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Self-destructing mobile phone messages

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14 December, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Self-destructing mobile phone messages

A UK hi-tech company has come up with a “self-destruct” text messaging service, which should prove popular with anyone wishing to maintain utmost secrecy in the messages they send. Subscribers can safely send any mails in the knowledge that a downloaded application in their mobile phone, called StealthText, will destroy their secrets 40 seconds after recipients click on the link to read them. The software’s developer Staellium UK hopes the service, derived from military technology, will appeal to business people dealing with sensitive information, love cheats or others who want to allay fears about potentially incriminating information. A representative said the company wants to give senders control over the messages they send instead of relying on recipients to delete them.

The technology has all the hallmarks of a gadget from a 007 movie. Staellium CEO Carole Barnum commented the fledgling service has “massive benefits for people from all walks of life”. She said: “Ultimately, no one will have to worry about their messages or pictures ending up in the wrong hands ever again.” Staellium’s website hints that soccer superstar David Beckham might need StealthText. His alleged lover Rebecca Loos conspicuously failed to delete his lovey-dovey mails last year, to his enormous embarrassment. StealthText is not, in fact, permanently wiped. To comply with U.K. legal requirements, the message stays on a secure server, even after the recipient deletes it. However, to prevent abuse, the recipient has no access to the server after the message vanishes.

WARM-UPS

1. SUPERLATIVE MAILS: Ask your partner(s) about e-mail. Use superlatives in all of your questions. Remember the questions you asked and were asked and move on to different partners. After speaking to several people, sit down with new partners and tell them what you found out.

2. SECRETS: Are there lots of secrets in your e-mails? In pairs / groups, discuss the kinds of things or information you (or others) might want to self-destruct when writing to the following people:

- Your partner
- Your boss
- A parent
- Your best friend
- A colleague
- Someone in a chat room
- Your bank manager
- Other _____

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Hi-tech / text messages / secrets / mobile phones / Internet links / military technology / business people / love cheats / 007 / David Beckham / vanishing

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. SECRET PEOPLE: Who would benefit most from self-destructing text messages? With your partners(s), speculate on the kind of secrets the following people might want to vanish without trace:

- George W. Bush
- The leader of your country
- Brad Pitt
- The CEO of a global company
- A 16-year-old
- Britain's Prince Charles
- Osama bin Laden
- You

5. E-MAIL OPINIONS: Discuss these opinions with your partner(s). Do you agree with them?

- a. E-mail is the greatest invention since sliced bread.
- b. There should be self-destruct buttons for spam – before it reaches my phone.
- c. I will most definitely subscribe to this new service.
- d. What if the recipient saves the message? It doesn't destruct then!
- e. People shouldn't send messages they might regret later.
- f. The world is becoming a secretive place full of suspicion.
- g. I don't care who knows my secrets. I have nothing to hide.
- h. What happens if it's a really long message that takes 80 seconds to read?!?!?

6. E-MAIL: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with e-mail. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. A company has invented an e-mail that destroys recipients' phones. T / F
- b. New "secret mail" will vanish forever 40 seconds after being opened. T / F
- c. The software behind the mail is derived from military technology. T / F
- d. The developer hopes people will write more incriminating mails. T / F
- e. The technology has all the hallmarks of a gadget from a 007 movie. T / F
- f. The company said the technology will help people from all runs of life. T / F
- g. David Beckham sent lovey-dovey text messages to an alleged lover. T / F
- h. The messages don't entirely destruct, but stay on a secure server. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| a. come up with | disappears |
| b. utmost | noticeably |
| c. recipients | originated |
| d. derived | new |
| e. allay | maximum |
| f. hallmarks | abide by |
| g. fledgling | developed |
| h. conspicuously | signs |
| i. comply with | reduce |
| j. vanishes | receivers |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| a. A UK hi-tech company has come | military technology |
| b. popular with anyone wishing | walks of life |
| c. derived from | over the messages they send |
| d. allay fears about potentially | to maintain utmost secrecy |
| e. give senders control | the recipient has no access to the server |
| f. the fledgling | up with a "self-destruct" text |
| g. people from all | mails |
| h. pictures ending up | service has massive benefits |
| i. lovey-dovey | incriminating information |
| j. to prevent abuse, | in the wrong hands |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WHOOPS: Delete the five incorrect words from the ten in bold in each paragraph. In pairs / groups, think of replacement words.

Self-destructing mobile phone messages

A UK hi-tech company has come **down** with a "self-destruct" text messaging service, which should **prove** popular with anyone wishing to maintain utmost secrecy in the messages they send. Subscribers can safely send any mails **in** the knowledge that a downloaded **applicant** in their mobile phone, called StealthText, will destroy their secrets 40 seconds **before** recipients click on the link to read them. The software's developer Staellium UK hopes the service, **derided** from military technology, will **appeal** to business people dealing with sensitive information, love cheats or others who want to **alloy** fears about potentially incriminating information. A representative said the company wants to give senders control over the **messages** they send instead of relying on recipients to **delete** them.

