

Apple iPhone with VoiceOver

Lesson 6 - Text Messaging



This lesson has been designed for users of iPhone models which don't have a Home Button, in conjunction with the VoiceOver screen reader and iOS 26. For reference, models of iPhone without a Home Button that are compatible with iOS 26 are: 11, 11 Pro, 11 Pro Max, 12, 12 mini, 12 Pro, 12 Pro Max, 13, 13 Mini, 13 Pro, 13 Pro Max, 14, 14 Plus, 14 Pro, 14 Pro Max, 15, 15 Plus, 15 Pro, 15 Pro Max, 16, 16 Plus, 16 Pro, 16 Pro Max, 16E, 17, 17 Pro, 17 Pro Max, 17 Air and 17E.

iOS26 has brought some amazing new features, including improvements to Apple Intelligence. It has also brought some cosmetic changes to the Operating System, including "Liquid Glass", a new way of displaying text and graphics". Depending on how your iPhone has been configured, you may find some minor differences when working through the information provided in this lesson. However, it isn't anticipated that they will cause you much of a problem!

1. Introduction

Text messaging is one of the most common forms of communication used today. Whilst older mobile phones may have had the ability to speak some on screen items, and letters or numbers being pressed, they didn't gain the capability to smoothly read text messages until the early 2010's. Since then, the ability for devices to send and read messages in text format has developed greatly, with dozens of apps being capable of doing so. This lesson only concentrates on the Messages app, which is built-in to your iPhone.

Your iPhone has the capability to read text messages to you, and makes it pretty simple to send a response. In this lesson we will cover reading text messages, and typing responses using the virtual keyboard. In a later lesson, we will cover how to dictate a text message and how to tell Siri to read your incoming messages for you. This simplifies text messaging even more.

By the end of this lesson you should understand:

- The three types of text messages.
- What conversations are.
- How to configure Message Setup options.
- How to manage text messages.
- How to send a recording as a text message.
- How to reply to and forward Text Messages.
- How to attach Photos or videos to text messages.
- How to delete text messages.

1.1 Types of Text Messages

There are three types of text message supported by your iPhone. The first two types are sent over your service provider's cellular network. The third type is sent over the internet. Just in case you are ever on Egg Heads, here they are. Remember Sensory Services by Sight For Surrey when you win big!

- **SMS - Short Message Service:** SMS messages are text only messages that are limited to no more than 160 characters and can only be sent to one recipient at a time. This was the first popular type of text messaging available.
- **MMS - Multimedia Messaging Service:** MMS messages allow pictures, videos and sound clips to be attached to text messages. They also can be more than 160 characters long and can be sent to multiple recipients.
- **iMessage:** These messages can be exchanged between two Apple devices with an internet connection.

NOTE 1: Depending on your mobile phone plan, you can incur additional charges for SMS and MMS messages.

IMPORTANT! VoiceOver users should not text whilst driving. This is extremely dangerous! In fact, if you are riding in a vehicle and the driver is texting, you should ask them to stop. In 2015 An article posted at Distraction.Gov, a website sponsored by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of the United States government, stated that "Five seconds is the average time your eyes are off the road whilst texting. When travelling at 55 KM per hour, that is enough time to cover the length of a football field blindfolded."

1.2 Conversations

A conversation is a chain, or series of text messages exchanged between two or more people. For convenience, we will refer to the entire chain as a Conversation, and each message in the Conversation as a comment.

For example:

1. Tom sends a text message to his friends Jim and Bob saying, "Hey Guys! Come experience the game on my new 80" TV with incredible surround sound".
2. Jim sends a return message saying, "OK. I'll bring the beer".
3. Bob then sends a message asking, "What about some pizza?"
4. Finally, Tom responds, "Ok Bob, you pick it up".

Each time an additional comment is sent, it is added to the bottom of the chain of messages. This makes a conversation. A conversation is to text messaging what a Thread is to Emailing. The biggest difference is that in a conversation, comments are displayed in Chronological order (oldest to newest). In Email threads, the messages are displayed in reverse chronological order (newest to oldest).

2. Configuring Message Options

Let's take a look at the Setup options for Messages. Launch the Settings App from the Home Screen. Then, locate and activate the "Apps" button.

Now you need to find the Messages button. This can be done in several ways:

- Use a combination of the Next Screen and Explore gestures.
- Use a combination of the Next and Previous Item gestures.
- Activate the Search field at the bottom of the Apps screen and type the letters "M", "e", and "s". Upon doing this, a list of items which contain those letters, in the order you typed them, will be displayed above the Search field. Use the Explore gesture to find the "Messages" button.

It doesn't really matter which technique you use! When you've located the "Messages" button, perform an Activate gesture and the Messages screen will be displayed.

2.1 The Action Row

As in previous lessons, we will call the area at the top of the screen just below the Status Bar the Action Row. There are two items which appear in the Action Row. Situated at the upper left corner, is the "Apps, Back" button. When this button is activated, you are returned to the Apps Screen. The second item is a Heading, which reads, "Messages".

2.2 Configuring iMessages

There are quite a few options for iMessages available in the Messages screen. This section covers only those options which are considered important.

The iMessage button

The iMessage button is situated directly below the "Default Messaging App" button. This button toggles your iPhone's ability to send iMessages. Below this button is a text label which states "iMessage uses wireless data to send messages between Apple devices. About iMessage and FaceTime & Privacy". This label is formatted as a link! If the iMessage button is toggled "On", this text label isn't present.

If you activate the link, you will be taken to a web page which provides in-depth information about Privacy, Messages and FaceTime. To close this page and return to the Messages screen, activate the "Done" button, situated at the upper left corner of the screen.

If iMessaging is off, then only SMS or MMS message types will be sent, even though the receiving device is iMessage capable. If this switch is on, then the following options become available below it.

