impact?

In the U.S., texting started with teens, and it has been spreading quickly to older generations. Out of necessity, parents have learned how to text because teens tend to do the majority of their non-verbal communication through texting.

Now that adults have learned from their kids what a great tool texting is, they've incorporated it into their communication mix to connect with friends, family, and colleagues. Thanks to teens, people of all ages are starting to learn the benefits of texting.



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- ◉ Don't most people already know how to text and tweet? Do we really need a book to tell us how to do it?

You would think most people already text and tweet on a regular basis, but that's not the case, especially when it comes to Baby Boomers and Generation X. *Read Between the Lines* is the first guide of its kind that walks readers through the process of when, why, and how to text and tweet in such a fun and simple format. Plus, the text lingo dictionary in the back of the book will help anyone decipher a text that's been received.

For the most part, people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five know how to text, but they still need to learn that text manners matter. Parents should require their teenagers to read "The Golden Rules of Texting" (chapter 10) before they ever get handed their cell phone. For those new to texting, *Read Between the Lines* teaches the basics and beyond in a non-intimidating way.

- ◉ What are the big texting and tweeting no-no's? Is there such a thing as text or Twitter™ etiquette?

I would recommend never texting when you're in the company of others, where you could offend someone around you. Also, never text while driving, which I totally understand is hard to do. Sometimes, we all have to use a little restraint.

- ◉ Sexting is a terrifying concept for any parent, and it's something we frequently hear is rampant among teens. What can parents do to protect their children and make sure they understand the serious consequences involved with sexting?

The most important thing parents can do to protect their children from the dangers of sexting is to first understand what it is. Then they should sit down and have a serious conversation with their kids about what can happen to them if they ever decide to text inappropriate pictures and comments out to others, as well as what to do if they receive inappropriate texts.

"Parental 411" (chapter 3) walks parents through this process, gives them some great discussion points, and provides some stopgap measures that can be easily implemented.

TITLE: READ BETWEEN THE LINES: A HUMOROUS GUIDE TO TEXTING WITH SIMPLICITY AND STYLE  
AUTHOR: SHAWN EDGINGTON | CATEGORY: REFERENCE / HUMOR / GIFT | ISBN-13: 978-1-934812-53-2 | HC: \$16.95



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- **How do educators feel about using texting as a communication tool between teachers and students?**

Educators who are in touch with their students are taking advantage of text technology in the classroom. From lecture texting to teachers sending reminder text messages to their students, texting is a great tool that can be easily added to the classroom environment.

Communication between teachers and students by text is much more prominent in the U.K., but I expect the U.S. to catch up within the next few years.

- **Let's talk texting and tweeting lingo. It seems virtually impossible to stay on top of all of the abbreviated lingo circulating—it's like learning a foreign language! Do you have to use lingo in order to be taken seriously when texting?**

You're right—texting and tweeting lingo are like a foreign language! The good news is that it's NOT necessary to use lingo in order to be taken seriously when texting. Most of the time, you just need to understand the most common text abbreviations. If you want to tweet, you'll need to know Twitter™ lingo and commands in order to achieve success.

- **Have you personally been involved in an emergency situation where having the ability to communicate through text messaging was beneficial?**

When my friend's teenage daughter ran away from home, the situation required text communication. After eight panic-filled phone calls to her daughter with no answer, she asked for my help, and it dawned on me that I should send her a text. Within seconds she responded, "I'm OK Shawn, I'm just at a friend's house watching TV . . . tell my mom I'll be home in a few hours."

I'm passionate about the need for all people to learn how to text, just in case they're ever in a similar situation. To communicate effectively with the younger generation, it's worth it to learn something new, no matter how old you are.

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- ◉ Through all of your research for *Read Between the Lines*, do you think texting and tweeting are here to stay?

Text messaging and Twitter™ are definitely here to stay. It's estimated that in just a few short years, there will be trillions of text messages and Twitter™ updates delivered globally every day. I believe we are only beginning to understand and take advantage of all the benefits.

- ◉ What's next? Is there another book in your future?

Since texting and tweeting are only in their infancy, it's going to be important to publish a follow-up book to get the message out as to all the new ways we can utilize these incredible technologies . . . with simplicity and style, of course!



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