



Pre-Reading Activities

A: Storytelling

- 1 Read the story below.

Today as I walked past the school I saw a boy who was about 13 years old run out of the school gate as fast as he could. The other children were still in school so I think he was **playing truant**. He didn't look at me or any other people who were nearby. He kept his face looking straight ahead and just ran.

to play truant - a student stays away from school when he or she should be at school.

- 2 Work in groups of four and write a story explaining what has happened. Use the questions below to help you. Choose one student in the group to write your story down.

Why is the boy running out of school?

Where is he going?

How is he feeling?

What will happen to him at home tonight and at school tomorrow?

- 3 Choose one student in your group to read your story to the class.

B: Interview

Work in small groups and talk about these questions.

1. What do parents of a student have to do if the student is sick or away from school?
2. What happens in your country if someone plays truant from school? Is truancy a common problem in your country?
3. Have you ever done this? If yes, why did you do it?

C: Vocabulary

Today's article has words related to school. Work in pairs and discuss the following words. You may use a dictionary if you need to.

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|------------------|
| 1 | truancy | 4 | attendance |
| 2 | absent/absence | 5 | principal |
| 3 | excuse | 6 | secondary school |

Reading Activities

A: Preparation for Reading

Read the first paragraph of today's article and discuss the questions with your group.

1. What is text messaging?
2. What is the school doing to stop students from 'playing truant'?
3. What do you think the phrase 'to think twice' means?

SINGAPORE Tuesday April 3 (Reuters) - Children at a Singapore school will need to think twice about playing truant after a mobile phone text message broadcast system which automatically alerts their parents kicked off Tuesday.

to alert - to warn, to make someone aware of something. **to kick off** - to start for the first time, to begin.



B: Reading for the Main Ideas

1. Read the whole article without using a dictionary.
2. Turn the article face down and make short notes on what you remember from the article.
3. Use your notes to tell your partner what you remember from the article. Then listen to your partner
4. Together, write a headline for the article. Try to include the main idea of the article in your title. Be ready to share this with the class. Your teacher will then tell you the real headline.

SINGAPORE Tuesday April 3 (Reuters) - Children at a Singapore school will need to think twice about playing truant after a mobile phone text message broadcast system which automatically alerts their parents kicked off Tuesday.

"I was hoping that through this system I actually **reduce** the amount of administrative work for teachers (and) **enhance** the home-school links," Tan Teck Hock, principal of Yishun Town Secondary school told Reuters.

Teachers will mark the names of absent students in an electronic database. The mobile phone text message of Short Message Service (SMS) broadcast system, supplied by local technology provider WorldRemind, taps into the database and automatically sends out a message to parents telling them their child is missing from class.

Parents can choose from one of four preset SMS replies providing an excuse for the child's absence or stating they are unaware of their child's whereabouts. Teachers will **obtain** a summary of the day's attendance once the system has received a parent's replies.

"The idea is to **cut down** response time for the teachers and for the parents...not to cause more stress for the student," Victor Lim, WorldRemind's chairman said.

Close to 400 13-year old students will test the system **initially** but Tan plans to have the 1,400-strong school fully wired before the end of the year. About 70 percent of parents have mobile phones, Tan said.

The system cost about S\$5,000 (US\$2,760).

Mobile phone text messaging, introduced to the city-state in 1995, has become an extremely popular means of communication with users **punching out** millions of messages per day.

Words:

obtain - get

cut down - make less, make something smaller

reduce - cut down, make less

enhance - make better, help, improve

initially - at first, in the beginning

punching out - typing words or numbers on a computer etc.

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C: Writing Questions

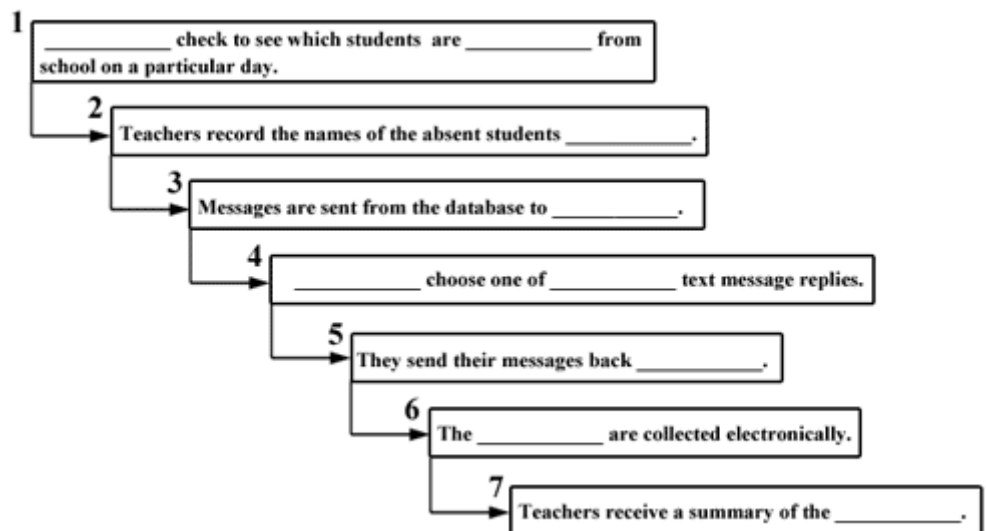
Write three 'what' questions you could ask another student based on today's article. Think carefully about the grammar of your questions. Begin your question with the word 'what'.