The Send and Receive Button

This button allows you to set up one or more mobile numbers or email addresses to receive iMessages. If only one mobile number or email address is set up, VoiceOver announces the name of the button followed

by the mobile number or email address. If multiple mobile numbers or email addresses are set up, then VoiceOver announces, "X addresses", where X is the number of mobile numbers/email addresses that can receive iMessages.

When the Send and Receive button is activated, the iMessage Setup Screen appears. See section 2.5 - The iMessage Setup Screen for more details.

The Send Read Receipts Button

This button is located just below the information label which reads "Show photos of your contacts in Messages". VoiceOver reads, "Send Read Receipts, button", and then announces whether the function is on or off. When this is on, the sender of an iMessage will be notified when you read it.

The Resend as Text Message Button

This toggle button allows your iPhone to send an iMessage as an SMS message when a WiFi connection is unavailable. The iMessage must be short and contain no attachments. Be aware that SMS messages are not encrypted and that Network provider charges may apply.

2.3 Text Messaging Options

The MMS Messaging Button

This button is situated just below the heading which reads "Text Messaging". It toggles your iPhone's ability to send and receive Multimedia Message System (MMS) messages on and off. If you disable MMS messaging, your iPhone will work much like older mobile phones, only sending and receiving Short Message System (SMS) messages. So you won't be able to receive or send photos, videos, or sound clips with text messages. You will be limited to text messages of up to 160 characters only. You will also not be able to participate in messages sent to groups of people.

NOTE 2: If you are concerned about exceeding your monthly text messaging or data limits, then turning MMS messaging off can help. If you have an unlimited plan, we suggest you leave this feature on and participate in the rich world of 21st century instant communications.

The Show Subject Field Button

You can enable a separate subject field for the messages you send. This toggle affects iMessages as well. Turning this feature on is extremely uncommon.

The Character Count Button

If you attempt to send an SMS message of more than 160 characters, your message will be broken up into several SMS messages. Turning character count on displays the number of characters in your text message.

2.4 The Blocked Contacts Button

Activating this button results in the Blocked Contacts screen being displayed. Here, you can choose to add phone numbers and email addresses stored in the Contacts app to a list of blocked numbers. You will not receive phone calls, messages, email or FaceTime calls from any of those numbers or email addresses which have been added to the blocked list. If you have blocked a number or email address, it can also be unblocked in the Blocked Contacts screen.

2.5 The iMessage Setup Screen

The iMessage Setup screen appears when you activate the "Send and Receive" button. It has an Action Row at the top which has the "Messages, Back" button, and a heading which reads "iMessage".

If you Explore down the screen just a little, you will find a heading that reads, "You can receive iMessages To and Reply From ". Below this heading is a list of items which contains your mobile phone number and any email addresses you have already set up to receive iMessages. Use the Select Gesture, a One Finger Double Tap, to turn addresses on and off. When an address is set to receive messages, VoiceOver says, "Selected", before it reads the address.

If you select an email address from the iMessage section, another heading is displayed below which reads "Start New Conversations from", which is followed by your mobile phone number plus the list of email addresses again. Select which item you want new conversations to come from. Unlike the list above where you can select multiple addresses, here you can only select one.

When you have finished making your selections, activate the "Messages, Back" button, situated at the upper left corner of the screen to return to the Messages screen.

2.6 Message History

Below the Blocked Contacts button is a heading which reads, "Message History". Below this heading is a button, which VoiceOver reads as, "Keep Messages", followed by either "30 days", "1 year" or "For Ever". Activate this button to tell your iPhone how long to keep messages before automatically deleting them. If you set this to "For Ever", then you must delete your messages manually.

2.7 The Filter Spam Button

This button is situated below a heading which reads "Unknown Senders". If you turn this feature on, iMessages from unknown senders (those not in your Contacts List), will be prevented from sounding alerts when they arrive. They will also be moved to a separate list of messages.

2.8 Audio Messages

The Expire Button

This button is situated directly below the Audio Messages heading. It allows you to set the expiration time of Audio messages. It can be set to "2 Minutes", which is the default, or to "Never", which means you must delete audio messages manually.

The Raise to Listen Button

Setting this to "On", allows you to listen and reply to Text messages with an audio component by raising the phone to your ear.

2.9 The Send Low Quality Photo Previews Button

When this button is toggled On, images that you send will be in lower quality than the original.

3. Setting the Sound for Incoming Text Messages

If you don't like the default sound your iPhone uses for incoming text messages, you can change it from within the Settings Menu.

Use one of the following techniques to find the "Sounds & Haptics" button from the Settings main menu and Activate it.

- Use a combination of the Next Item and Previous Item gestures until VoiceOver says "Sounds & Haptics".
- Use a combination of the Next Screen and Explore gestures until VoiceOver announces "Sounds & Haptics, Button".
- Activate the Search field at the bottom of the Apps screen and type the letters "S", "o", and "u". Upon doing this, a list of items which contain those letters, in the order you typed them, will be displayed above the Search field. Use the Explore gesture to find the "Sounds & Haptics button".

Now you need to find the "Text Tone" button. This is located below a heading which reads "Ringtone & Alerts". There are a few ways to do this:

- Keep using the Next Item gesture.
- Use a combination of the Next Screen gesture and the Explore gesture.
- Turn the Rotor to the Headings item. Then, perform the Set Mode gesture, a One Finger Swipe Down, until VoiceOver announces "Ringtone and Alerts, heading".

Below the "Ringtone and Alerts" heading, are a series of buttons that allow you to customize the sounds your iPhone plays when a particular event takes place. In this case the event is when a Text message is received.

Locate the Text Tone button and then perform an Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the "Text Tone" screen will be displayed.

3.1 The Sound Selection Screen

The screen for selecting sounds has an Action Row at the top. Situated at the upper left corner of the screen, you will find the "Sounds & Haptics" Back button. You activate this button to save your selected

sound, and return to the Sounds and Haptics screen. To the right of the Sounds & Haptics Back button, you will find a heading which reads "Text Tone", to indicate the type of sound you are selecting.

