

## Shmanners 473: Voice Notes

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["Shmanners Intro Theme" by Brental Floss plays]

**Travis:** Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

**Teresa:** And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

**Travis:** And you're listening to Shmanners!

**Teresa:** It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:** For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

**Teresa:** Hello, dear.

**Travis:** How are you?

**Teresa:** *Eh...*

**Travis:** Eh...

**Teresa:** *Eh...*

**Travis:** [sings] Aah!

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I went to the dentist this morning. It's not my favorite activity, but gotta be done.

**Travis:** And it's great, everyone should do it. The dentist? Ah! Take it from me, a guy who didn't go to the dentist for like five years—

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** And then had to go a bunch of times in one month to fix the thing.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** We don't need to get into it!

**Teresa:** Like I said, it's gotta be done.

**Travis:** I've got a little bit of that post-tour crud!

**Teresa:** Oh, you sure do.

**Travis:** Oh my god, yesterday? Did not feel like a human being... I felt like a puddle of goo. But I feel like sixty-five percent of a human being today.

**Teresa:** Okay?

**Travis:** Which is close to my regular eighty-two percent.

**Teresa:** [titters] Oh, that's just regular?

**Travis:** That's normally where I'm at, now that I'm forty-one.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Much of me has turned to goo permanently. While, interestingly, other parts have calcified.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Like your back.

**Travis:** Into a—like, yeah! My back, my knees.... but my brain? Goo. It's fine! It's great! I love... aging... cheese. Okay.

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** But none of that, none of that is what we're talking about today.

**Teresa:** Well, maybe a little bit?

**Travis:** It is?

**Teresa:** I mean, sort of?

**Travis:** *Aging?*

**Teresa:** A little bit.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** Okay. So, here we are. Today, we're gonna—

**Travis:** I thought I knew what we were talking about!

**Teresa:** [laughs] It's adjacent. We're gonna talk about—

**Travis:** Who's Jason?!

**Teresa:** Shush. [chuckles] Stop it. We're gonna talk about voice notes.

**Travis:** Okay. Like on my phone?

**Teresa:** Yeah, like on your phone. That's how we do it today.

**Travis:** And let me ask you a question, and this is gonna sound snarky, because it is—

**Teresa:** Mm-hm?

**Travis:** And that's like a whole episode?

**Teresa:** Yeah, totes.

**Travis:** Really?

**Teresa:** Really-really!

**Travis:** Oh, goodness. Okay.

**Teresa:** Let me hit you with—

**Travis:** That felt like it should have been like a, "And we'll get right to it, after this break."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Sorry, no, that's not happening yet.

**Teresa:** Let me hit you with some stats.

**Travis:** I like stats.

**Teresa:** Okay. A YouGov poll in 2022 reported that twenty-two percent of Americans loved receiving voice notes, and twenty-five percent didn't. So, I guess the other like, fifty percent is apathetic about voice notes?

**Travis:** Neutral. It doesn't have to be apathetic, it can be like, "Hm, I feel nothing about—" Like not like eh... Well, I guess that would be—I did—can I be honest with you?

**Teresa:** Mm-hm?

**Travis:** I dislike them.

**Teresa:** Okay?

**Travis:** But I think that has to do with like my... like focus, and stuff, of just like... thinking about the person talking.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** I'm not really able to listen to them talk like I am when I'm watching someone talk.

**Teresa:** We'll get into that.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** That's definitely a pro and a con there.

**Travis:** But I love audio books. Isn't that interesting?

**Teresa:** Mm-hm, interesting? Sometimes, voice notes are a lot like audio books; you just listen to someone tell a story. Anyway, though, in the years following those polls, they now show that sixty-two percent of Americans have sent one, a voice note, and about thirty percent use voice messaging as their primary communication tool daily, or even multiple times per day.

**Travis:** Get out of town.

**Teresa:** Forty-three percent of eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds who responded to the survey said that they use the feature at least weekly.