Then find a partner and ask your questions. Be ready to answer your partner's questions.

1. What..._____?
2. What..._____?
3. What..._____?

D: How does it work?

Fill the gaps in this flowchart describing the text messaging system.



E: Vocabulary

Look at the list of words below and match one word from Column A with a word that can go together with it from Column B. (You may look at the article.) These are called collocations.

Example: **play truant**

Column A	Column B
play	student
cause	time
mobile	popular
electronic	truant
provide	database
extremely	stress
response	phone
absent	an excuse

Post-Reading Activities

You may do one or more of these.

A: Say it!

Work with a group of four. Choose one role each to talk about for at least one minute. Then take a different role.

Role A: You are Tan Teck Hock. How do you feel about the new system. How will it help the school?

Role B: You are the parent of a student at Yishun Town Secondary school. Your child plays truant a lot. Talk about how you feel about the new system.

Role C: You are a student at Yishun Town Secondary school. You think the new system has been introduced to make students frightened of playing truant. Talk about how you feel.

Role D: You are a teacher at the school. Describe your reaction to the new system.

B: Writing

Imagine you are the parent of a secondary school student. Write a short letter to your child's teacher explaining why your child was absent from school for a week.

C: Vocabulary

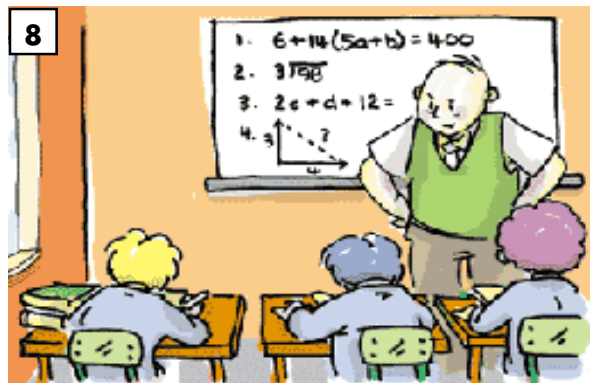
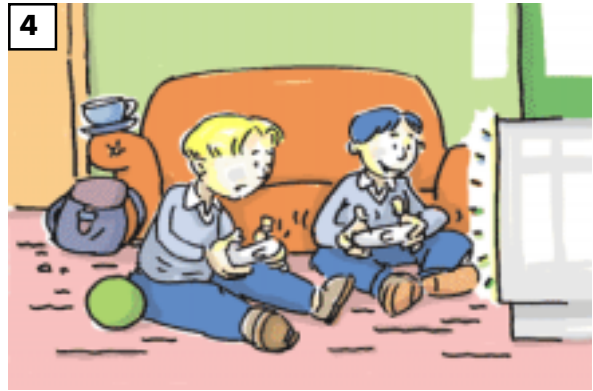
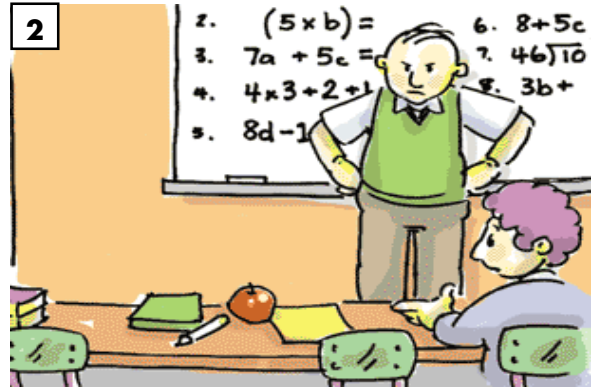
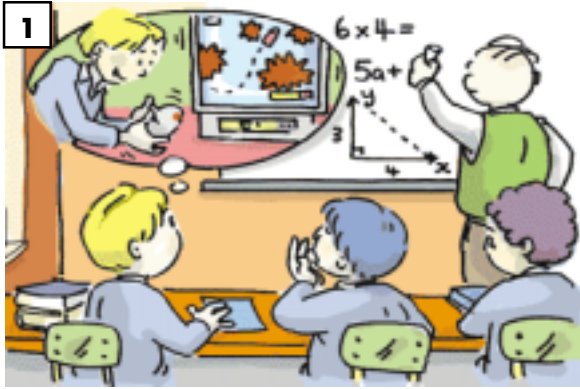
Choose three words from today's article that you do not know. Then complete the following:

