

Cell Phones for Communication and Enjoyment

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?

Reported by Karino Ayako



This mark indicates that more related information is included on the "Click Japan" website. <http://www.tjf.or.jp/clicknippon/>

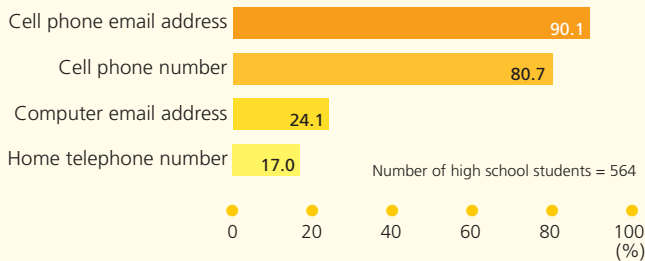
* The articles "Spread of Cell Phones Throughout the World" and "A Cell Phone History in Japan" may be found on the "Click Japan" website.

Communication

Spreading Friendships with a Cell Phone

Forty-five point nine percent of Japanese junior high school students own a cell phone, and the percentage is as high as 95.9 percent for Japanese high school students. Due to the high cost of talking via cell phones, junior high school and high school students often send text rather than call. They now start friendships by exchanging cell phone email addresses. The average number of email addresses listed in the device's direc-

Information children give when they make a new friend

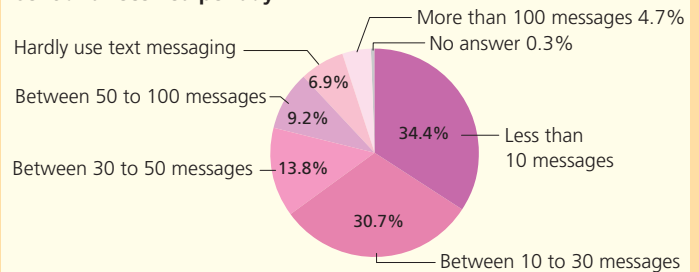


Source: "Survey of Parents and Children on Children's Cell Phone Use." (2007, Mobile Society Research Institute)

tory is 48 for junior high school students and 72 for high school students. As they grow older, students collect more friends as their relationships with people expand.

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.

Average number of cell phone email messages sent and received per day



Source: "Survey of Children's Use of Cell Phones, Etc." (2009, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)

Reasons Children Start Using Cell Phones

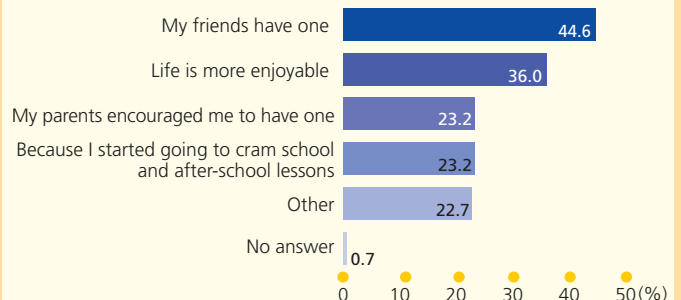


According to the 2008 "Survey of Children's Use of Cell Phones, Etc." conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 24.7 percent of sixth grade elementary school students use a cell phone, a figure that testifies to the increasingly lower age of cell phone users. Among 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-school classes and after-school lessons. The most common use

of cell phones among elementary school students is to communicate with family members.

Meanwhile, what reasons do junior high and high school students have for owning a cell phone?

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



Source: "Survey of Children's Use of Cell Phones, Etc." (2009, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)

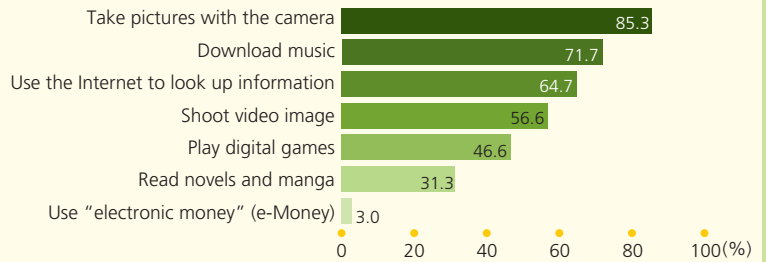
Enjoying the Cell Phone

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.