The technology has all the **birthmarks** of a gadget from a 007 movie. Staellium CEO Carole Barnum commented the **fledgling** service has "massive benefits for people from all **walks** of life". She said: "Ultimately, no one will have to worry about their messages or pictures ending up in the wrong **feet** ever again." Staellium's website **hints** that soccer superstar David Beckham might need StealthText. His alleged lover Rebecca Loos conspicuously failed to delete his **lovey-dovey** mails last year, to his enormous embarrassment. StealthText is not, in fact, permanently **swiped**. To **comply** with U.K. legal requirements, the message stays on a secure server, even after the recipient deletes it. However, to **encourage** abuse, the recipient has no access to the server after the message **varnishes**.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Self-destructing mobile phone messages

A UK hi-tech company has _____ a "self-destruct" text messaging service, which should prove popular with anyone wishing to maintain _____ secrecy in the messages they send. Subscribers can safely send any mails in the _____ that a downloaded application in their mobile phone, called StealthText, will destroy their secrets 40 seconds after _____ click on the link to read them. The software's developer Staellium UK hopes the service, _____ from military technology, will appeal to business people dealing with sensitive information, love cheats or others who want to _____ fears about potentially incriminating information. A representative said the company wants to give senders control over the messages they send instead of _____ on recipients to delete them.

The technology has all the hallmarks of a _____ from a 007 movie. Staellium CEO Carole Barnum commented the _____ service has "massive benefits for people from all walks of life". She said: "Ultimately, no one will have to worry about their messages or pictures ending up in the _____ ever again." Staellium's website hints that soccer superstar David Beckham might need StealthText. His _____ lover Rebecca Loos conspicuously failed to delete his lovey-dovey mails last year, to his enormous embarrassment. StealthText is not, in fact, permanently _____. To comply with U.K. legal requirements, the message stays on a _____ server, even after the recipient deletes it. However, to prevent abuse, the recipient has no access to the server after the message _____.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'stealth' and 'text'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WHOOPS: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "SECRETS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about secrets and the things you write in mails.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| • come up with | • gadget |
| • knowledge | • walks |
| • click | • hands |
| • military | • lovey-dovey |
| • allay | • secure |
| • control | • vanishes |

STEALTH TEXT MAIL DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of the idea of "self-destructing" mail?
- c. Do you think you'll be subscribing to the service?
- d. How often do you send mail that you definitely would not want other people to read or that might end up in the wrong hands?
- e. Do you worry about privacy on the Internet?
- f. What do you think of the fact that the world's intelligence services can read all of your mail?
- g. How valuable a service do you think StealthText might be?
- h. Would you get angry about mails you receive vanishing after 40 seconds?
- i. Don't you think StealthText e-mail is not totally secure? People can still copy and paste and then save messages!
- j. Do you have any mails in your inbox that are potentially incriminating?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think all the technology we see in movies will eventually end up in our everyday lives?
- d. What other useful functions would you like to see with e-mail software?
- e. Do you think David Beckham will subscribe to StealthText?
- f. Would you trust your partner if they started sending you StealthText messages?
- g. Who do you think will benefit most from StealthText?
- h. Do you think this technology could be applied to prevent spam mail from reaching your in-box?
- i. Do you ever write or receive lovey-dovey mails?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

SECRET INFO: Talk to you partner(s) about the people you would and would not give information to and why?

INFO	PARENT	PARTNER	FRIEND	BOSS	COLLEAGUE
E-mail password					
ATM PIN number					
Biggest secret					
Most shameful experience					
Political allegiance					
Salary					
Details of past romances					
Other _____					

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on StealthText. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. PERFECT MAILER: Make a poster outlining the perfect e-mail system. Explain all of the useful functions. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all think of similar things? Do you all agree each other's functions might be useful?

4. MY E-MAIL HISTORY: Write an essay about your history using e-mail. Explain your first experiences, the things you like and the things that annoy you. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Do they have similar thoughts and experiences?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. F e. T f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| a. come up with | developed |
| b. utmost | maximum |
| c. recipients | receivers |
| d. derived | originated |
| e. allay | reduce |
| f. hallmarks | signs |
| g. fledgling | new |
| h. conspicuously | noticeably |
| i. comply with | abide by |
| j. vanishes | disappears |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| a. A UK hi-tech company has come | up with a "self-destruct" text |
| b. popular with anyone wishing | to maintain utmost secrecy |
| c. derived from | military technology |
| d. allay fears about potentially | incriminating information |
| e. give senders control | over the messages they send |
| f. the fledgling | service has massive benefits |
| g. people from all | walks of life |
| h. pictures ending up | in the wrong hands |
| i. lovey-dovey | mails |
| j. to prevent abuse, | the recipient has no access to the server |

WHOOPS:

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