**Travis:** Interesting.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** I think that I... I'm adjacent to this too.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Because I prefer like... if it's longer than like a sentence, like if I'm telling a story—

**Teresa:** Okay?

**Travis:** Right? Or like explaining a big feeling about a thing, I will do a video. Right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Like, but I'm an expressive person.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Who speaks with their hands and many faces, and poses, and all of that. So, I like... I like to be seen. [titters]

**Teresa:** But some people don't like to be seen. They don't like to look at themselves while they—while they talk. That's one of the problems I think of FaceTime, when I do FaceTime, is sometimes I feel like I'm looking at myself, because I can see my little square, in your big face. And I'm like—

**Travis:** Excuse me?

**Teresa:** [titters] Okay, I normally really only FaceTime you. And my sister, Liz. But—

**Travis:** I know, but why did you have to mention my big face?

**Teresa:** [chuckles] I want to look at your face, but sometimes when I'm talking, I end up looking at my face, which I don't really want to do. You know what I mean?

**Travis:** No, because I like looking at my own face, but...

**Teresa:** Anyway...

**Travis:** I have a painting of my own face right over there. He stares at me every day while I work.

**Teresa:** [titters] There it is. So, it would seem that there is quite a dramatic boost in the amount of usage of the voice note. However, it does have critics. A woman, Talia Cooperman, who is a jewelry designer—but she gave this quote to the Wall Street Journal, that's why this is important. It says that she absolutely despises it when people use voice notes over just plain old texting. Quote, "I actually find it very selfish."

**Travis:** Oh?

**Teresa:** Let me explain to you why.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So, they can be very drawn out. Some people do ramble on. They do go on, don't they? And it can be time consuming to listen to. And there isn't really a universal etiquette about leaving voice notes, like, there are some general guidelines. Because it's a fairly new, although, not as new as you would think.

**Travis:** Oh, twist?

**Teresa:** It's a fairly new communication medium.

**Travis:** I think that touches on something from—of like, when I see that someone has sent me a voice note. And if you're listening to this and you're someone who has sent me a voice note, sorry! When I see that someone sent me a voice note, I think, "Oh my god." Right? Because it's like—

**Teresa:** Do you think it's like homework now?

**Travis:** It's gonna be so long and rambling! Right? Because if it was like a sentence, they would have just texted it.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Right? Or it would be like five seconds long. And I look at a voice note and I'm like, "This voice note is two minutes long. My god..."

**Teresa:** Two minutes is not that long.

**Travis:** It is to me! Do you know how important my time is? [chuckles]

**Teresa:** Well, let's—

**Travis:** I could be playing Animal Crossing!

**Teresa:** Let's find this flip side. If you really miss someone, if you miss talking to them, perhaps because you've been isolating in your home due to illness—

**Travis:** Uh-huh?

**Teresa:** Like we all did for the Covid 19 pandemic, maybe a voice note is really something that is very dear to you. Which is what people have said about—in Time Magazine, journalist Rainesford Stauffer wrote a love letter to voice notes, saying that it allowed her to find solace in her loved ones' voices, even if I couldn't see their faces.

**Travis:** Okay, so this... okay.

**Teresa:** Uh-huh.

**Travis:** I would agree that there is a use case of them. That like if someone was telling me a story, right? And it was like, "This is—oh! This is so juicy." Or exciting, or whatever, right? And they wanted to have like the passion in their voice, right? About it.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** But they were somewhere where they couldn't film, or they didn't want to see themselves, or whatever. Or if it's as you're describing, it's something very thoughtful and stuff, right? I could see that. And so, if you were sending it like you might send a card to someone, right?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Or a love letter, as you said, that's great. Right? I think it's when it's just like a rambling like, "What else... what else has happened to me? Hm, I don't know, ba-ba-ba—" Right? Where that's where it feels a little tedious.

**Teresa:** I mean, I would also say that it's a great way to communicate the way that you organize your thoughts. So like, if I want to talk to someone, and my thoughts are not organized about it, I might wait until I've organized them to text them. Because it seems very much like, okay, that's it, but now



I can go back and I can edit, and I can go through this thing. But if I needed to talk about it before organizing my thoughts, I think that a voice note would be a great way to do that. You know what I mean?

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Anyway, it does seem to be a mildly young-ish thing for the peoples. So like, eighty-four percent of Gen Z claims to use them regularly, and sixty-three percent of Millennials say they do. But the numbers fall off when you go back to Gen X and Baby Booms, and it shows that they're trying it out, but it is not a primary mode of conversation at all. Most of those, the Gen X and the Baby Boomers, it seems that text message has become primary mode. Although, as you get older, calling on the phone also.