Cell phone functions used by high school students



Source: "Survey on Children's ICT Use" (2005, Benesse Educational Research and Development Center)

More than Just a Communication Tool

The functions of cell phones are increasing:



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 appliques 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>



Art Editions: Kusama Yayoi

Expressing Yourself

絵文字 *Emoji* (Emoticons): A Useful Way to Express Feelings

Today, not only young people, but members of other generations as well, use “emoji”—picture characters (“e” meaning “picture” and “moji” meaning “letter”). *Emoji* are used when you want to set the tone of a message that’s comprised of just words, or when you want to soften what you want to say, or when you want



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to fully express emotions of joy, anger, or sadness. *Emoji* are very useful tools that can express your emotions and feelings.

All sorts of *emoji* are available, some are symbols, others are illustrations, or “dekome” (decoration mail). Some are included in the cell phones from the start, but others, such as *dekome*, can be downloaded as desired. *Dekome* are more colorful and many of them are animated.



ケータイ小説 *Keitai-Shosetsu*: The Emergence of the Cell Phone Novel

With the functions of cell phones ever expanding and the number of the 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. It 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 rhythmical 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.



This cell phone was designed with reading of *keitai shosetsu* and electronic books in mind. Japanese text is displayed in the customary vertical-line format.

Which accessories and decorations do you like?



Designed by Matsuyama Emi



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.

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

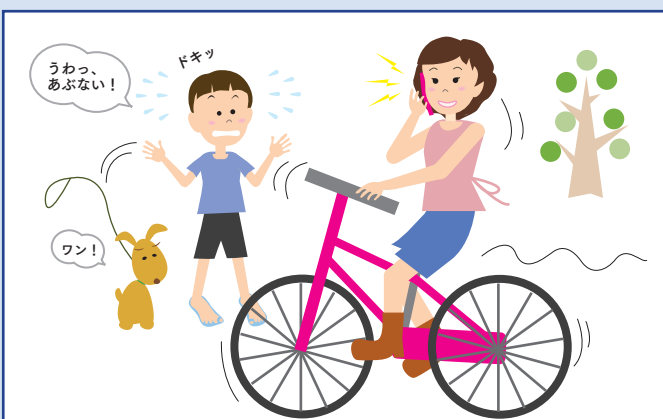
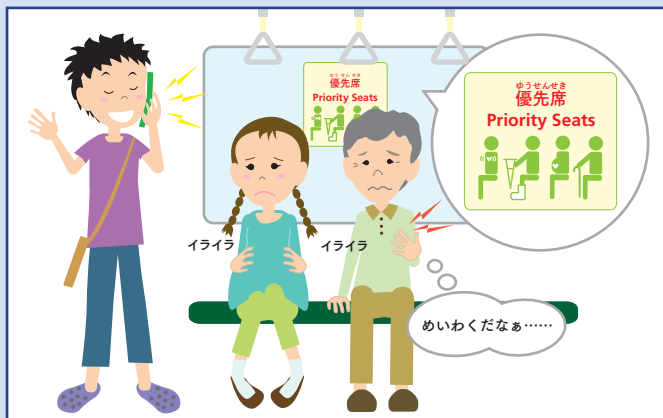
	More than 1 minute	More than 10 minutes	More than 30 minutes	More than an hour	More than 3 hours	More than 6 hours	Not in particular
High School Students (n = 549)	12.4%	65.6%	86.5%	93.1%	95.1%	95.6%	4.4%

Source: “Survey of Children’s Use of Cell Phones, Etc.” (2009, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)

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

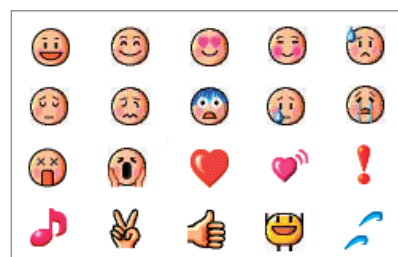
are signs as well as announcements on trains instructing passengers to refrain from talking on their phones and to put them in silent mode. People are also reminded to switch off phones near the priority seats where people, who may have heartbeat-regulation devices, are often seated. Cell phone use while driving a moving vehicle, including a bicycle, is prohibited by law.