Good Vibrations!

Your iPhone can be set to vibrate when a text message is received, even if the Ring/Silent Switch is set to silent. This is a great way to be silently alerted to a message without disturbing those around you.

Below the Action Row is a button which Voiceover announces as "Haptics", followed by the current vibration pattern. If you want your iPhone to vibrate as well as play a sound, you can activate this button. Upon doing this, You will be presented with a choice of several vibration patterns, or you can choose "None" for no vibration at all. Activate each button until you find the vibration pattern you want. When you are finished, activate the "Text Tone" Back button, situated at the upper left corner of the screen, to return to the Text Tone screen.

Below the Haptics button is a heading labelled Store and below this heading are two more buttons, labelled "Tone Store" and "Download All Purchased Tones". Activating the Tone Store button results in the iTunes Store being displayed. Here, you can select and purchase a tone. Activating the Download All Purchased Tones button will result in all tones you have purchased being downloaded to your iPhone.

The Alert Tones List

The list of available tones begins just below the "Download All Purchased Tones" button. You can set any sound as a text Alert as follows:

1. Make one of the alert buttons the Current Item.
2. Use an Activate gesture, to select the sound and play it.

At the end of the Alert Tones list, you will find a "Classic" button. This opens other screens with even more sounds. There is some good stuff here, so don't forget to check it out.

When you have selected a tone, activate the "Sounds & Haptics, Back" button at the upper left corner of the screen, to return to the Sounds and Haptics Screen.

NOTE 3: When you activate the "Sounds & Haptics, Back" button, the last sound you played will be the sound set for the text alert. If you decide you liked the previous setting best, be sure to select the sound again before exiting the Text Tone screen.

4. Finding and Starting the App for Messages

The Messages App is the default app used by your iPhone to send and receive text messages. The icon to launch this app can be found on the first page of your Home Screen. It is usually situated in Row 1, Column 1.

4.1 The Four Finger Single Tap

This gesture will change the Current Item to either the first item on the screen, excluding the Status Bar, or the last item on the screen. If the screen has multiple pages, then all the intervening pages are skipped. The placement of this gesture is important. If you perform this gesture on the top half of the screen, the first item on the screen becomes the Current Item. If you perform this gesture on the lower half of the screen, then the last item on the screen becomes the Current Item. From now on, we will refer to these gestures as the First Item and Last Item gestures.

If the Messages Icon is the First item on the Home Screen, you can perform the First Item gesture, a four finger single tap on the top half of the screen, to make it the Current Item. If it is not, then go forward through the icons by either using the Explore gesture, or by using the Next Item gesture until you find it. Then use an Activate gesture to launch the application.

Another method of opening the Messages app, is to invoke Siri and then say "Open Messages". All being well, the Messages app should open a second or two later.

5. The Message List

The Messages app has two screens. The Message List screen displays all the text messages and conversations you have either sent or received, but not yet deleted, whilst the other, the Message Content

Screen, displays the contents of one of the messages or conversations listed in the Message List. In this section we will take a close look at the options available in the Message List screen.

When you launch the Messages app, your iPhone will display the Message List. VoiceOver will say "Messages", followed by "Edit" button. This announcement informs you that you are in the Messages app and the Current Item is the "Edit" button. To the right of, and just below the Edit button is a Heading that reads, "Messages". Situated at the upper right corner of the screen you will find the "Filter" button. These 3 items make up the Action Row.

5.1 The Edit Button

The "Edit" button is situated at the upper left corner of the screen. When you activate this button, a popup menu is displayed consisting of the following options: Select Messages, Edit Pins, Set Up Name & Photo and Show Recently Deleted. Activating the first item in the list, the "Select Messages" button, results in the Message List being displayed in edit mode. In this mode you can select multiple messages to be deleted, and then delete them all at once. Deleting Messages will be discussed later in this lesson.

NOTE 4: You can find out how many new text messages you have without even opening the Messages app by simply finding its icon on the home screen. If you have unread text messages, VoiceOver will announce the number of unread messages after it announces the icon's name. It will also do this with the Email icon. Sometimes it pays to slow down a little and let VoiceOver make its entire announcement before moving on.

5.2 The Filter Button

The "Filter" button is situated at the upper right corner of the screen. When you activate this button, a popup menu is displayed consisting of the following options: Messages, Spam, Recently Deleted and Manage Filtering. At the bottom of the menu, you will find the Dismiss Context Menu button.

5.3 The Message List

The Message List is situated directly below the Action Row. Both sent and received messages are displayed in this list, unlike the Inbox of most mail applications, which only displays messages you have received. You can Explore through the list, or use a combination of the Next and Previous Item gestures, until you find the message you want. If the list of messages is longer than one screen, you can use a combination of the Next and Previous Screen gestures to scroll the list one screen at a time.

Each message or conversation in the list takes up one row. They are arranged chronologically from newest to oldest. If you Explore down the list and stop long enough at each row, VoiceOver reads the following pieces of information:

- whether the message is a video or audio message. If the message is neither of these, VoiceOver won't say anything.
- Whether or not the message has been read. If the message has been read, VoiceOver won't alert you to this.
- The name or mobile number of the sender of the message.
- The actual text of the message. If the message is part of a conversation, only the last comment in the conversation is announced.
- The time the message was sent. As the message gets older, the time becomes more approximate. For conversations, this is the time the last comment in the conversation was sent.

NOTE 5: You need to open the message to find out whether or not it has an attachment. You also need to open it if you want to review earlier comments in the conversation.

When any message in the Text Message List becomes the Current Item, the Rotor automatically dials itself to the Actions Function. You set the mode to the action you want with the Set Mode gesture, a One Finger Swipe UP or One Finger Swipe Down. Then perform a One Finger Double Tap to carry out the action.