**Travis:** Yeah. Not like Gen Zs like me. You know, me and my fellow Gen Zs.

**Teresa:** Hm...

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** You mean Elder Millennial?

**Travis:** I actually, can I just say, of the terms you could use for someone, Elder Millennial makes me sound like I'm in charge of a space cult. And I'll—

**Teresa:** [guffaws]

**Travis:** I'll take it.

**Teresa:** I love that.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** I love it.

**Travis:** "I am Elder Millennial. Come, drink from the stars with me."

**Teresa:** So, to your point, a lot of people feel like the voice note is very convenient for the sender, but not for the receiver, right? You said that if you—when you get one, sometimes you feel like, "I don't have the time to commit to this right now." As opposed to a text message where you might be able to just kind of skim it. Or you think, "Oh, well, it's just a couple sentences, I'll read it." Right? You don't even really go into your text app. You usually read it right from your notification screen.

**Travis:** Unless, okay, unless my—the text message demands a response.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** It pops up on my home screen and I'm like, "Okay, got it." Right? And then people are like, "How do you have so many unread texts?" And I'm like—

**Teresa:** That's how.

**Travis:** Why would I click on it to look at—I see it right there? I didn't need to respond to it.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Some people would even go so far as to say that they feel like it's kind of narcissistic, to assume that your friends want to hear you kind of like ramble, like you said. Or even that it conveys a meaning that they couldn't even be bothered to type it out, to say to you.

**Travis:** The thing is, and this is my own opinion—

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** This is not the opinions of Shmanners as a... as a corporation.  
[titters]

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** But I think that the whole nature of like, not a phone call, right? So we're talking like text messages, whatever, you're sending it through text.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Right? Is that like short and sweet, to the point, like, this didn't require a meeting, this didn't require a phone call.

**Teresa:** Right, "This could have been an email."

**Travis:** Right?

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** It's like, this was like a one or two sentence thing, a question, a quick check in, right?

**Teresa:** But also, I think that it gives you the kind of like space between things. People don't expect that you're going to reply to a text message right away.

**Travis:** The thing is, is with a voice message... And I know you said two minutes isn't a long time, I understand that. But the amount of time within there that actually contains the point, the answer, the question that I need to respond to or need to get, is time for—like might be fifteen seconds of a two-minute thing.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And that's just not how my brain processes information. Where I can look at a text message and see, "Yes," or, "8PM," or the name of the restaurant, right? But if they send a voice message on this long thing about the restaurant and what time and all this stuff, I don't know what the answer was in all of that.

**Teresa:** We're gonna go over some more of those pros and cons later, but first, I—

**Travis:** A word from another Max Fun show!

[theme music plays]

**Alexis:** Hi! I'm Alexis. I'm one of the co-hosts of Comfort Creatures. And I'm here with River Ju, who has been a member since 2019. Thank you so much for being a listener and a supporter of our show.

**River:** Yeah, I can't believe it's been that long. [titters]

**Alexis:** [chuckles] Yeah, right? As the Max Fun member of the month, can I ask what sort of made you decide to be a member?

**River:** I used to work at a library, so I just used to listen to podcasts while I reshelfed all the books. It really helped with, you know, doing—[chuckles] being at work. So, I just wanted to give back to what's been helping me.

**Alexis:** Yeah.

**River:** It feels good to be part of that.

**Alexis:** As the member of the month, you will be getting a \$25 gift card to the Maximum Fun store, a member of the month bumper sticker, and you also, if you're ever in Los Angeles, you can get a parking spot at the Max Fun HQ, just for you.

**River:** Yay! I'm actually going to LA in September, so I'll get to use the parking space.

**Alexis:** Yes! Thank you so much, River, for doing this. This has been an absolute blast.

**River:** Yeah, of course. I've been so glad to be able to talk to you, too, and I'm so excited to be a member of the month.