Let's Try!

What emoticon would you choose when you feel like this?

- うれしい!
- 楽しみ!
- ドキドキ
- ワクワク
- やったー!
- こま 困った……
- かな 悲しい……
- だいす 大好き
- ショック
- 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>

What We Have Gained, What We Have Lost

Akane (Second-year high school student, Chiba)

Izuho (First-year university student, Tokyo)

Lisa (Second-year high school student, U.S.)

Today, cell phones have become an essential item for high school students, among whom ownership is as high as 96 percent. But not all students use their phones in the same way. Three students, Akane, Izuho, and Lisa, gathered to talk about their cell phones and how they use them.

Reported by Karino Ayako



Akane

I got my first cell phone when I entered junior high school. My school was rather far away from home, so my parents gave it to me because they were worried about my safety. My parents pay my phone bill, which is about 5,000 yen a month.



Izuho

I received a cell phone as a present from my parents at the end of junior high school, when I passed the entrance exam to the high school I wanted to go to. The cell phone I'm using now is my fourth. When I was in high school, the charges on my phone were about 8,000 yen a month, and my parents paid for it. Now, if I use more than 8,000 yen, I have to cover the rest with my own money from working part-time jobs.



Lisa

I'm here in Japan since September last year as an exchange student. I've had a cell phone since I was in my third year of junior high. In the U.S., my parents gave me a prepaid card worth around 10,000 yen for one year's use. Here in Japan, my cell phone bill is about 3,000 yen a month.



You can listen to their voices and read their self-introduction in easy Japanese.

Q: Do you always have your cell phone with you? Which functions do you use most often?

Izuho: I have my cell phone with me most of the time, even when I go in to soak in the bath. I really like the way the sound echoes in the bath (laughter). The function I use the most is voice phoning, because I think you can get across your feelings more accurately if you phone than by just sending text. I also like using the other functions of cell phones, like games and the scheduler. At the moment, I'm really devoted to my phone's GPS tracking system! I found my way here by GPS today, in fact!

Akane: I take my cell phone to school everyday, but I switch it off until after school. I don't have it with me all the time when I'm at home either. I phone, text, and occasionally take photos. I also use it for checking train timetables and finding out when movies are showing and so on.

Lisa: Sometimes I take my cell phone to school, sometimes I don't. To me private time is important. I don't like it when people think they can get hold of me just any time they please. In the States my father drives me to school, so I use my cell phone to call Dad to come and pick me up after school.

Q: How often do you text? Do you reply to your messages immediately?

Akane: I'm very slow at writing text, so I don't often send it to my friends. I sometimes exchange text with members of my family. My father sends all his text in hiragana. He sends messages like, "きょうのがっこう、どうだった?" (How was school today?) He's late coming home from work, so I don't have much time to talk to him, you see. I think he writes these messages on his way home. Meanwhile, my little sister sometimes sends me messages like, "おねえちゃん、大好きだよ!" (I love you, O-Nee-chan!) A little embarrassing, yes, but it makes me happy.

Lisa: I only send text about three times a day, too. I try to respond to text messages as soon as I can, but sometimes I can't. On such occasions, I hear a lot of my Japanese friends demand, "Why didn't you reply?" But my American friends aren't like that.

Q: Do you use *emoji* (emoticons) or any other special characters?

Izuho: My friends use a lot of *emoji*, but I don't. I don't feel like myself when I use them. So sometimes my friends misunderstand me and ask, "Are you angry?"