The options available using the Set Mode gesture are as follows:

Activate, Default Action

The text message will be opened. This is the default action. So you don't need any Set Mode gestures to make this happen. You can just use an Activate gesture on the message.

Pin

This moves the currently selected message to the top of the list. This can make it easier to locate important messages. As new messages arrive, the pinned item remains at the top of the list.

Mark as Read

If the currently selected message hasn't been read, this marks it as read. If the currently selected message has been read, this item changes to become "Mark as Unread".

Hide Alerts

You will no longer be alerted to new messages from the selected sender. However, the message will still arrive in the Messages app. If the Hide Alerts option has been activated for a given contact, the Rotor item changes to become "Show Alerts".

Delete

This displays a popup window asking if you would like to delete the conversation. Usually, two options are available, Delete and Cancel. However, if the message you want to delete is from someone who isn't in your Contacts list, a third option called "Delete and Report Junk" becomes available.

Drag Item

This option allows you to reorganise the list of messages.

5.4 Searching for Text Messages

At the bottom centre of the screen, you will find the "Search" Text Field. You can enter text in this field just like you can in any other text field. When you do, your device will search for any message which contains the characters you entered. This search cannot search inside attachments.

So if you type the letters R, o and d as in delta in the search field, you will see a list of messages where for example, Rodney is the sender or one of the recipients. You will also find messages that contain the words "rod", "rodent" and "aerodynamic" in them.

5.5 The Compose Button

The "Compose" button is situated at the lower right corner of the screen. When activated, the Text Message Content Screen is displayed. Here you can compose a new text message. See section 7 - Composing Text Messages for more information.

6. The Text Message Content Screen in Reading Mode

This Screen is divided into Three areas. They appear from top to bottom as follows:

- The Action Row: This area contains the Back Button and a list of addressees. It also contains the FaceTime button if the message type is iMessage.
- The Message Body: This is where the text of the message or conversation is located, as well as any attachments.
- The Comment Area: This consists of the Add button, the Message Text Field and the Dictate button.

6.1 The Action Row

The first item in the Action Row is the "Back" button. It takes you back to the Message List screen. This is the screen which contains the list of messages. Like most other Back buttons, it is situated at the upper left corner of the screen.

To the right of the "Back" button is the Addressee button. The name of this button depends on certain factors, for example, the message type and who is being messaged. The most common are as follows:

- The name of the person you are messaging with, if he or she is in your contacts list.

- The phone number you are messaging with, if it is not in your Contacts List.
- The phrase "Group MMS", if you are messaging with multiple recipients.

When the Addressee button is activated, a screen is displayed which contains more information about the contact, or contacts in the case of a group message. There are a number of options for each contact, including the following:

- Call - You can initiate a call to the number the message was sent from.
- Video - You can initiate a video call to the number the message was sent from. This could be using FaceTime, WhatsApp or any other app you have on your iPhone which can make and receive video calls.
- Mail - You can initiate an email message to the contact, providing their email address is stored in the Contacts app.
- Info - Activating this button results in the Contact Card for that contact being displayed in View Mode. See Lesson 4 - Creating and Managing Contacts, Section 6 for a list of options available from View Mode.
- Share My Location - You can share your current location with the contact/s.
- Hide Alerts - this is a button which displays the current status of the alert. You can press this button to toggle between Off and On.

To change back to the more compact mode of the addressee list, activate the "Back" button, situated at the upper left corner of the screen, just below the Status Bar.

Situated at the end of the Action Row, you might find a FaceTime button. This allows you to initiate a FaceTime call to the number, provided the person you are calling has an Apple device. If the person you are calling doesn't have an Apple device, this button is not present.

6.2 The Message Body Area

The Message Body Area displays the content of the text message or conversation. For conversations, the comments in the conversation are displayed in order from oldest at the top, to newest at the bottom. This is the opposite of an email thread, which displays the newest message first, and the oldest one last.

If the content takes up more than the allotted area of the screen, you can scroll the Message Body Area up and down with the Next and Previous Screen gestures. These gestures will only work when the message Body area is the current item.

When the Message Body area becomes the Current Item, the Rotor automatically dials itself to the Actions Function. The Set Mode gesture has five options, as follows:

Tap Back

When you select this mode and perform a One Finger Double Tap, 6 buttons appear above the message. These are Heart, Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down, HaHa, Exclamation Mark and Question Mark. If you have used Emoji's in the past, the last six of these you used will also be available.

When you select each button in turn, VoiceOver says "double tap to react to message". Activating one of these buttons results in a message being sent to the sender. The text they receive will contain a comment associated with the button you chose. For example, if you chose the Thumbs Up button, the text they receive will say "your name", followed by the words "liked this".

Add Sticker

When you select this mode and perform the Activate gesture, a popup window is displayed, which contains options for adding a sticker to your message. Stickers are parts of images which are created in the Photos app. Using stickers is tricky with VoiceOver, so this option won't be discussed further.

Copy

When you select this mode and perform the Activate gesture, the currently selected comment will be copied to the hidden memory buffer.

Translate

Activating this option results in a popup window being displayed, which contains options for translating the currently selected comment. You can choose to translate the text from one language into another, for example English to German. Upon the text being translated, a number of buttons become available. These include Speak Translation, Copy Translation, Add to Favourites and Open in Translate. This feature is really useful if you are trying to communicate with someone who doesn't speak English.

Select

Activating the Select option results in the currently selected comment being selected. When a comment is selected, additional actions can be carried out using the Rotor, including Copy, React and Delete. The Select feature is beyond the scope of this lesson, so won't be discussed further.

More

When you select this mode and perform the Activate gesture, two buttons appear at the bottom of the screen. Situated at the lower left corner, you will find the "Delete" button, which allows you to remove the comment you Activated from the conversation. Situated at the lower right corner, you will find the "Forward" button, which allows you to Forward the comment you activated to another person.

