

TEACHER'S NOTES

digital wildfire

www.macmillandictionary.com

**Overview:** Suggestions for using the **Macmillan Dictionary BuzzWord** article on *digital wildfire* and the associated worksheets.

**Total time for worksheet activities:** 45 minutes

**Suggested level:** Upper intermediate and above

1. If you intend to use the worksheet in class, go to the *BuzzWord* article at the web address given at the beginning of the worksheet and print off a copy of the article. Make a copy of the worksheet and the *BuzzWord* article for each student. You might find it helpful not to print a copy of the Key for each student but to check the answers as a class.
2. If the members of your class all have computer and internet access, ask them to open the worksheet before they go to the *BuzzWord* article link. Make sure they do not scroll down to the Key until they have completed each exercise.
3. Encourage students to read through the questions in Exercise 1 before they look at the *BuzzWord* article. Ask them to read through the whole article carefully and answer the questions, then compare their answers with a partner. Check the answers as a class.
4. When students have completed Exercise 2, ask them to correct the false statements. See the Key for the corrections.
5. Before completing Exercise 3, explain that, as mentioned in the Background section of the article, the expression *digital wildfire* is an example of the use of *metaphor* (= a type of comparison, a meaning that has developed from a literal meaning because it has some of the same features). The idea of 'fire' is a commonly used metaphor in English, and Exercise 3 gives a number of example expressions. Ask students to work in pairs to match the expressions to the definitions. Point out that two of the expressions can be found in the article. Give help where necessary; for example, less confident students could be allowed to look up the expressions in the [Macmillan Dictionary](#). As an extension activity, more capable students could be asked to write an example sentence for each expression.
6. Before completing Exercise 4, explain that individual words often have metaphorical meanings. Explore some examples with students, e.g. *explode* = 'express anger', *goal* = 'something you hope to achieve', *sweet* = 'nice') and ask students to suggest others. Exercise 4 highlights some adjectives connected with 'temperature'. Ask students to work individually to read the sentences and choose whether the sense is literal or metaphorical. When they are ready, ask students to compare answers with a partner.
7. Some of the first words students learn in English are parts of the body. Such words also often have metaphorical meanings connected with their literal sense, e.g. eyes can be used to watch so are often associated with monitoring things; the head contains the brain so is often associated with thinking. Exercise 5 highlights some idiomatic expressions containing words for parts of the body. All these expressions are quite common in informal or conversational English. Complete the exercise as a class activity. As each question is completed, ensure that students understand the meaning of the idiomatic expression highlighted.
8. As a wind-up activity, invite students to suggest other idiomatic expressions that they might know which contain the words in Exercise 5, or words for other parts of the body, e.g. *put your heads together* (= think about a problem with other people), *bite your tongue* (= stop yourself from saying something), *break someone's heart* (= make someone feel very sad).

Go to the **Macmillan Dictionary BuzzWord** article at:

<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/buzzword/entries/digital-wildfire.html>

## 1 Find the information

Read the *BuzzWord* article on the word *digital wildfire* and answer these questions.

1. What did thousands of Americans temporarily believe?
2. What effect did a digital wildfire have on oil prices in the summer of 2012?
3. Who is mainly responsible for avoiding digital wildfires?
4. What other expression is used with the same meaning as digital wildfire?
5. What two examples does the author give of things that can spread like wildfire?
6. In what century was the word *wildfire* first used in a figurative way?

## 2 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text?

1. Thousands of Americans mistakenly thought that a radio play was a news broadcast.
2. Digital wildfires don't spread very quickly.
3. The November 2012 allegations about a UK politician were false.
4. An acceptable legal restriction on online speech will be established in the near future.
5. Social media can never be used to deal with a digital wildfire.
6. The phrase *spread like wildfire* was used before the expression *digital wildfire*.

## 3 Fire metaphors

Match the expressions to the correct definitions.

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. burn the midnight oil     | a. to quickly affect or become known by more and more people                                      |
| 2. play with fire            | b. to have a bad experience when something goes wrong   |
| 3. fan the flames            | c. to make a feeling or belief stronger   |
| 4. burn your boats / bridges | d. to do something dangerous or risky that could cause problems                                   |
| 5. spread like wildfire      | e. to do something that makes it impossible for you to return to the situation you were in before |
| 6. get your fingers burnt    | f. to work until very late at night   |

WORKSHEET

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**4** Literal or metaphorical?

Read the sentences and look at the adjectives in bold. Is the meaning of the adjective literal (L) or metaphorical (M)?

1. We'd like to give everyone a **warm** welcome. L / M
2. An **icy** wind blew across the fields. L / M
3. Have you had a **hot** meal today? L / M
4. She looked at me with an **icy** stare and said 'Of course not!'. L / M
5. The beaches were lovely but the sea was a bit **chilly**. L / M
6. Jen's mother was a **cold** and unpleasant woman. L / M
7. My French teacher has a really **hot** temper. L / M
8. These flowers grow best in a **warm** climate. L / M
9. There was no electricity so I had to have a **cold** shower. L / M
10. The new proposals got a rather **chilly** reception. L / M

**5** Complete the email

Complete the email below with the words in the box. Be careful! There is one extra word.

arm      ears      eye      foot      hand      head      teeth

To: Jenny@email.com  
From: Alice@email.com  
Subject: Hello

Hi Jenny,

I just have to tell you what happened yesterday. Martin came into the office and asked me to give him a (1) \_\_\_\_\_ carrying some boxes. As we walked into another room, he told me to keep an (2) \_\_\_\_\_ on Amy because she looked unwell. At lunchtime, I asked her if she wanted to go out for a walk. At first she said no, but eventually I managed to twist her (3) \_\_\_\_\_. We sat down in the park and I asked her if she was feeling OK. She looked at me and said: 'I'm pregnant and I feel really sick, but I'll just have to grit my (4) \_\_\_\_\_ and carry on!'. I was so shocked, I couldn't believe my (5) \_\_\_\_\_. But then she smiled and said 'Only joking!'. As we walked back to the office she was laughing her (6) \_\_\_\_\_ off!

:-)

Alice

KEY

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KEY

**1 Find the information**

1. that the US had been temporarily invaded by extraterrestrials
2. It made them rise.
3. users and consumers of social media
4. digital misinformation
5. rumours and diseases
6. in the 13th century

**2 Comprehension check**

1. T
2. F. Digital wildfires can spread very quickly ('at breakneck speed').
3. T
4. F. It seems unlikely that an acceptable legal restriction will ever be arrived at.
5. F. Using social media is one of the most effective ways to deal with a digital wildfire.
6. T

**3 Fire metaphors**

1. f
2. d
3. c
4. e
5. a
6. b

**4 Literal or metaphorical?**

1. M
2. L
3. L
4. M
5. L
6. M
7. M
8. L
9. L
10. M

**5 Complete the email**

1. hand
2. eye
3. arm
4. teeth
5. ears
6. head