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## Dish: Txt N Da Filipins

Behind-the-scenes happenings on 'The Screen Savers' staff. You can catch the show weeknights at 7 p.m. Eastern.

Also airs weeknights at 10 p.m., 1 a.m, 8:30 a.m. Eastern.

By [Roman Loyola](#)

As regular readers of the [Daily Dish](#) know, many of "The Screen Savers" staff have been on vacation lately, including myself. I went on a trip to the Philippine Islands, my ancestral homeland.

While the Philippines isn't known as a technological wonderland (tech fans are everywhere in the Philippines, though, and TechTV is available), there was one tech innovation that hasn't really caught on here in the US, but is extremely popular in the Philippines and the rest of Asia: short text messaging, (also known as SMS, or short messaging service).

### Did u get my msg?

For the uninitiated, text messaging is a cellphone feature that allows you to send short text messages. It's a feature found on many cellphones, not just abroad but also here in the US.

My aunt introduced me to "text." She, like other cellphone users in the Philippines, actually prefers text to talking on the cellphone, mostly because it's cheaper.

It's so popular that you can text orders to restaurants, music requests to radio stations, and questions to television talk shows.

Nokia, the major Philippine service provider, has signs throughout downtown Manila that say, "Do Not Text While Crossing the Street" (the signs are in English; most Filipinos can speak English as well as the national language, [Filipino](#)).

My aunt excitedly showed me the art of text messaging. The key is to be efficient, resorting to misspelling and phonetics. A typical text message exchange might read like this (if you can't understand it, try reading aloud):

**Me:** HI WAT TYM WIL U PIK ME UP 4 DINR?

**Aunt:** I LEEV WORK 5. PIK U UP 6. K?

**Me:** K. WE STOP AT MAL B4 DINR. I HAV 2 BY NU SHUS. K?

**Aunt:** K. C U LATR.

The first time I started to text, the writer/editor in me just couldn't give in to the purposeful misspelling and bad grammar. My aunt actually scolded me for practicing such inappropriate text behavior, but that's not what caused me to give in.

What caused me to give in was the fact that you have to use the cellphone number pad to type. To type the letter "A" you press the number 2 button once, but to type "S," you have to press the 7 button four times (P, Q, R, then finally S). Typing full sentences this way can take forever, which I found out when I was trying to tell my aunt that that we were lost in the middle of downtown Manila and I was trying to relay streets and landmarks.

## **Talk to me**

Text messaging is nice and all, but I'm not sold on it. There were too many times when actually talking on the phone would have taken less time than text messaging (that same phone call in the Philippines would've cost much more than the text messaging, though).

Text messaging can even be life threatening. Nokia put up those signs for a reason. There were even times when my cousins were text messaging and driving at the same time. With traffic laws practically non-existent in the Philippines, it made for a harrowing ride.

Why hasn't text messaging caught on in the US? We have multiple cellphone providers who can't agree on a standard to support. For example, my wife's phone supports text, while my phone doesn't. Text has caught on in small circles, but a common standard needs to be implemented for widespread use. In other countries, cellphones use [GSM](#), so compatibility isn't an issue.

## **Text much?**

Have you caught the text-message fever? Have you used it and hated it? Join the Talkback discussion below and let me know what you think.

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