Akane: Once when I sent a message without any *emoji*, I got



Talking about the advantages and disadvantages of cell phones made these three students think again about something they have come to take for granted.

a reply saying, “Are you joking? Or are you serious?” Since then, I add an *emoji* when I want to make sure they know I’m joking around.

Lisa: In English texts, we often use emoticons and shorten words, like “because” to “cuz.” We drop the vowels or misspell words on purpose—like “vry” for “very,” “skool” for “school,” and “4ever” for “forever.” That’s the cool thing to do.

Q: What do you think are the disadvantages of cell phones?

Lisa: One thing I really dislike about cell phones is how some people talk loudly on them. In the U.S., people often forget to turn off their cell phone in church, in the library, or at concerts. In fact, one actor walked out of the theater after three cell phones rang during his performance.

Akane: On the trains here some people get so immersed in their cell phones, either texting or playing games, that they don’t realize they’re occupying two seats, although there are people who want to sit down. I think people’s cell phones can make them less considerate of other people.

Izuho: One of the greatest disadvantages of cell phones is that there’s a tendency to become dependent upon them. I hate it when we’re out eating and talking together and a friend fiddles with his or her cell phone the whole time. Still, maybe I can’t talk; I rely so heavily on the conveniences of my cell phone. So here I am, a guy who can’t let go of his cell phone because of its amazing functions! (laughter)

Akane: A lot of people run a blog or personal profile site from their cell phone. I hear about people who post their portraits on their profiles or who actually go and see people they meet via their blog, but I think such things are pretty risky.

Izuho: If it’s anonymous, I’d write anything freely. It gives you great freedom, but at the same I think it’s very dangerous. Once a friend of mine had nasty things written about him on his profile page and it really stressed him out. You can’t guess the tone of a message when it’s just written in words, and it can make the reader imagine all kinds of things.

Q: What would you do if you couldn’t use your cell phone from tomorrow?

Lisa: It’d make me a little afraid to be on the streets at night. Once at night in Shibuya there was a man who followed me for about 10 minutes. I immediately called a friend and stayed on the line. It reassured me.

Izuho: I think the hardest thing is that I couldn’t just call up someone right away, even if he or she is far away, if I didn’t have a cell phone.

Akane: Life would be a lot less convenient, but I don’t think my life would change that much. But it would be a shame if I can’t send text to a friend when I want to ask them something I need to know. For instance, at night when you can’t call using your home phone, if you have a cell phone you can just send text to ask an urgent question.

Izuho: But I also think many good things might happen if we didn’t have cell phones. To begin with, we would be talking more to people. For example, if we couldn’t rely on the phone’s GPS, we’d be asking people for directions.

Lisa: I think we’d become more responsible if there were no cell phones. For example, when we’re meeting friends, we would be sure to find out where we’re going to meet in advance and leave home early in order not to be late.

Akane: I sometimes hear about people who get all worried when somebody doesn’t reply right away to their text message, or people who are left out of the loop in their circle of friends because of cell phones. Maybe, if we didn’t have cell phones, relationships between people would be better.

Lisa: In the end, I think if each person keeps a mind of his or her own and doesn’t overuse cell phones, they can be a lot of fun.



Cell phones show the personality of their owners—some simple and clean, others pasted with their favorite print-club stickers, their straps dangling accessories.

My favorites



好きなことば (favorite phrase)

Akane: ありがとう Thank you.

Izuho: 今を生きる Living in the now.

Lisa: Smile often.

好きな色 (favorite color)

Akane: エメラルドグリーン。海の色だから。
Emerald green, because it’s the color of the sea.

Izuho: 紫。なぜか、小さい頃から好きでした。
I don’t know why, but I have liked purple since I was a child.

Lisa: 薄いピンク色。美しい桜の花を思い出させてくれるから。
Pale pink. It reminds me of beautiful cherry blossoms.

今、熱中していること (current passion)

Akane: 映画を観て、その原作を読むこと。
I enjoy watching films and reading the original stories they are based on.

Izuho: 日本舞踊 Japanese traditional dance.

Lisa: 日本語の勉強 Learning Japanese.