Two buttons also appear at opposite sides of the Action Row. At the upper left corner of the screen, you will find a button labelled after the first name of the person the message is from, or the mobile number if the person isn't in your Contacts list. When this button is activated, a screen is displayed which includes the contact details of the person. At the upper right corner of the screen, you will find the "Cancel" button. Activating this button returns to reviewing the conversation without taking any action.

NOTE 6: When you activate the Delete button, you will receive a confirmation prompt. Be sure you wish to proceed, because this action cannot be undone.

6.3 The Next and Previous comment Gestures

When the MessageBody Area becomes the Current Item, the meaning of the One Finger Swipe Left and Right gestures changes slightly. If the message is a conversation with multiple comments, then the Next and Previous Item gestures become the Next and Previous comment gestures. Each comment is preceded by a label which identifies the day and time when the message was sent.

6.4 The Comment Area

The Comment Area starts as is single row at the bottom of the screen. From left to right, it has three items as follows:

The Add button

Activating this button results in the message window being collapsed and a popup window being displayed. This contains options such as Camera, Photos, Audio and a whole lot more! To close the popup window and return to the message window in full screen mode, you must activate the "Dismiss Popup button", situated directly below the Status Bar, or the VoiceOver Scrub gesture.

The Message Text Field

This is where you type your comment. Before you can do this however, you must first activate this field using an Activate gesture.

The Dictate button

Activate this button to engage the microphone and allow dictation. When dictation is enabled, you will hear a low pitched tone. To end dictation, activate the button again. Upon doing this, you will hear a higher pitched tone and the text you spoke will be entered into the message field.

When you are in the process of sending a message, the "Dictate" button is replaced by the "Send" button. If you want to dictate additional text, you must use the Dictate button, situated at the bottom right corner of the Virtual keyboard instead.

NOTE 7: You can insert graphics into Text messages, but not all devices can receive them. Older devices which can only receive SMS messages will not receive or display them.

When you Activate the Message Text Field, a Virtual keyboard appears at the bottom of the screen, just as it does when you activate any other Text Field. When you are ready to send your comment, Activate the "Send" button, which is relocated to be just above the letter "P".

7. Composing text Messages

The Message Content Screen in Compose Mode has the following parts:

- **The Action Row:** This area contains a heading which VoiceOver reads as, "New Message" and to the right of this heading, a "Cancel" button.

- The "To" Text Field: This is where you enter the name or mobile number of the person you wish to message. Associated with this Text Field, you will find the "Add Contact" button, which is used to expand and collapse the recipients list.
- The Comment Area: This area is approximately half way down the screen. It contains the "Message Text field"! You use this area to type your message.
- Two buttons, situated to the left and right of the Message Text Field, labelled "Add" and "Dictate respectively".
- The Virtual Keyboard: This appears directly below the Comment Area.

There are three ways to start a Text Message. You can compose a new text message, reply to a text message you have received or forward all or part of a text message to another recipient.

7.1 Composing a New Message

To compose a new text message, follow these steps:

1. If it is not already open, Launch the Messages app.
2. Use the Explore gesture, or combination of the Next Item or Previous Item gestures, to find the "Compose" button. For reference, this button is situated at the lower right corner of the screen, to the right of the "Search" Text Field. The Last Item gesture, a Four Finger Single Tap in the lower part of the screen, should get you there straight-away!
3. Activate the button. Upon doing this, VoiceOver will announce, "To, Text Field, Is Editing, insertion point at start".

Let's analyse what VoiceOver just said.

"To ". This is the name of the Current Item.

- "Text Field". This is the type of item that the Current Item is.
- "Is Editing". This tells you that when you start typing, your data will be entered into this field. This is important to listen for when the Text Field you want to type in becomes the Current Item. If you don't hear this, you need to use an Activate gesture to start editing mode in that field.

- "Insertion point at start". This informs you of the position of the cursor in the text field. When creating a new message, the start position will be the same as the end position.

You can enter either a telephone number or a contact in this field. However, before we do this, perform the Previous Item gesture. VoiceOver will say , "Cancel, button", because when you activated the "Compose" button, the Current Item was set to the "To" field. This caused VoiceOver to skip the Cancel button, which is above the "To" field in the upper right corner. Now you know where it is, if you need it.

IMPORTANT: You can activate the Cancel button at any time to be returned to the main Messages screen. However, anything in the "To and "Message" Text Fields will be permanently lost, and there is no "Are you sure?" prompt. So be sure before you activate it!

Now use the Next Item gesture to get back to the "To", field. Let's enter your own mobile phone number by typing in the digits.

4. Use an Activate gesture to be sure the field is in Editing Mode.
5. Activate the "More Numbers" key at the bottom left of the keypad to switch the virtual keyboard to Numbers mode.
6. Enter your mobile phone number. Don't worry about formatting characters like dashes, parenthesis, or spaces.

NOTE 8: If you have a contact card set up for yourself, and if it has one or more telephone numbers in it, or an email address in addition to your mobile number, then a series of buttons will appear below the "To" field. You will have to activate the one that matches your mobile phone number. You can also add numbers directly from your Contact List using the "Add Contact" button.

7. If the "To" field is the Current Item, use the Next Item gesture to find the "Add Contact" button, or explore to the right of the "To" field until you find it.
8. Activate the button. Upon doing this, the Contacts List will be displayed.

9. Use an Activate gesture to add a recipient. If the chosen contact has more than one telephone number, or has an email address plus a mobile phone number, you will be asked to select which one to use.

Once you have made the selection, you will be returned to the "To" field in the New Message screen. You can add another address or move on to the next field.

NOTE 9: The reason you can enter an email address is that many Smartphones can also receive email messages as text messages.

You can also simply start typing the contact's name. When you do this, a list of matches will appear below the "To" field. The more letters you type, the more narrowed down the list becomes. When the list is small enough, you can select from the list and not have to type the entire name or number. If you commonly send text messages to a group of people, start typing one of the names in the group. That group appears in the list as well as the individual's name you are typing. You can add an entire group of recipients very quickly this way.

