The Main Idea Strategy: Student Practice Lessons

Name

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Date

**Instant Messaging**

Have you or someone you know ever been “IM’ed?” In other words, have you or someone you know ever been “instant messaged?” Millions of people across the world “IM” each other every day. For one, “instant messaging” works exactly as it sounds. It’s a message sent to somebody instantly. If a person works on the computer, it can be mighty hard to talk on the phone and type at the same time. If a person is on an “IM” program, however, that person could work and “talk” at the same time.

The first instant messaging programs required users to have a unique number, similar to a phone number, which signified their identity. This caused people to remember the “number” of their friends. Then, programs allowed people to make up screen names that allowed users to make up fake names that the friends could remember easier than a number. Now, there is a “linking” process that lets people connect their instant message screen name to their cell phone, allowing “IM” to occur anywhere on cellular phones.

If you have been instant messaging a friend and need to eat dinner, you might type in “g2g, ttyl.” Alternatively, if you were messaging your boyfriend or girlfriend, you might type “ly☺” or “ly2☺.” In other words, if you need to eat dinner, you have “got to go” or “g2g.” The “ttyl” means “talk to you later.” In the other example, you might tell your boyfriend or girlfriend “love you” or “love you too,” or “ly☺” or “ly2☺.” If you need to take a break, you could type the message “byb,” or “be right back.” These are just a few of the abbreviations often used in instant messaging.

The instant messaging programs themselves have also become far more sophisticated. Features have been added to the “IM” programs. At first, people just typed messages and kept a list of their “friends’ numbers. Then, people categorized their friends in special lists. Later, new instant messaging programs added extra features, like animated smiling faces and beeps that let people know that someone left a message. Nowadays, instant messaging programs allow people to “hide” their identities so that they can seem invisible, in case they do not want to be someone to return a message to them.

Instant messaging is not just child’s play. Colleges use instant messaging to allow students to communicate with and librarians. Businesses use “IM” to send out mass messages about important security information. For example, pretend that a big business was filled with people who worked at computers all day. If someone knew of a security issue, that person could “IM” the whole office and everybody would know that something was happening. Also, police departments have gotten involved with instant messaging. They encourage people to register their phone numbers with the police, so that the police can send a mass instant message from the police station computer to all the cell phones registered, in case of an emergency.

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