**Alexis:** Yay!

**Speaker:** Become a Max Fun member now at [maximumfun.org/join](https://maximumfun.org/join).

[break]

**Jeremy:** Hey, everybody! I'm Jeremy.

**Oscar:** I'm Oscar.

**Dimitri:** I'm Dimitri.

**Jeremy:** And we are the Eurovangelists.

**Oscar:** We're a weekly podcast, spreading the word of the Eurovision Song Contest, the most important music competition in the world.

**Jeremy:** Maybe you already heard Glen Weldon of NPR's Pop Culture Happy Hour talk up our coverage of this year's contest. But what do we talk about in the off season?

**Dimitri:** The rest of Eurovision!

**Jeremy:** Duh.

**Dimitri:** There are nearly seven decades of pop music history to cover.

**Oscar:** Mm-hm! And we've got thousands of amazing songs, inspiring competitors, and so much drama to discuss. And let me tell you, the drama is juicy.

**Dimitri:** Plus, all the gorillas and bread-baking grandmas that make Eurovision so special.

**Jeremy:** Check out Eurovangelists, available everywhere you get podcasts, and you could be a Eurovangelist too!

**Oscar:** Ooh! I want to be one!

**Jeremy:** You already are. It's that easy.

**Oscar:** Oh, okay. Cool.

[break]

**Travis:** And we're back.

**Teresa:** We're back. So, I want to give you a short history of the voice note. Now, it is—

**Travis:** It began in ancient Egypt!

**Teresa:** No... no, but it does go back a lot further than you might think.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** Let's go back to the invention of the gramophone.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** 1887.

**Travis:** Yeah, I knew the year. Pff!

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** You think I didn't know the year, you had to say it? O, course, I think everybody at home, we all said it in unison with you, eight... 1887, was it?

**Teresa:** 1887.

**Travis:** 1887, we knew that.

**Teresa:** The gramophone made it possible to record and play back sound on discs, which were easy to store, copy and send through the mail. So, your record player wasn't just for playing music, it was a very useful tool to communicate over long distances. So, these earliest forms of voice notes, as we would—like sending of the discs, goes back to just before the 1920s. And it boomed during the 1930s and 1940s, because...

**Travis:** The war?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And... commercialism.

**Travis:** Well, sure! What technology hasn't boomed due to commercialism?

**Teresa:** [titters]

**Travis:** And consumerism!

**Teresa:** [chuckles] It's true. A man named Alexander Lisiansky created the Voice-O-Graph machine for an American—

**Travis:** The voice—can I—hey.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Can we go back to that naming convention?

**Teresa:** I know!

**Travis:** The something O-Matic, the O-Graph. Come on!

**Teresa:** Yeah, I know.

**Travis:** Bring it back, Voice-O-Graph!

**Teresa:** The Voice-O-Graph machine was created for the American company called Mutoscope. I know, there's another one—

**Travis:** Like rotoscope.

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** There's another—let's put "scope" at the end of more things.

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** Do you think that Gallagher ruined the O-Matic thing with the Sledge-O-Matic?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm... no.

**Travis:** That everybody's like, "We don't want to seem like the Sledge-O-Matic. We can't do O-Matic anymore."

**Teresa:** No, I don't think so.

**Travis:** You don't even want to play in that space with me?

**Teresa:** No. I think it was fine. People were—people have been doing and did O-Matic way before Gallagher.

**Travis:** No, I'm just saying that maybe he ruined it, because he used it for the Sledge-O-Matic, and people were like, "Now it's a joke. So we can't use O-Matic."

**Teresa:** No, it was always a joke. [laughs]

**Travis:** I'm trying to have a little fun, talk about Gallagher on our manners podcast. I never get to do that. You know that. I never get a chance to bring up Gallagher, who I saw.

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** I saw perform live, when I was like ten. And I never get to talk about it on our manners podcast.

**Teresa:** Did you wear a trash bag?

**Travis:** I wasn't that close.



**Teresa:** Oh, okay. Okay, so then what you would do is, you would get into a kind of like phone booth, almost. For those people who have maybe never seen one, it's a large wooden box, sometimes with windows, but always with a door. And you get into it, and you could record your own voice.

**Travis:** It's like a TARDIS.

**Teresa:** A little bit, yeah. And these—

**Travis:** Except it's weirder on the inside. Sorry, go on.

**Teresa:** And these were set up all over amusement parks and tourist attractions, and boardwalks and train stations, bus terminals, and USO events. Right?