7.2 The Message Text Field

To type a message you must first find the Message Text field and activate it for editing.

10. Use the Next Item gesture until you have located the Message Text Field. VoiceOver will say "Double tap to edit". Also, depending on how your iPhone is configured, you may hear the following message "Use the rotor to access misspelt words, mentions, text effects". Ignore this message for now!
11. Use an Activate gesture to switch the field to Editing Mode. Upon doing this, VoiceOver will say, "Text Field, Is Editing, insertion point at start".
12. Use the virtual keyboard to enter, "This is a text message to myself".
13. Now move your finger to the letter "P", but don't actually type it.

14. Explore slowly up and you will come to the "Send" button.
15. Activate the Send button to send the message to yourself.

7.3 Replying to a Text Message

You can reply to a message by following these steps:

1. Go to the Text Message List and Open the message you want to reply to.
2. At the bottom of the screen you will find the comment Area. Find the Message Text Field and Activate it. Upon doing this, the Virtual keyboard will appear and will push the Comment Area up the screen.
3. Type the Text of your reply.
4. Activate the "Send" button, which is situated just above the letter "P".

7.4 Adding a Media Attachment

To continue with this exercise your iPhone should be in the Compose mode on the Text Message Content Screen. You also will need at least one photo or video stored on your iPhone in the Photos app.

1. Start a new Text message.
2. Enter one or more recipients in the "To" field.
3. Enter any comments you want to send with the picture/video in the Message Text Field. It is easier to do this before you add the attachment.
4. Locate the "Add" button. If the Message Text Field is not activated for editing, you will find the Add button at the left hand side of the bottom of the New Message Screen. If the Message Text Field is activated for editing, then the Apps button will be just above the letter "Q" on the Virtual keyboard.
5. Activate the "Add" button. Your iPhone will make a chirp-like sound and a popup window will be displayed.

6. Use the Explore gesture, or the Next Item gesture, until the Photos button is the Current Item and then perform an Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the available photos and videos will be displayed, where the Virtual keyboard was.
7. Explore down the screen until VoiceOver announces a very general description of one of your photos or videos. It will sound something like, "Live photo, Portrait, the 25th of January, 11:27, image", or, "blurry, very bright, image".
8. Use the Explore gesture, or a combination of the Next Item and Previous Item gestures, to move through the images until you find the one you want.

NOTE 10: You may find that when using the Next or Previous Item gestures, you are unable to explore more than a handful of items. If this is the case, use the Next Screen gesture, a Three Finger Swipe Up, to bring the next few items into view, then use the Explore gesture instead to locate the desired photo or video.

9. Perform an Activate gesture, on each photo you want to include in your message.

The more photos you attach to a text message, the longer it will take to send and receive. You or the message recipient may also incur charges if your data plan limit is exceeded. It is recommended that you limit attached photos to one or two per message.

When you attach a photo, it appears above and to the left of the Message Text Field.

10. When you are finished, activate the "Send" button, to send your message, along with any photo's you attached.

Using the Camera to Take a Photo or Record a Video

You can also take a photo or record a video to attach to a message. From the message field, use the Previous Item gesture until Voiceover says, "Add" and then perform an Activate gesture. In the resulting screen, locate and activate the "Camera" button. Upon doing this, a screen appears in which the image from the camera's view finder takes up the top half of the screen.

At the bottom centre of the screen, you will find the "Take Photo" button. Directly below this button, you will find the "Camera Mode" Picker Item, which is used to switch between Photo, Portrait, Pano, Video and Slow Motion Video. Use the Set Mode gesture, to select the desired option.

Situated at the bottom right corner of the screen, just to the right of the Camera Mode button, you will find the "Camera Chooser" button, which includes the current setting. This is used to switch between the rear-facing and front-facing cameras.

Just above the Take Photo button, running all the way across the screen, you will find the "Zoom" Picker Item. When this item is the Current Item, you can perform a One Finger Swipe Up to zoom in or a One Finger Swipe Down to zoom out. The zoom range is from 0.5x all the way up to 15x. The default is 1.0x.

NOTE 11: During the creation of this lesson, locating the available controls was a little inconsistent using the Next Item and Previous Item gestures. Therefore, it is recommended that you use the Explore gesture to locate the desired option when taking a photo or recording a video.

To take a photo or record a video, depending on what you are doing, make the "Take Picture" or "Record Video" button the Current Item and perform an Activate gesture. If you are recording a video, you will need to activate this button again to stop the recording. When you have finished, activate the "Done" button, situated at the upper right corner of the screen, to return to the New Message screen. The picture/video will be present just above and to the left of the Message Text Field.

7.5 Sending an Audio iMessage

Rather than sending text, you can record your voice or other sounds and send them to another iOS device just like sending a text message.

1. Start a new text message.
2. In the "To" field, enter the address or phone number of another iOS device.

3. Locate the "Add" button. If the Message TextField is not activated for editing, you will find the Add button at the left hand side of the bottom of the New Message Screen. If the Message Text Field is activated for editing, then the Add button will be just above the letter "Q" on the Virtual keyboard.
4. Activate the Add button. Upon doing this, your iPhone will make a chirp-like sound and a popup window will be displayed.
5. Use the Explore gesture, or the Next Item gesture, until the "Audio" button is the Current Item and then perform an Activate gesture. Upon doing this, the microphone will be engaged and recording will start.

When you activate the Audio button, four buttons become present, situated in a row just above the virtual keyboard labelled "Cancel Audio Recording", "Play", Continue Recording" and Stop. The Stop button changes to become the "Send" button when recording is stopped.

6. Record your message and then activate the Stop button.

Tip! It is recommended that you Mute VoiceOver before activating the Audio button. If you don't do this, Voiceover's announcements will be included in the recording. The technique is to locate the Audio button, mute VoiceOver with a Two Finger Double Tap and then perform the Activate gesture on the Audio button. This will start the recording. When done, perform the Next Item gesture five times and perform a One Finger Double Tap. This should, all being well, activate the Stop button. You can now unmute VoiceOver with a Three Finger Double Tap.

