**ACTIVITY: Communicating in science**

**Activity idea**

In this activity, students look at SMS text language to gain a deeper understanding of communicating in science.

By the end of this activity, students should be able to:

* write messages using SMS text language
* explain the usefulness of SMS text language in communication via mobile devices
* explain the similarities between SMS text language and the specialised vocabulary, numeric and symbolic systems and conventions of science communication.

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**Introduction/background**

Just as SMS texting has its own language, so does science. SMS text language is invaluable for sending messages on mobile phones. A whole specialised vocabulary has developed. This is a useful analogy to introduce the importance of and the reasons for the specialised language of science.

Scientific language is critical for science. Scientific knowledge is communicated through its text, its associated symbols, diagrams, graphs and equations. This specialised language of science makes it possible for scientists to communicate ideas and explanations in a way that would not be possible with everyday language.

This specialised language is particularly important in three areas:

* For collaboration among scientists – particularly since scientists generally work as part of a wider scientific community rather than the stereotypical view of a scientist working alone in a laboratory or in the field.
* In the presentation of science at conferences or in publications.
* To actually help a scientist shape their ideas. Language is needed to construct scientific understandings and explanations. Thinking cannot be clear until it has had expression. We must write or speak or act our thoughts or they will remain half-formed.

For more information on communicating in science, see the article [The ‘Communicating in science’ strand](http://link.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/419-the-communicating-in-science-strand).

Adapt this activity to best suit the age and dynamics of your students.

**What you need**

* An A4 size copy of the [Mobile phone](#Mobile) per pair of students
* A copy of [Some txt speak](#SMS) for each pair
* Large sheets of paper and pens for group brainstorming

**What to do**

1. As a class, establish parameters for this activity (e.g. no hurtful or offensive messages).
2. Have students pair up and give each pair a copy of the [Mobile phone](#Mobile) and [Some txt speak](#SMS).
3. Have each pair spend 5 minutes having a text-based conversation with their partner by taking turns to write messages on their phone. The students need to include as many abbreviations in their messages as possible.
4. Then in groups of 4–6, have students brainstorm as many scientific words or symbols as they can. Set a time limit.
5. Share back their best two with the class.
6. Lead a class discussion on the similarities and differences between text messages and scientific language. (Refer to [Introduction/background](#Introduction) for key ideas.)
7. As a class, pairs or individuals, construct a Venn diagram to show the differences and similarities.

**Extension ideas**

Discuss the confusion that can arise in communication when words in daily use have a different meaning than the same word used in a scientific context, for example, energy, work, force, hypothesis, theory, law and gas.

Have the students construct an on-going graffiti wall to which they can keep adding words they know or come across that have a different everyday and scientific meaning.

**Mobile phone**



**Some txt speak**

2NITE tonight

2MORO tomorrow

AYS are you serious

B4N bye for now

BCNU be seeing you

BF boyfriend

BFF best friends forever

BRB be right back

BTW by the way

COS because

FYI for your information

GF girlfriend

GR8 great

GTG got to go

IDK I don’t know

JK just kidding

L8R later

LOL laugh out loud

LTG like to go

LTK like to come

NP no problem, nosy parents

NVM never mind

OIC oh, I see

OXOX hugs and kisses

PLMK please let me know

ROFL rolling on floor laughing

TMB text me back

TTYL talk to you later

TYVM thank you very much

WWYC write when you can

WYWH wish you were here

Y2K you are too kind

ZZZ sleeping or bored

Source: [www.snaphow.com/list-of-sms-abbreviations-meaning-of-texting-words-symbols](http://www.snaphow.com/list-of-sms-abbreviations-meaning-of-texting-words-symbols)