**Travis:** Oh! Okay?

**Teresa:** The most popular one being in San Francisco, at the pier. And then there was another really popular one at... in New Orleans, that was used a lot for these sort of things.

**Travis:** When you were a kid, did you ever do one of those, it's like a photo booth, but it was like a video karaoke kind of thing? Where like you would sing along in the booth, and then you would get like a VHS like of your thing.

**Teresa:** No...

**Travis:** No? My brothers and dad and I did it, I think at Universal Studios, when Griffin—it would have been like Griffin three, me six, Justin nine, I think.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Yeah. This just made me think about that just booth set up—

**Teresa:** It is a little bit like that.

**Travis:** Where it's like a photo booth, but it's like a voice booth.

**Teresa:** Yeah, totally. There was even one placed at the top of the Empire State Building.

**Travis:** Right on top?

**Teresa:** No. In the observation deck, where people go.

**Travis:** That makes a lot more sense.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] How would they get it up there? It's an antenna and stuff—

**Travis:** King Kong? King Kong would put it up there.

**Teresa:** King Kong would put it up there?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I think he works for the man.

**Travis:** Well, not now! He fell off the building!

**Teresa:** Anyway—

**Travis:** T'was Beauty killed the Beast!

**Teresa:** You would put in a few coins. and take a few minutes to record your message, and then out would come a small record that was lightweight enough to send through the mail, but durable enough for your family to listen to again and again when they missed you, right? Sometimes they would even provide an envelope for you to send it in the mail. And they were wildly popular. You can actually listen to a lot of these recordings, there is a database. A very dedicated man named Thomas Levein, or Livin, I don't know—

**Travis:** Or Levine.

**Teresa:** It doesn't have an E at the end. So anyway—

**Travis:** Lavah!

**Teresa:** He is a professor and media theorist at Princeton University, has devoted himself to preserving as many of these as he possibly can. He has a full archive dedicated to what he has dubbed the Phonopost, and is currently sifting through a seven-year backlog of countless audio letters sent across the US, South America, Europe, Russia and China. He's already digitized about three thousand discs.

**Travis:** That's incredible!

**Teresa:** It's amazing! And you can listen to them, at [phono-post.org](http://phono-post.org).

**Travis:** That gives me a lot of hope that all my podcasts will still exist in a hundred years.

**Teresa:** I think so!

**Travis:** Someone will digitize, or whatever, will be downloaded straight into brains, of—

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** All the episodes of this podcast, and My Brother, My Brother and Me, and everything, in a hundred years.

**Teresa:** Maybe?

**Travis:** Maybe.

**Teresa:** Maybe. Okay, so then, since the 1940s, recording technology has only gotten better. People who would save voicemail tapes can now save audio files on their phone, or voicemails, or messages. And there are even whole apps dedicated to voice notes. In 2013, WhatsApp was the very first social platform to introduce the idea of voice notes.

**Travis:** Really?

**Teresa:** And it caught... it caught on like, I don't know, hula hoops and The Beatles. The app reports that about seven billion voice notes are sent per day on their platform.

**Travis:** That's how many people there are!

**Teresa:** Well, I mean, let's just say that—

**Travis:** Probably not one per person.

**Teresa:** Probably not one per person. People are probably doing the heavy lifting sending like three or four—

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** To ten a day.

**Travis:** And hey, thanks to those heroes out there.

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** Doing the work, sending the voice notes for those of us who don't. We appreciate you.

**Teresa:** Vox reporter Sharon Gaffery pointed out that hearing a person's voice gives you different paralinguistic cues that simply cannot be communicated in writing. Then there's—

**Travis:** And this is a thing people have talked about on the internet for years—

**Teresa:** That's the thing, tone and context and—

**Travis:** Oh, yeah.

**Teresa:** All kinds of stuff, right?

**Travis:** Intonation, inflection, all that stuff.

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** You can't get subtext from a text.

**Teresa:** Scientists support this, saying that hearing a person's voice makes us feel closer to them, and can be healthy for a human need to socialize with others. And so like, I think that that's definitely one of the pros for sending a voice note.