1. Copy the sentence from today's article (with the unknown word).
2. Look at the sentence and try and decide what part of speech the word is.
3. Look at the words which go together with the new word (collocations). Underline these words.
4. Try to guess the meaning of the word before you look in the dictionary. Write down your guess.
5. Look in the dictionary and find as much information as you can. Do all the following:
 - check the part of speech
 - read the example sentence if there is one.
 - notice other words with the same or opposite meaning.
 - look carefully at the grammar of the new word.

D: Writing from Pictures

Use the series of pictures to write a story. Tell it from the point of view of:

1. one of the two boys;
2. one of the boys' parents; or
3. the boys' teacher.



TEACHERS' NOTES AND ANSWER KEY

Pre-Reading Activities

A: Storytelling - Sample Answer

...The boy ran out of school because he had just been given back his test results and he had done very badly. His teacher had told him she wanted to talk to him about his work. His parents wanted him to do well at school but he was lazy and thought he could do the tests without studying.

He was afraid of what the teacher and his parents would say. His father would probably say that he wasn't allowed to watch television after school or go out with his friends at the weekend.

He was on his way to the river where he could look at the muddy water, throw some stones into the river and think about what he would do next.

B: Interview - Notes

If the students are from different countries you may wish to have a feedback time after this activity where students hear about different discipline systems in the various countries represented.

C: Vocabulary - Notes

The expression 'to play truant' is a formal way of describing the idea of a student missing school when they should in fact be there. English also has different slang expressions for this idea. If you are aware of any that are used in your country (either in the students' first language or English slang expressions) you could talk about these with students.

C: Vocabulary - Answers

truancy - the habit of staying away from school when the student should be there

absent - not there, not present

excuse - the reason you give for something you have done (or not done)

attendance - from the verb 'to attend', being present, opposite of 'absence'

principal - person in charge of a school

secondary school - a school that students attend until the age of 18 after completing their elementary school education

Reading Activities

A: Preparation for Reading - Answers

1. Sending typed messages through to someone's mobile phone.
2. If a student is absent from school their parents will be told through their mobile phone.
3. To stop and think more carefully before doing something.

B: Reading for the Main Ideas - Notes

2. and .3 Make sure students understand what they have to do before they begin. Ensure that they cover the article or turn it face down so that they can't see it. They are trying to recall what they have read.
4. Have students share their headlines with the class and write them up on the board. Then present the actual headline and see whose headline was the most similar. (They may not have used the same words but their headline expresses the same idea.)

B: Reading for the Main Ideas - Answer

4. This was the original headline - 'School Fights Truancy with Phone Messaging'

C: Writing Questions - Notes

This is a good opportunity to do some formal grammar work on forming 'what' questions as a class. You may wish to do it all together and end up with 6 questions on the board rather than having students working on their own.

C: Writing Questions - Sample Answers

What is the name of the school?

What is the name of the principal of the school?

What does the teacher have to do to contact the parents?

What is the reason for the text messaging system?

What was the cost of the new system?

What is Tan's plan for the end of the year?

What did Tan say is the benefit of the system?

D: How does it work? - Suggested Answers

Teachers check to see which students are **absent** from school on a particular day.

Teachers record the names of the absent students **in the database**.

Messages are sent from the database to **parents' mobile phones**.

Parents choose one of **four** text message replies.

They send their messages **back to the school**.

The **parents' replies** are collected electronically.

Teachers receive a summary of the **day's attendance**.

E: Vocabulary - Answers

play truant; cause stress; mobile phone; electronic database; provide an excuse; extremely popular; response time; absent student.

Post-Reading Activities

A: Say it! - Notes

It would be possible to change this into a debate between parents and students, with two speakers on each side of the debate.

B: Writing - Notes

You may like to model the format of a letter of this kind before students write, and to elicit useful vocabulary and write it up on the board. Alternatively, you may want to ask students to write, and then choose one student's piece and do a reformulation, showing the correct form.

C: Vocabulary - Notes

Students may need help with using their dictionaries effectively, in which case you could work through one word as a class to model dictionary use before they start. Then students can work independently but will still need you to circulate to make sure they are finding the information they need.

D: Writing from Pictures - Notes

Circulate to help students with their stories. Once they have finished encourage them to swap stories with other students or put their finished work on the wall of the classroom so they can enjoy reading other students' compositions about the same events.