7. Locate and activate the Play button, to check your recording. If necessary, once you have listened to the recording, activate the Continue Recording button to add more audio to your message. Remember to mute VoiceOver before you do this!
8. If you are happy with your recording, activate the Send button to send it. Alternatively, if you don't like the recording, activate the Cancel Audio Recording button to return to the New Message screen without saving the audio.

Recording audio messages will require practice, due to having to Mute and Unmute VoiceOver in the process. So why not spend some time going over the steps involved until you are comfortable at recording audio messages without any VoiceOver announcements in them.

8. Forwarding Messages

You can forward a text message which has only a single part, or you can use the VoiceOver Rotor to forward one part of a conversation.

1. To begin, open the Messages App.
2. Explore the screen until you find the message you want to forward.
3. Perform an Activate gesture to open the message.
4. Locate the message body area. This is where you will find all comments in the conversation.
5. Perform the Next Item or Previous Item gesture until you have selected the comment you wish to forward. Then, perform the Set Mode gesture, until VoiceOver says "More".
6. Perform an Activate gesture. Upon doing this, your iPhone will make a chirp sound and two buttons will appear at the bottom corners of the Text Message Content Screen. They are "Delete" at the bottom left, and "Forward", at the bottom right. VoiceOver does not automatically read them. You will have to use the Explore gesture to find them.
7. Activate the "Forward" button. Upon doing this, VoiceOver says "To, Text Field, Is Editing".
8. Enter a phone number or email address from your contacts list into this field.
9. Explore down from the "To" field until you find the original text of the message you are forwarding.
10. Use the Start/End of Field gesture to position the Insertion Point at the beginning of the field.

11. Type, "Now I am forwarding this message" and then activate the Enter key to add a blank line between the text you typed and the original message.
12. Finally, activate the "Send" button. For reference, it is located to the right of the TextField you are editing! Another way to find it is to Explore upward from the letter "P" of the virtual keyboard.

You can forward multiple parts of a conversation by selecting them. However, VoiceOver does not give any indication of what conversation parts are selected or deselected. This makes forwarding multiple parts of a conversation extremely difficult. Therefore, forwarding multiple parts of a message won't be covered in this lesson.

9. Deleting Messages

There are two common ways in which messages can be deleted. You can delete messages one at a time, or you can delete messages in bulk. Both of these methods are only available in the Message List screen.

9.1 Deleting Messages One at a Time

To delete messages one at a time, follow these steps:

1. Ensure you are in the Message List screen of the Messages app.
2. Use a combination of the Next Item or Previous Item gestures until you have located the message you want to delete.
3. Perform a Set Mode gesture, until VoiceOver announces "Delete".
4. Perform a One Finger Double Tap. Upon doing this, you will be asked if you are sure you want to delete the message.
5. Use the Next Item gesture until the "Delete" button is selected and then perform an Activate gesture.

When you delete a message, it is sent to a holding place called "Recently Deleted". Messages will remain here for 30 days, whereafter, they will be permanently deleted.

9.2 Deleting Bulk Messages

To delete bulk messages, follow these steps:

1. Ensure you are in the Message List screen of the Messages app.
2. Activate the "Edit" button, situated at the upper left corner of the screen. Upon doing this, a popup menu will be displayed consisting of the following options: Select Messages, Edit Pins, Set Up Name & Photo and Dismiss context menu. VoiceOver will announce the name of the Current Item. This should be the "Select Messages" button.
3. Activate the Select Messages button. Upon doing this, you will go into edit mode. In this mode, you can select multiple messages, ready for deletion.
4. Use the Next Item gesture to move through the list of messages. When you come to a message you would like to delete, perform a One Finger Double Tap to select the message. When you do this, VoiceOver will say "Selected".
5. Use the Next Item gesture again until you come to the next message you want to delete and perform a One Finger Double Tap to select it. Continue in this way, until all messages you want to delete are selected.

TIP: When you are selecting multiple items from a list, you may want to use the Split Tap gesture. Explore down the list with one finger. When you find an item you want to select, Keep your finger stationary and tap anywhere on the screen with another finger. The item under your stationary finger becomes selected, and you can continue Exploring the list without having to find your place again.

6. Now activate the "Delete" button, situated at the lower right corner of the screen. Upon doing this, a message will be displayed which reads "These conversations will be deleted from all your devices. If you report as junk, the conversations will be sent to your service provider and Apple".

7. Locate and activate the "Delete" button. Upon doing this, the messages will be deleted and you will be returned to the Message List. For reference, this is the screen which has the heading "Messages".

9.3 Recovering Deleted Messages

Sometimes, you will accidentally delete a message you didn't want to. If this is the case, don't panic, there is a way of retrieving messages!

To retrieve a message deleted in error, follow these steps:

1. Ensure you are in the Message List screen of the Messages app.
2. Activate the "Filter" button, situated at the upper right corner of the screen. Upon doing this, a popup menu will be displayed consisting of the following options: Messages, Spam, Recently Deleted, Manage Filtering and Dismiss context menu. VoiceOver will announce the name of the Current Item. This should be the "Messages" button.
3. Locate and activate the "Recently Deleted" button. Upon doing this, a screen will be displayed which has the heading "Recently Deleted". Below this heading, is a message which reads "Conversations show the days remaining before deletion. After that time, messages will be permanently deleted. This may take up to 40 days".
4. Use the Next Item gesture to explore the list of deleted messages. As you navigate, VoiceOver announces the number of messages from that person or mobile number you have deleted, followed by the number of days left before they are removed from your device.

If you have deleted multiple messages from the same person or mobile number, you can only retrieve all of the messages. It isn't possible to retrieve an individual message.