**Travis:** Yeah, but... okay, not to be Johnny Complainer again—

**Teresa:** Uh-huh.

**Travis:** As everybody says—

**Teresa:** Everybody says that.

**Travis:** Then why not take it a step further and let me see your face? Where I'm gonna get even more context clues. Like send a video, and now I'm gonna get even more inflection and stuff where I can see your facial expressions, I can see your body language, I can like context it. Because I think maybe that's part of the reason for me, is like I'm sitting there and it's like, I have no context.

**Teresa:** Well, that's one of the reasons I like the app Marco Polo, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Because it is video... it's a video note, kind of, right? But I do feel like there are certain limitations as to when I can make those.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And I, especially like in public, you don't want to be responsible for like recording people who don't want to be recorded, right? And there's a little more anonymity for people in the background—just a voice, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And so like, it also can be sent hands-free, which may not be true for your... for your video.

**Travis:** Yeah, if you have like headphones or air pods or something with a microphone in them and stuff, yeah, I could see that.

**Teresa:** Mm-hm, Mm-hmm. And the sender has the ability to kind of like let out all of their thoughts. Maybe they don't—maybe they don't want to be able to—they don't have to want to like put on makeup or get dressed. Or like, you don't have to make yourself presentable in the same way that you might for a video. I'm not saying that everybody does, but you can—you can look a mess, and send a voice note, and nobody knows that you look a mess.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** It's true! It's true. It might also be better for sensitive topics, like people don't like to be seen crying. I know that I don't like—if I have something that's very upsetting, and I need to talk about it, it's probably easier for me to just talk about it without worrying about the video, because then I'm on video crying, and I don't want people to see that.

**Travis:** Okay, but here's the thing I'll point out.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And not to be a contrarian, but everything you have just stated as reasons to do it are based on the sender.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Not the receiver.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** So, it's not that it's a better way to convey the information to your audience, it's that it's more convenient for you, the sender, to not have to worry about those things.

**Teresa:** That's true!

**Travis:** So, like—

**Teresa:** Which also is the same thing for multitasking. Maybe you're—you need to be like folding laundry or whatever, and you can send a note that you don't need to text out.

**Travis:** Yeah, sure, absolutely. It just doesn't make it necessarily a better way to convey information.

**Teresa:** Yes, you are correct.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And those—that's definitely one of the cons, right? It's convenient for the sender, but maybe it's not for the recipient, where they now have to get a place where they can like mentally fully listen.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Right? And concentrate on what the person is saying.

**Travis:** Or even listen and hear, you know?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** If I'm like at a restaurant and I get a text, I can respond to that very easily.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Right? Whereas, if I get a voicemail, it may—or voice memo, maybe it's too loud to hear, maybe it's too quiet for me to play it. And it's like, okay, great, now I have to remember to listen to this later and answer it later.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Which, the chance of that for me is slim.

**Teresa:** It also is kind of a one-sided conversation, right? If the voice note is long enough, there might be several points that they're addressing. And so, as a recipient, you would have to like go through and address each point, maybe, if you wanted to reply. And so, it's kind of a one-sided thing, it's... We call this speaking in paragraphs, as opposed to sentences, in our house. [titters]

You also have very little control over the sound quality, right? If you're just talking into your phone, maybe you're in a busy room, or maybe you're out and there's traffic noise or construction noise, or whatever, it might be difficult for that. Also, it's very casual communication, because like you said, like your—my have—like I tend to do, some filler words in there, while you're thinking.

And I said earlier that my thoughts might not be as organized when I'm speaking, as opposed to when I write down. So, there are definitely cons to it, right? But here are some ways that our listeners can be their most Shmannerly selves while sending and receiving voice notes. Consider the recipient's surroundings.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Is your recipient at work right now? Probably not the best time for a voice note. They might be busy, and a text would be better. Or maybe they're sick at home on the couch, and they would love a voice note, something to distract them from feeling ill. I think that's something that you would—you would like.



**Travis:** I would also make the argument that—and I'm going to be pro-voice note.

**Teresa:** Okay, I love it.

**Travis:** If it is like after, say, I don't know, for me, I'm an old man, 10PM, right? And you have a lot of information to convey. Instead of sending me like nine text messages that might buzz near my head or ding near my head, one long voice note that I can listen to in the morning is preferred.

