

## The Messenger Act

**Definition and Scope of This Document:** While this document applies directly to MSN Messenger and Windows messenger, some parts of it respectively apply to other messenger services, such as: Yahoo Messenger, AIM, IRC, etc. All messenger services, regardless of application are henceforth referred to as "Messenger."

### I – Status

#### Definitions

**Online:** A user who is at their computer, ready and willing to chat.

**Busy:** A user who is currently at their computer, but performing a task which temporarily prevents that user from chatting at that particular time.

**Be Right Back:** A user who is currently online, but is temporarily away from their computer.

**Away:** A user who is currently at their computer, but is temporarily away from their computer for a longer period of time than allowed by a "be right back" status.

**On The Phone:** A user who is currently at their computer, but speaking with someone else on the telephone and is unable to perform other tasks.

**Out to Lunch:** A user who was at their computer, but has (a) gone into the kitchen to prepare a meal, or (b) left the premises to obtain a meal.

#### Temporal Conditions of Use

**Online:** N/A.

**Busy:** Not exceeding thirty minutes.

**Be Right Back:** Not exceeding fifteen minutes.

**Away:** Not exceeding thirty minutes.

**On The Phone:** Not exceeding thirty minutes.

**Out to lunch:** Not exceeding one hour.

It is of utmost importance to display the correct status at all times. At no time should a user log into Messenger, place himself on "away" status, and then forget that they are logged in. If a user is not going to be able to chat, they should not log into Messenger.

## II – Grammar

### History

Grammar encompasses fundamental rules of composition of the English language. Without it, a written communications standard would not exist; chaos would ensue. As we progress through our school system, we learn these fundamental rules. But, as Messenger and other forms of online chat have become more popular among our young people, they are re-learning a new kind of grammar – online grammar.

### Definitions

**Online Acronym:** An acronym created by, and used by online chatters, such as “LOL” (Laugh Out Loud).

**Online Shorthand:** Shorthand largely used by the online community, such as: “ya,” “dunno,” “I C,” “C ya,” replacement of the suffix “cks” with “x” (bux, sux), etc.

### Conditions of Use

Proper grammar should be observed, but more loosely than in other forms of communication. Punctuation does not always have to be perfect, but should be observed to the extent that communication will not become misunderstood.

## III – Emoticons

### Definition

The term “emoticon” is formally defined as a series of keyed characters used especially in instant messaging to indicate an emotion, such as pleasure :) or sadness :( . Messenger has taken this one step further and included graphics which correspond to emoticon symbols.

### History

The first emoticon dates back to April 12, 1979, when Kevin McKenzie suggested using -) for “tongue in cheek.” Although emoticons can be a source of entertainment, and can bring some emotion into a relatively dry form of communication, they must be used with caution.

### Conditions of Use

1. The user must not insert more than two (2) emoticons into the same sentence.
2. The user must not “flame” another user by overloading their window with emoticons.
3. The user must include text with every emoticon (read: said user may not reply with only :p).
4. The emoticon must be relevant.

## IV – Nicknames

### Definition

In the world of instant messaging, the terms “nickname,” “screen name,” and “handle” are often used interchangeably; these are a pseudo-identities used only online which identify a user. Examples include “N8,” “at0m,” etc.

### Conditions of Use

Nicknames are generally created at the discretion of the user. However, there are some regulations.

1. A nickname, or personal message, must not exceed twenty-one characters. This causes it to take up more than one line, and becomes a nuisance (in a standard sized window).
2. A nickname must not cloak the true identity of the user so much that other users are forced to guess who they are. An exception to this would be if your e-mail address was your name (johndoe@hotmail.com).
3. Adding short quotations in addition to your name, or in your personal message is permissible (see #1); however, using a quotation *for* your name is inadvisable.

## V – Pictures and Webcams

### Definition

**Picture:** A personal identifying icon which is located on the right side of the message window.

**Webcam:** A video capture device located on the user’s end which allows other contacts to view them in real time.

### Conditions of use

1. A picture or webcam must not be indiscernible.
2. A picture or webcam must not be lewd, or offensive.

## **VI – Mobile**

### **Definition**

A feature which allows a user to send a message to the mobile device of another user.

### **Conditions of use**

1. The mobile feature must not be enabled if the user does not wish to receive incoming messages on their mobile device.
2. The mobile feature should be used with greater caution than a standard messenger conversation.
3. If known, the user must not exceed the maximum number of characters allowed by the mobile unit. If unknown, short messages should be used.

## **V – Security**

### **Definition**

Online security is becoming more of a necessity every day. Users must learn how to protect themselves properly. When using Messenger, it is important to follow three simple rules:

1. The block feature should be used with caution. Blocking someone is considered an insult, and the user should only do this if the situation permits. It is recommended to block people for the following scenarios: (a) You don't know them, and they have sent you an unsolicited message, or (b) You are unhappy with that person, and do not wish to speak with them.
2. The user must never give out their credit card number.
3. The user must make sure that they know that a link is safe before they click on it.

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