"Techno talk": Rules for digital communication

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Connecting with people has become much easier with new technology. Messages that once needed an operator, a postage stamp or a carrier pigeon are now as simple as tapping a name on your screen. Just like that, you're connected.

However, it's also easier to get caught up in a confusing situation by breaking the new rules for communicating. Here's just one example. Many people these days do not want you to call them unless you've texted to make sure it's OK to call. That's just the beginning.

Mark Angiello is a 29-year-old office worker from White Plains, New York. "I'm usually pretty chill and not much bothers me," he said. There's one thing that really bugs him, though. What he "hates more than anything else in life" is the terrible one-word message, "K."

At Least Reply "Got It"

"At the very least reply with, 'Got it,'" Angiello said. "You're not that busy."

Ramoan Bruce is a 29-year-old DJ from the Bronx. He said his list of digital communication 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."

There are many others who talked on social media about similar problems.

Twitter user @Zelvel wrote about one problem. He said it's a rule in texting that "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."

Three Friendly Texts Before Asking For A Favor

"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 wrote another. "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 do not leave a message after the voicemail beep and do not send too many texts in a row. Some people do not like when you just start a conversation with "Hey." If you do not pick up a phone call, then text the caller "What's up?" then you, too, have some rules of your own.

Have you ever wondered where these small communication rules come from?

James Ivory is a professor of communication at Virginia Tech. He said these rules are simply a new form of something humans have seen in the past.

Internet Gives Birth To New Set Of Rules

Ivory said that every generation and every small group of friends has its own slang and customs. Internet culture has given birth to a new set of these rules, he said.

One can learn a normal language by taking lessons. Digital communication is not the same, though. The person on the other end of a call, text or email may not always understand the rules.

"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 fill that gap by using emoji or sending gifs, he said.

Elaine Swann is a manners and lifestyle expert. She said that it's perfectly natural for social manners to change as communication formats evolve.

"We used to pick up the phone and say Happy Birthday, Happy New Year's and Merry Christmas to each other," she said. These days, it is perfectly good manners to send those via text, she said. We are evolving with the way we communicate, so the guidelines of manners must evolve as well, she said.

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."

Directions: Use the information found in the article to identify the best response for each item.

R1: Cite text evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly

1. What is Elaine Swann’s reaction to people who text “Happy Birthday” instead of calling someone to wish him/her a Happy Birthday?
   A. She feels it is inappropriate because it demonstrates bad manners and poor judgment.
   B. She feels it is appropriate because every small group of friends has its own slang and customs.
   C. She feels it is acceptable because manners evolve along with the way we communicate.
   D. She feels it is acceptable because that is the only way some people communicate.

R1: Cite text evidence to support an analysis of what the text says implicitly

2. Read the first paragraph of the article:
   Connecting with people has become much easier with new technology. Messages that once needed an operator, a postage stamp or a carrier pigeon are now as simple as tapping a name on your screen. Just like that, you're connected.
   What inference (conclusion) can the reader make based on this paragraph?
   A. Technology can create many confusing situations for people.
   B. Technology makes connecting with others more convenient.
   C. Technology has caused people to start having good manners.
   D. Technology is having a negative effect on communication.

R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases

3. Read the last paragraph from the section Internet Gives Birth To New Set Of Rules
   "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.
   "What is the meaning of the word inconsiderate as it is used in the paragraph?
   A. to be thoughtful about another person's feelings and/or circumstances
   B. to be kind and helpful
   C. not caring about other people or their feelings
   D. not having enough time to help someone

R2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text; Summarize a text

4. Read the following paragraph from the section “Internet Gives Birth To New Set Of Rules.”
   "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.
   Which of the following is an accurate explanation of what this paragraph means?
   A. Swann thinks that people who are busy should stop what they are doing to answer a call.
   B. Swann thinks it is rude not to let someone on the phone know that you are with other folks.
   C. Swann thinks that it is bad manners when someone chooses not to answer the phone.
   D. Swann thinks it is more polite for people to ignore a call than it is to answer it when they are busy.