5. Locate the person or mobile number you would like to retrieve messages from. Then, use the Set Mode gesture until VoiceOver says "recover" and then perform a One Finger Double Tap. Upon doing this, you will receive a popup window consisting of two buttons - "Recover X Messages", where X is the number of messages and "Cancel".

6. Activate the Recover x Messages button and the messages will be returned to the Messages List.
7. When you have finished recovering messages, activate the "Filter" button, situated at the upper right corner of the screen, and from the resulting popup menu, activate the "Messages" button. Upon doing this, you will be returned to the Message List screen.

You can also choose to recover all messages. Situated at the lower left corner of the Recently Deleted screen, you will find a button labelled "Recover All". Activating this button results in a popup window being displayed consisting of two buttons. One button is labelled "Recover X messages", where X is the total number of deleted messages. The other button is a "Cancel" button. If you activate the Recover X messages button, all of the messages you had deleted, will be recovered and you will be returned to the Message List screen. Activating the Cancel button returns you to the Recently Deleted screen without making any changes.

10. New Gesture Review

First Item

Four Finger Single Tap. Jumps to the first item of any screen and makes it the Current Item. This action must be performed near the top of the screen. It can be performed at any time.

Last Item

Four Finger Single Tap. Jumps to the last item of any screen and makes it the Current Item. This action must be performed near the bottom of the screen. It can be performed at any time.

Previous comment

One Finger Swipe Left. Moves to the previous comment in a text message conversation. It can only be used when a Text Conversation is Displayed.

Next comment

One Finger Swipe Right. Moves to the next part in a Text Message conversation. It can only be used when a text conversation is displayed.

11. Exercises

1. What are the three types of text messaging, and can you name some differences between them?
2. Which of the three types only works between Apple devices and requires a WiFi Connection?
3. What is a "conversation?" What are the similarities and differences between a conversation and an Email Thread?
4. If you block a number from sending messages, what else will be blocked from that number?
5. When using the First/Last Item gesture, the four finger single tap, how do you control whether to move to the first or last item?
6. How can you find out if you have unread messages without launching the Text Message app?
7. Describe the steps involved to delete a message from the Message List?
8. If you enter the letters T for Tango, A for Alpha and N for November into the search field, which of these messages will NOT be found?

"Help, I'm all tangled up!"

"I just bought a new coat."

"The team's jerseys are black and tan."

"Stan will be late for dinner."

9. If you want to reply to a message, where can you find the Text Field to type your reply?
10. How can you recover all of the messages you have deleted.

The answers to these questions can be found on page 32.

Congratulations! You have completed the lesson on Text Messaging. In a later lesson you will learn how to use Dictation to fill in Text Fields. This will make the process of sending messages even easier!

Answers to Section 10 Exercises

1. What are the three types of text messaging, and can you name some differences between them?

The three types of text messages are Short Message System (SMS), Multimedia Messaging System (MMS) and iMessages. SMS and MMS messages travel over your service provider's network, but iMessages travel over the internet. SMS messages can only be sent to a single recipient, but MMS messages can be sent to multiple recipients simultaneously. SMS messages are limited to 160 characters. MMS messages are not limited, and can come with attachments. iMessages can only be sent to other users of Apple devices. They have no character limit, and can also contain attachments.

2. Which of the three types only works between Apple devices and requires a WiFi Connection?

iMessages require recipients who use Apple devices, and require a WiFi connection.

3. What is a "conversation?" What are the similarities and differences between a conversation and an Email Thread?

A conversation occurs when a series of text messages are sent back and forth between two or more recipients. When Email messages go back and forth in the same way, it is called a thread. Conversations are shown in order from the oldest message to the newest. Threads are shown in reverse order.

4. If you block a number from sending messages, what else will be blocked from that number?

If you block messages from a number, you will also block incoming phone calls. The blocked party will not know they are being blocked.

5. When using the First/Last Item gesture, the four finger single tap, how do you control whether to move to the first or last item?

If the four finger single tap is performed near the top of the screen, then the gesture is the "First Item" gesture. If the fingers make contact on the lower half of the screen, then the gesture becomes the "Last Item" gesture.

6. How can you find out if you have unread messages without launching the Text Message app?

Touch or Explore the Messages icon. VoiceOver will announce, "Messages", and then announce the number of unread messages in the message list. You can also find this information in the Notifications Area which will be discussed in an upcoming lesson.

7. Describe the steps involved to delete a message from the Message List?

The easiest way is to make the message that you want to delete the Current Item. When you do this, the Rotor automatically dials itself to the Actions function. Then use the Set Mode gesture until VoiceOver says, "delete", and then use the Activate gesture. In the resulting popup window, locate the "Delete" button and perform an Activate gesture.

8. If you enter the letters T for Tango, A for Alpha and N for November into the search field, which of these messages will NOT be found?

"Help, I'm all tangled up!"
"I just bought a new coat."
"The team's jerseys are black and tan."
"Stan will be late for dinner."

The message that says, "I just bought a new coat" will not show up, because it has the letter "T" at the end of the word "bought", the letter "A" of the word "a" and the letter "N" of the word "new" in the right order, but they are separated by spaces. The others will show up because even though the letters "T", "A" and "N" are only a part of the word, they still show up in sequence.

90. If you want to reply to a message, where can you find the Text Field to type your reply?

The Message Text Field, where you can type your reply, is located at the bottom of the screen, in the centre of the Comment Area.

10. How can you recover all of the messages you have deleted.

From the Message List screen, activate the "Filter" button, situated at the upper right corner of the screen. Then, from the resulting popup window, locate and activate the "Recently Deleted". In the resulting screen, locate and activate the button labelled "Recover All", which is situated at the lower left corner of the screen. Upon doing this, a popup window will be displayed consisting of two buttons labelled "Recover X Messages", where X is the total number of deleted messages and "Cancel". Activate the Recover X Messages button. Upon doing this, all messages will be recovered and you will be returned to the Message List screen.