Cell Phones have become an essential communication tool for almost everyone today. Their diverse functions have made them more than just a tool of communication. How are cell phones used among students in elementary school, junior high school, and high school?

Reasons Children Start Using Cell Phones

According to the 2008 “Survey of Children’s Use of Cell Phones, Etc.” conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 24.7 percent of sixth grade elementary school students use a cell phone, a figure that testifies to the increasingly lower age of cell phone users. Among reasons children start using cell phones, the most common cited is “my parents encouraged me to” and because “I started going to cram school and after-school lessons.” In the case of elementary school students, parents most often obtain cell phones for their children out of concern for their safety. By giving them a cell phone, parents can check in often with their children, whose spheres of activity have extended to attending extra-study classes and after-school lessons. The most common use of cell phones among elementary school students is to communicate with family members.

The largest number of both junior high school and high school students send less than 10 messages a day, and the second-largest number send between 10 and 30 messages a day. Many high school students use text messaging to communicate about important matters, meaning that for high school students cell phones have become a crucial device for communicating with friends day to day.

Reasons for owing a cell phone (Second-year high school students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My friends have one</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life is more enjoyable</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents encouraged me to have one</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I started going to cram school and after-school lessons</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enjoying the Cell Phone

**Most Often-used Cell Phone Functions**

Other than communicating by phone and text message, junior high and high school students frequently use the cell phone’s camera, Internet-access, and music and ring-tone download service functions.

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**More than Just a Communication Tool**

The functions of cell phones are increasing:

- Taking pictures with the camera
- Downloading music
- Use the Internet to look up information
- Shooting video images
- Playing digital games
- Reading novels and manga
- Use “electronic money” (e-Money)

Source: “Survey on Children’s ICT Use” (2005, Benesse Educational Research and Development Center)

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**Choosing a Cell Phone by the Design**

What are the criteria by which junior high and high school students choose their cell phones? According to a monitor survey published by Oricon, Inc. in October 2008, 50.5 percent of junior and senior high school students choose their cell phones “by the design.” Other generations give “calling rates” as the major criterion for choosing a cell phone. Next, after design, junior high and high school students value most “the amount of memory” (48.5 percent) because they often use functions that require ample memory, such as taking photos, listening to music or shooting videos. Many users enjoy adding “デコシール deko-shiiru” (decoration stickers) and beaded appliqués to decorate their cell phones (“デコ電 deko-den”)—and choose various straps and accessories to make their phones unique and original.

Deko-den shop:
- Decorate ⇔ http://www.decorate.co.jp
- Edo-X ⇔ http://k-taicustom.com

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Japanese Culture Now-2
With the functions of cell phones ever expanding and the number of cell phone subscribers increasing, a new cultural genre called the “keitai-shosetsu” (cell phone novel) has emerged in Japan. The keitai-shosetsu first caught attention in 2000, it is said, when a writer named “Yoshi” began publishing a novel via his cell phone. Keitai-shosetsu are novels written on a cell phone and read by cell phone.

One example of a keitai-shosetsu is “Koizora” (Sky of Love), a story that has been accessed by an estimated 12 million readers, mainly junior high and high school students, who circulated news about the novel among them. “Koizora,” which features a high school girl whose life changes dramatically when she meets a certain high school boy, was published as a book in 2006 that sold over 2 million copies, and was adapted for film that was a box-office hit earning 3.9 billion yen. Many other keitai-shosetsu were turned into books in 2007, producing a small boom. Cell phone novels are made up of short and rhythmic sentences, due to the limited number of words one can write in a line on a small cell-phone screen and written in the casual language of teenagers.

Some criticize keitai-shosetsu, however, saying that they are not fiction, and far from conventional literature. Japan’s well-known Buddhist nun and writer Setouchi Jakucho, 86, too, was critical of keitai-shosetsu in the beginning, but in order to understand the medium that had so successfully captured the attention of young people, she wrote a cell phone novel called “Ashita no Niji” (Tomorrow’s Rainbow) under the penname “Purple.” In doing so, she realized the potential of keitai-shosetsu, which can move people deeply by expressing the subtle, conflicting emotions of young people using the simplest language. She later reappraised keitai-shosetsu, calling it “a type of literature,” and encouraged young people to use it to freely express themselves.

Due to the emergence of this new medium, there are now more opportunities for people to see their fiction writing published. The annual Japan Keitai-Shosetsu Award is now in its fourth year, as more and more writers of the medium enter the competition to make a name for themselves in the genre.
**Smart Use of Your Cell Phone**

**Drawbacks of Cell Phones**

While cell phones have become much-valued daily communication tools for junior high and high school students, various problems have emerged that cannot be ignored. Some students become so immersed in their cell phones that they do not get enough time to study and they go to sleep too late at night. Although text messaging is useful in expanding communication with friends, it can also be a source of stress for an increasing number of junior high and high school students. More than 80 percent of junior high and high school students think it is “late if you don’t get an answer within 30 minutes of sending a message,” indicating the pressure students are under to answer text messages promptly. More than 50 percent of high school students “sometimes find cell phone messaging troublesome.”

Another big problem is slander and abuse generated from private blogs and “profs” (profiles) belonging to junior high or high school students, otherwise known as “cyber-bullying.” Also, there are cases where students who discover each other on “deai-kei saito” (online meeting sites) or through personal profile and Internet game sites end up getting involved in shady dealings or crime.

In order to prevent young children from stumbling into the darker side of cell phones, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology took measures in January this year to forbid elementary and junior high school children from bringing cell phones to school unless absolutely necessary, and limit high school students’ usage of cell phones during school hours. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Police Department also calls upon parents to equip children’s cell phones with filtering devices so as to protect children from harmful sites.

**Cell Phone Manners**

In Japan, it is widely accepted custom to turn off cell phones or put them in silent mode, called “マナーモード” (manner mode) in public places. When cell phones first appeared, many people talked loudly on the train and there were occasional conflicts when people around them reacted angrily. Today, there are signs as well as announcements on trains instructing passengers to refrain from talking on their phones and to put them in silent mode. People are also reminded to switch off phones near the priority seats where people, who may have heartbeat-regulation devices, are often seated. Cell phone use while driving a moving vehicle, including a bicycle, is prohibited by law.

**Think it is “late if I don’t get an answer within x minutes after sending a message.”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More than 1 minute</th>
<th>More than 10 minutes</th>
<th>More than 30 minutes</th>
<th>More than an hour</th>
<th>More than 3 hours</th>
<th>More than 6 hours</th>
<th>Not in particular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Students</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Let’s Try!**

What emoticon would you choose when you feel like this?

- うれしい！ ・困った……
- 楽しみ！ ・悲しい……
- ドキドキ ・大好き
- ワクワク ・ショック
- やった一！ ・はずかしい

The meanings of the words above and more emoticons can be found at [http://www.tjf.or.jp/takarabako/bi.htm](http://www.tjf.or.jp/takarabako/bi.htm)