**Teresa:** Hm, okay. I like that. I mean, you—there's also not the same limit on text characters that there used to be.

**Travis:** Oh my god, but can you imagine?

**Teresa:** So, you could send a long text message.

**Travis:** If I woke up in the morning and there was like a twelve paragraph one text?

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** I'd burned my phone to ash.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I'm not reading all that! This ain't homework!

**Teresa:** [chuckles] Touché.

**Travis:** I'm not in school!

**Teresa:** [chuckles] Touché.

**Travis:** And also, I would say, if you—if this became a regularly scheduled thing, like if you're someone who lives in a big city where you like walk to work in the morning or something, right? You commute every morning. And you and your friend develop the like expectation that like, every morning,

you're not really able to have a phone call because you can't hear each other, or whatever, but you'll send voice notes.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Like on your way home from work or whatever. It's a time you know you're getting 'em. It's something exchanged between the two of you. They know when to expect it. That kind of thing, I think that's great.

**Teresa:** That's great. We would recommend that you are clear and to the point, especially if you're talking to someone that you're not extremely close with. So, maybe instead of using that to kind of collect and organize your thoughts, think about it first, and be clear and concise.

**Travis:** Or alternatively, I would also argue that if it's like a friend who you're just like telling about your day, or whatever, know that you might not get an answer to it.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** So, if there's questions in there or important information that you need to convey, make sure that is sent in like a text message, or something. Like, if part of your ramble is like, "Oh, by the way, I'm not going to be able to make it to that thing tomorrow night."

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Send that as a text message, so you know they got that and it's responded to, and not part of like a three-minute-long thing where it might get lost in the middle of it.

**Teresa:** So, that's a good idea to do. It's also a good idea to listen to your own voice note before you send it. Just because it made sense to you while you were saying it, might not mean that it makes sense to everyone to hear it. And if you do listen to it like that, you can pull out the bullet points, right? So like, you have sent this voice note, and you know that you did say "I'm not going to be able to make it," then you can reiterate that in the text later.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Make sure you consider your audience, as far as how long your voice note is.

**Travis:** You might have picked this up from things I've been saying.

**Teresa:** Yeah... yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** The general consensus is that, for someone that you don't have an established pattern of voice notes, thirty seconds is enough. Up to two minutes, for someone that you have an established pattern, but over two minutes, people really kind of check out. So, unless it's like we are narrating our days, and we're like doing it on our way to work, I could see how that could run a little longer.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Right? Like, it would turn into more like a... I don't want to say vlog, because it's not video.

**Travis:** We used to, we—this was like first hundred episodes of My Brother, My Brother and Me, I think that early. Maybe even like first fifty. We talked about a guy who was like, "Yeah, my wife and I, we both work, we're both busy. And like, we don't always have time to like hang out and do phone calls, but she loves podcasts, blah-blah-blah." And we suggested recording like a podcast for one person, or a podcast for your wife called Hi, Hon, How Was Your Day?

**Teresa:** [chuckles] Yeah!

**Travis:** And it's just you doing it.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And I think about that still to this day, the title, "Hi, Hon, How Was Your Day?" And just a one-person audience podcast.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** That's like—

**Teresa:** That is kind of like the voice note—

**Travis:** "Hey! It's me, your host, Travis. You're probably wondering what your husband's been up to today. Well..."

**Teresa:** Yeah. So, I mean, that could be fun, right?

**Travis:** I would also, I would advise you to think about, does it need to be a voice note?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Because I think that sometimes we go too far in the like, there's no, you know, subtext and text. Where we're like, "But I need to explain why the answer is no."

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Or like, "I need to make it clear why I'm canceling." And it's like, you don't. Right? Like, if you're trying to like make yourself feel better about it, or whatever—maybe you do. I'm not gonna say a hundred percent of the time you don't need to explain yourself. But really ask yourself like, "Do I need to give a full explainer of this important information? Or can I explain it in like two sentences?"

**Teresa:** Right. Now, this final one might be a little bit silly, but I do want to say that you want to watch what you say in voice notes, and be careful not to incriminate yourself. [chuckles]

**Travis:** Oh, okay. Definitely, both of those things. Careful what you say, one, like, you're walking down the street doing a voice note, you trip over something, yell a big expletive.

