



# Handy Handouts®

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## Cyberslang... :) or :( ?

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### What is Cyberslang?

Cyberslang (also called textese, internet slang, internet shorthand, or chatspeak) refers to words, abbreviations, and/or acronyms frequently used in social media and text messaging. Individuals often use cyberslang in an effort to save time, reduce keystrokes, or limit characters in a message. Common examples of cyberslang include using acronyms such as LOL (meaning "laugh out loud"), replacing words like "you" and "are" with the letters "u" and "r," and using nonstandard written words such as "4ever" instead of "forever" or "plz" instead of "please."



### Is Cyberslang Helpful or Harmful?

In a rush to type out quick messages to friends, students often eliminate grammatical elements such as capitalization, proper punctuation, or the apostrophe in possessives and contractions (for example, "brads phone" instead of "Brad's phone"). In social media contexts and in text messaging, misspelled words and abbreviated words are common. While this may lead to difficulty in interpreting some messages (e.g., "ill c u l8r" really means "I'll see you later.") most students know when these grammatical elements can be left out and when more formal written language is required (such as when writing for educational/academic reasons).

Some research even shows that cyberslang can actually teach positive language skills. For example, many students who dislike writing willingly engage in text messaging. This is because students view text messaging (unlike writing "assignments") as fun. Text messaging allows students to play with language without having to worry about grammar and spelling rules. While the disregard for grammar and spelling might sound like a harmful effect, frequent text messaging exposes students to text which can lead to better phonological awareness skills and improved reading skills.

The ability to read and write competently is critical to success in school and the “real world.” Cyberslang can have both positive and negative influences in students’ reading and writing skills. As long as teachers, parents, and students are aware of what these influences are, they can be on the lookout for the harmful effects and can address them before they become problematic. For more information about this topic, see Handy Handout #365, “Social and Academic Vocabulary – What’s the Difference?”)

Resources:

“Are Texting and Tweeting Making Our Students Bad Writers?” accessed February 2, 2018, <https://www.common sense.org/education/blog/are-texting-and-tweeting-making-our-students-bad-writers>

Chantal N. van Dijk, Merel van Witteloostuijn, Nada Vasic, Sergey Avrutin, and Elma Blom, “The Influence of Texting Language on Grammar and Executive Functions in Primary School Children,” accessed February 2, 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4816572/>

“Do Texting and “Cyber Slang” Harm Students’ Writing Skills?” accessed February 2, 2018, [http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/arcives/texting\\_impacts\\_student-writing.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/arcives/texting_impacts_student-writing.shtml)

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## Helpful Products

The list of Super Duper® products below may be helpful when working with children who have special needs. Visit [www.superduperinc.com](http://www.superduperinc.com) and type in the **item name or number in our search engine**. If you’re viewing this Handy Handout on a computer, click the links below to see the product descriptions.

*Funzee Phones*  
[Item #FZF-43](#)

*Topic Talk Conversation card Game*  
[Item #GB-192B](#)

*Webber Core Curriculum Vocab Cards Level 2*  
[Item #CRD-56](#)

*Word Joggers*  
[Item #TPX-21401](#)