

Making the Most of Your BlackBerry – Instant Messenger

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When is instant messaging a good thing? When you can use it on your BlackBerry! This article discusses a feature seldom used by BlackBerry users - the ability to download new software and capabilities to the unit.

Before we describe this feature in detail please note the following:

1. The use of this application will generally increase the amount of internet (data) time that your BlackBerry uses. If you are on a limited plan, you may wish to upgrade to an 'unlimited' plan so that you do not incur additional data charges.
2. This software package may be processing intensive. You may notice that your BlackBerry is sluggish when using this application. This does not affect the functionality of the unit but the performance may be affected.

With the caveats out of the way, let's explore one software package from Research in Motion...

BlackBerry Messenger

The BlackBerry Messenger program allows instant communication between BlackBerry units. BlackBerry Messenger now ships on most new BlackBerry's but if you have an older BlackBerry you can add this software to your unit.

BlackBerry Messenger is useful for informally connecting with people. The software is fully integrated with the BlackBerry so you can set separate sounds or vibrations that are distinct for messenger messages and an icon will appear on the main screen when a message is pending.


BlackBerry Messenger allows you to converse with several people at once, as independent conversations and you can also have conversations involving multiple people at the same time and on the same screen.

You can copy the conversation history and paste it into a message if you would like to keep a record of the conversation. Of course, instant messaging features such as emoticons, buddy lists and real time message delivery status are all a part of messenger.

Like most downloadable software, the best way to experience it is to try it.

Downloading BlackBerry Messenger

You can download BlackBerry Messenger using your BlackBerry's Browser; here's how:

1. Launch the BlackBerry Browser. 
2. Push in the wheel and select **Go To**
3. After the letters `http://` which appear on screen, type in the URL www.blackberry.com/messenger
4. Choose **OK**
5. After a moment an information screen will appear. Scroll to the bottom and select **Download Now**.
6. A license screen will appear with Terms and Conditions. Scroll to the bottom and select **I Accept**.
7. Another screen will appear, select **Click here to load BlackBerry Messenger to your device**.
8. Finally, the download screen will appear. Select **Download** and wait for the process to complete.
9. A new icon will appear on your BlackBerry after the download completes. The icon differs with each model of BlackBerry but the functionality is the same.

Using BlackBerry Messenger

The first time you use the program, you will be asked to enter a password and to select your nickname. Enter the information as requested.

Contact List

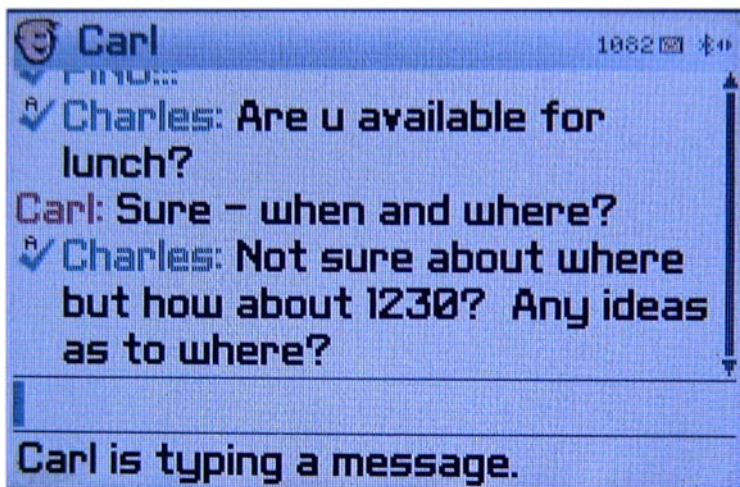
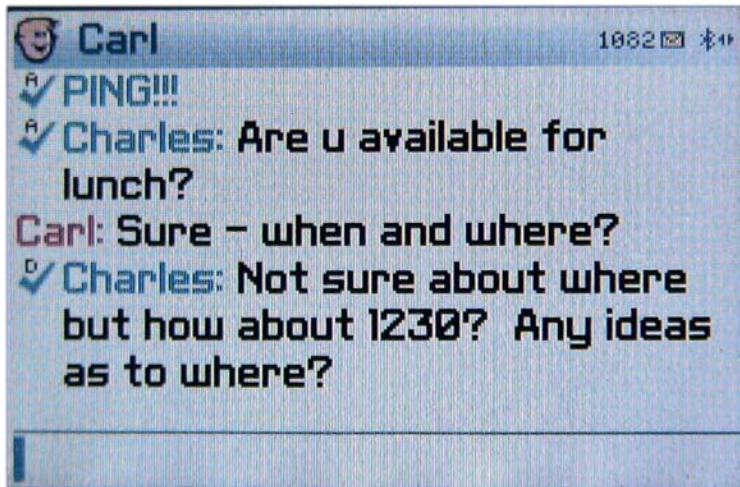
In order to send instant messages to others, they must be a member of your BlackBerry Messenger contact list. In order to invite them to be a part of your BlackBerry Messenger contact list, they must be a member of your BlackBerry contact list. Of course, the invitee must also have a BlackBerry. Consequently, the first thing you will want to do is **Add a Contact**. Push in the wheel to call up the menu and then select this item,