**Teresa:** [titters] Yeah.

**Travis:** And like, "Ah, anyways."

**Teresa:** "Oh, no." [titters]

**Travis:** And keep going. And then cut to that person in the office like, and that loud expletive plays on their phone.

**Teresa:** Yes!

**Travis:** You know, I could definitely see that, the incriminating yourself, yeah.

**Teresa:** Right. An etiquette expert rightfully pointed out that you can easily argue away the context of like a rogue text or a catty email, or be like, "I didn't mean to send that. That wasn't meant to you." Like, "I was—that doesn't mean what you think it means." Like, the tone is different, like all that kind of stuff. But if it's something coming out of your mouth, it's a lot harder to talk your way out of. [chuckles]

**Travis:** I've also watched a lot of CSI. They can isolate background noise.

**Teresa:** Oh, can they?

**Travis:** According to CSI!

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** And I bet in real life, to some degree, probably.

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Probably not the degree of CSI.

**Teresa:** So, I would say that I would like to get voice notes from my sister, but I don't know if I would like to get voice notes from everyone. I like talk to text.

**Travis:** Not me, you didn't say me, though, I noticed.

**Teresa:** You would never send me a voice note.

**Travis:** That's true, I'd send you a video.

**Teresa:** That's true.

**Travis:** That's what I do.

**Teresa:** I like talk—

**Travis:** Because I know you like—

**Teresa:** To text!

**Travis:** You like to see my face.

**Teresa:** I do.

**Travis:** I also like talk to text. But at some point, I stopped having to use like say the punctuation out loud. You used to have to do that.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Where you'd say like "exclamation point," right? And it would put it. And then it started like just figuring out where the exclamation points went and everything. And now, if I do it in public, I feel like just an absolute bonehead sitting there going "comma."

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** Or "dot, dot, dot, question mark?"

**Teresa:** I would say read over those, because you do often have to go in and edit just a touch.

**Travis:** Sometimes I just leave it, though.

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** If it's funny enough. If it's funny enough. I was texting Paul and—my friend, Paul. And I was telling him about—I was sick yesterday, and I was like, "And I had a small fever." But it came out "feber," and it was in there "feber." And I was like, yeah, well, it's—

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** That's fine. That's fine. Hey, everybody—

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Thank you for listening to our thirty-minute-long voice note. That's all this episode has been. Twist!

**Teresa:** [gasps]

**Travis:** Yeah, you had no idea! Let's see, thank you to everybody who came out to see My Brother, My Brother and Me and Adventure Zone in Texas. We had such a great time. The shows were wonderful. It was totally worth getting sick. I had a great time. The audiences were wonderful. We're coming to Salt Lake City and San Diego in October, doing My Brother, My Brother and Me and Adventure Zone there. So, make sure you get your tickets, and send in your questions and all that stuff. You can go to [bit.ly/mcelroytours](https://bit.ly/mcelroytours) to get that information.

Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not do this show! Thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could do—not do this show. Thank you to you for listening. We could do the show without you, but then that would be like a voice note sent into space.

**Teresa:** Oh?

**Travis:** Oh, wait, that might actually be a thing. I bet they do that for astronauts. Anyways, go on.

**Teresa:** I bet they do. We always thank Brent 'Brental Floss' Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone, where those are found. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography, yes, for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

As always, we are taking your topic submissions, your questions, your idioms, *your romance novel recommendations*. Send those to [shmannerscast@gmail.com](mailto:shmannerscast@gmail.com), and say hi to Alexx, because she reads every single one.

**Travis:** Now that there's a new season of Great British Bake Off—

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** That means there's also a new season of Bake On, mine and Teresa's Great British Bake Off watch along podcast. You can find it where podcasts are found, by searching for "Bake On." The first two episodes are up now. And then I post the episode art for each one on my Instagram, @TravisMcElroy. And you can leave comments about your thoughts about the season and the episode, and all that stuff! So, go check that out. And that's gonna do it for us. Join us again next week.

**Teresa:** No RSVP required.

**Travis:** You've been listening to Shmanners.

**Teresa:** Manners, Shmanners! Get it?

["Shmanners Intro Theme" by Brental Floss plays]

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