

# On Line's App Guide

## *Old-School Communication in a New-School Way*

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Once upon a time, long before text messaging and social media, if you wanted to have a go at your significant other, you had to do it face-to-face or over the phone. Then, you'd both have the opportunity to air your grievances, and maybe shed a few tears before moving on (hopefully).

Nowadays, there are myriad platforms and methods to employ when embroiled in a battle of words with your sweetie, including (but not limited to): passive-aggressive Facebook posts, infuriating Instagram snaps and, of course, hostile WhatsApp messages. In a world where your life moments are shared via an app or posted online and have the potential to live forever, can any conflict really die? After all, it's one thing to say you forgive your spouse's harsh words and it's another thing to see those words pop up every time you re-open your text message conversation.

That's the issue Mark Cuban, billionaire owner of the NBA Dallas Mavericks, aims to address with his new chat app, Cyber Dust. Available for iPhone and Android devices, this app offers a level of privacy virtually unheard of in our social media era. Described as "a more natural way to message", Cyber

Dust encrypts messages before deleting them in 30 seconds; allowing you to say whatever you like without the worry that it will come back to bite you in the end. Unlike the very popular Snapchat (which was hacked earlier this year), your messages never touch a server or hard drive, so there's nothing to retrieve. The app even blocks screenshots on Androids (though not yet on Apple devices) for an added bit of security.

Cuban was inspired to create a way to let users take control of their messages after watching the public dissection of his private texts during his battle against insider trading charges last year, and it looks like he's pulled it off.

True to Cuban's description of the app as a cross between WhatsApp and Snapchat, Cyber Dust lets you send text, emoji's, stickers and photos to your friends under the username of your choice. There's no connection to your real identity aside from the option of submitting your e-mail address for future password recovery. You can also send group messages to all of your friends and you get that handy little "sent" and "read" confirmations.

Plus, you can pin your own messages so you don't lose your place in the conversation. Video and group chats are planned for future updates. In terms of adding friends, the app can search your contacts or you can look for them by their username. Also in the pipeline is a feature to help you find popular users to follow.



Sounds good, right? Of course, the only way to know how it runs is to take it for a spin; which is just what I over a holiday weekend. I followed Cuban's lead after discovering that he blasts inspirational quotes, new music and interesting people to add under the name "blogmaverick" (get it?) every day. In the process, I made some new friends and discovered the freedom of saying anything; comforted by the knowledge that it would all be gone forever within seconds. In search of the full Cyber Dust experience, I even took the plunge and encouraged my boyfriend to give it a shot. Though initially hesitant about giving up the ability to save his words in perpetuity, I ended up enjoying its blend of the ephemeral nature of real conversation with the convenience of mobile technology. In fact, Cyber Dust added a new, relaxed dimension to our chats by forcing us to let go of the little things as meaningless details evaporated from our screens.

Of course, none of that addresses the concerns about infidelity that have arisen in wake of apps like Cyber Dust, which, critics say, encourage indiscretions by hiding the evidence. To that, I point out that cheating existed long before the advent of the cellphone (or the landline) and it will endure long after the next wave of technology has taken over. The truth is it's naïve to ignore the value of apps like this in a world where every interaction in cyberspace has the potential to haunt you endlessly.

We once lived in a world where the angry words you shouted at your significant other disappeared immediately into the ether (if not from their minds) allowing you both to eventually get on with your lives. These days, lingering texts and posts can cause old arguments to keep resurfacing to damage your relationship.

In the age of selfie, there's something to be said for a method of communication that doesn't eternally hold your words against you... even if your spouse does.



# CYBER DUST

*A better way to message*