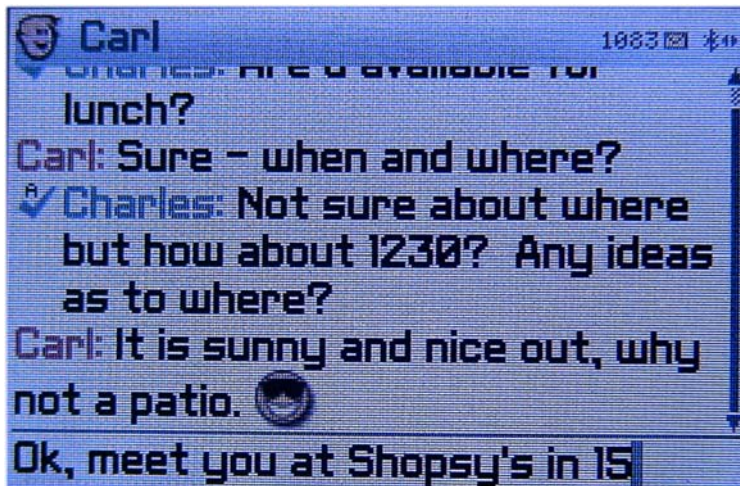
Adding a Contact sends a special email message to the contact that (1) allows them to load BlackBerry Messenger if they do not have it and (2) adds them to your contact (buddy) list once they accept your invitation.

Engaging Conversations

To begin messaging a contact, select **Start Conversation** from the menu. A blank screen appears. Just start typing. When you press enter, the message is immediately transmitted to the recipient's BlackBerry. A checkmark appears as the message is sent. When it is delivered to the recipient's BlackBerry, a D

is added above the checkmark. When the recipient reads the message an A replaces the D above the checkmark. When the recipient starts typing a response, the bottom of the screen will display <user> is typing a message. Please note that the letter differ if you are no using a BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES). See the diagrams below for an example where I set up a lunch with Carl.





As you can see from the above example and description, BlackBerry Messenger is very interactive. You can easily tell if someone is available to communicate - and quickly. You can reply in real time, sharing information and ideas as you think of them.

All of the standard features associated with typing apply when typing BlackBerry Messenger. In addition, you can press the SYM key twice to see emoticons that can also be used in conversations - something that can't be done in BlackBerry email.

If a recipient does not respond you can select **Ping Contact** from the menu. This causes their BlackBerry to vibrate or ring according to the settings that they have established. The unique sound or vibration will alert them to the fact that an instant message has arrived as opposed to an email or other event.

You can also **Invite** another contact to join the conversation. When this is done, messages typed on one unit appear on the two other units involved in the conversation. Don't be surprised if your BlackBerry is sluggish during a 3 way conversation. This option is a bit buggy on the unit. You will need to hold down the Alt key and scroll up and down to select the contact which you wish to add to the conversation.

Selecting **View Calendar** will provide access to your BlackBerry's Calendar from within the messaging program.

Finally, **Copy History** can be used to capture the conversation in case you need it at a later time.

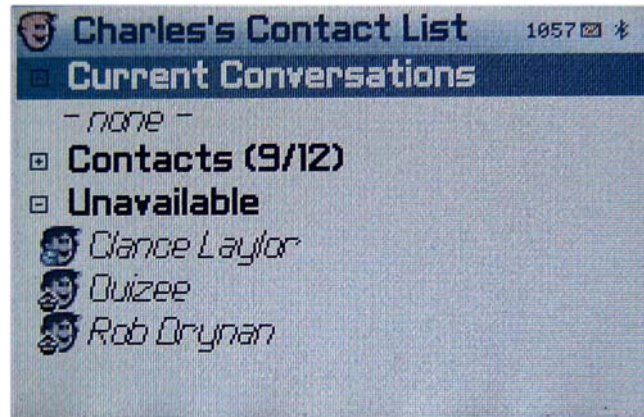
To end a conversation with another party, select **End Conversation**. Once a conversation is ended, its history can no longer be retrieved.

Do Not Disturb

If you do not want to be disturbed you can set your availability to Unavailable by selecting the Available option on the main menu. The BlackBerry will not vibrate or ring with this option set to Unavailable.

Contact Groupings

As you add more contacts, BlackBerry Messenger will automatically sort them into one of three categories depending on the status of the contact.



Current Conversations - any conversations that are still active will be identified by the recipient's nickname here.

Contacts - The complete list of active contacts will be shown here excluding the contacts listed in the other two categories.

Unavailable - These contacts either have their BlackBerry's turned off or they have set their status to unavailable. If a contact in this area is highlighted, the option Set Alert may be selected from the menu. If selected, BlackBerry Messenger will notify you when the contact becomes available.

Try it, You'll Like it!

Give BlackBerry Messenger a try. It's the best way to understand how it works and for you to decide if it is something that you want to use. Enjoy!

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