

Text and media messaging

Mobile phones are not just for talking. They can also be used for sending and receiving text messages, which are typed on the keypad. The person receiving the message can read it and text a reply back, and recent text messages are stored on the phone until they are deleted. Text messages can also be sent to a phone by email from a computer.

Multi-media messaging is similar to text messaging, but messages can contain photos, graphics, videos and sounds, as well as text. You need to have a media messaging handset to be able to swap this sort of message. As with text messaging, recent messages can be kept on the phone, but they can also be sent to an internet album. They can then be stored, altered and sent on to other people.

As well as one-to-one text messaging, you can have a conversation with several people at the same time by posting text messages in a chat room. Texting in a chat room is done anonymously, using nicknames.

O2 moderates its public chat forums for inappropriate postings and automatically stops people posting phone numbers, personal details like addresses, and swear words.

Another use for mobile phones is to receive information messages. These are text messages that are requested containing information such as celebrity gossip or football scores. Some information providers offer material that is suitable only for adults. All 18+ material is blocked on phones belonging to customers who have not verified that they are 18 or over. You can also ask O2 to restrict web access from mobile phones.

 See page 27.

Talking points

Some things you might like to mention to your children about text and media messaging:

- It is not possible to withhold a number when sending a text message from a mobile, so any text you send or receive can be traced.
- People in chat rooms are sometimes not who or what they say they are. Friends made online are still strangers.
- Information messages can sometimes be expensive. There is usually a charge for these messages on top of the normal text rate.