

GB Messenger for the GBA

GB Messenger is a low cost radio-messaging cartridge for the Game Boy Advance. It lets Game Boy Advance users send text messages to each other when they are within up to a 3-mile radius in rural settings and several city blocks in city settings.

The GB Messenger user experience is similar to that of a two-way pager or other message services such as those on most cell phones. However, GB Messenger does not use cellular or paging infrastructure and hence requires no registration or license and is totally free to use.

Text messages are constructed and sent with a virtual keypad that is displayed on the GBA screen. Navigation through the keypad is done quickly with the arrow key (D key). Messages can be sent to individuals or to groups of individuals at the same time. Users can also query to see what other GB Messenger units are online. Users can assign unique names to their units. These names or “handles” are what is reported in a query. Users can also request confirmation that a message they sent has been successfully received.

When a message is received, it is stored in flash memory. The Message LED is then flashed until all received messages have been read. If the unit is plugged into a GBA that is turned on, an audible alert is played through the GBA speaker until any button is pushed. Message management is done on-screen and up to 30 messages can be saved in internal flash.

GB Messenger is powered on or off through user input via the GBA. When removed from the GBA it will stay in the same power state it was in when it was removed. When powered on, the Active LED flashes. When powered off, the Active LED stays off.

GB Messenger has its own internal, rechargeable lithium ion battery that allows it to receive messages even when it is not plugged into a GBA. The condition of this battery is monitored and reported both on-screen and via the Active LED. If the battery is low, the activity indicator changes its alert cadence to indicate this. When plugged into a GBA that is powered on, the battery will trickle charge from the GBA bus. For fast charging, the user can also plug the standard SP charger directly into the receptacle on its side.

GB Messenger is targeted at a preteen and early-teen age group. Most friends in this age group attend the same schools and live locally within the same neighborhood. Hence, a 3-mile range would provide effective coverage for most users in this demographic.

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