

Language for ...

social media

Age: Young adult / adult



Level: Upper-intermediate-advanced

Length: 45–60 minutes

Language Focus: key vocabulary associated with the internet and social media

Skills: speaking, reading

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student and one copy of the Social Media Slang page per student

Aims: to allow students to effectively understand and use common language for social media

What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

of the suggestions will be obvious (Facebook, Instagram, etc). However, there might be some discussion about what can be defined as 'social media'. The definition given includes the term 'online community', meaning that sites and apps that focus on one-to-one communication (Gmail, etc) would not generally be seen as social media.

- 1 Start the lesson by writing the term *social media* on the board. Ask students to talk in pairs and try to come up with a definition for this term. Then hand out the student worksheets and ask students to read the definition at the top of page 1. Next, ask students to work in pairs. Each pair must have a pen and paper ready. Read aloud the instructions on the worksheet for Exercise 1a. Allow the students 30 seconds to write the names of all the websites and apps they can think of. When the time is up, they must submit their suggestions to a different pair of students. Go through this part as a class, writing up the names on the board and seeing which pair has come up with the most. Most
- 2 Ask students to discuss the questions in Exercise 1b. Allow them a few minutes to do this. Monitor and give some feedback, focusing on good language which they have used related to the internet and online communication.
- 3 Again in pairs, ask students to complete Exercise 1c. Encourage discussion (in English) between students as they do this. Then elicit the correct answers.
- 4 Tell the students that they are going to read four short texts in which people talk about social media. Refer them to the question in Exercise 2a. Tell them that they have about a minute to scan the four texts and decide the answer. Once you have elicited the answer, refer them to Exercise 2b. Ask them to read the texts again, this time in more detail, and to find the answers. Allow a few minutes for this. Students should first compare their answers in pairs and then all answers should be checked as a class.
- 5 Ask students to work independently to complete Exercise 3a. Remind them to refer back to the previous four texts to see these words in context. Ask them to compare answers in pairs, then elicit the correct answers.
- 6 Read aloud the instructions on the worksheet for Exercise 3b, emphasizing that some (but not all) the verbs will need to be converted into their past form. Allow students a few minutes to complete

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this task individually, monitoring them as they do so and helping weaker students. Ask them to compare answers in pairs, then elicit the correct answers. As a conclusion to this activity, you may wish to draw attention to the verbs *friend*, *troll*, *trend*. Highlight that these words were originally nouns but are used as verbs when talking about online communication. Ask students if they can suggest any other nouns which have come to be used as verbs (e.g. *to blog*, *to bookmark*, *to Facebook somebody*, *to Skype somebody*, etc).

- 7 Ask students to complete Exercise 3c in pairs. Encourage them to discuss their logic behind choosing certain answers. Finally, check the answers as a class. Allow the class to discuss why certain answers are correct (e.g. in sentence 3, the verb *friend* implies that there is a personal connection between the two people on social media, whereas the verb *follow* is more common when talking about celebrities or brands).
- 8 Refer students to Exercise 4a and ask them to discuss the questions in pairs. Remind them that they should try to incorporate new language from this lesson into their conversations. Monitor the class as they talk, making some notes on good language and frequent errors. Finally, provide feedback to the class as a whole.
- 9 Refer students to Exercise 4b and read aloud the worksheet instructions to the task. Allow students a minute or so to discuss their answers to the initial two questions. Before talking about the answers as a class, try to elicit the meaning of the acronyms *LOL* and *NSFW* (*Laugh Out Loud* and *Not Safe For Work*). Then elicit the correct answers to the two questions.
- 10 Ask students if they can suggest any other acronyms which are common on social media. If so, write some of these on the board. Tell them that in this final task, Exercise 4c, they are going to try to understand internet slang (both acronyms and common words). Tell them that this is a speaking activity, where they need to guess possible meanings from context. Point out that at the end of this task you will provide them with a photocopy with definitions of the slang terms (so they don't need to write during this task). Allow the students a few minutes to work in pairs, reading the four chats and trying to guess the correct answer to each subsequent question. Once they have done this, ask students for their interpretations of certain chats, but without telling them if they have guessed correctly or not. Hand out the **Social Media Slang** page and ask students to use the definitions to decide whether they have guessed correctly. Finally, elicit the correct answers to the four questions.
- 11 If there is more time, perhaps write some other internet slang terms on the board and ask students to discuss the meaning. Some suggestions:
 - BFF* = *Best Friends Forever* (perhaps you would use this term when commenting on a photo of yourself with a good friend)
 - BTW* = *By The Way* (an expression which people use to add some extra information at the end of a conversation)
 - I feel you* = an expression which means 'I agree' or 'I understand' but in a very deep sense
 - Yas!* = a very excited, emphatic way of saying 'yes' (to express further excitement, it's common to repeat letters, e.g. 'Yaaaaassss!!!')

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KEY:

- 1a** students' own answers
- 1b** students' own answers
- 1c**
- Instagram
 - Facebook
 - Vkontakte
 - LinkedIn
 - QZone
 - Twitter
- 2a** Donna and Jeff express generally positive ideas about social media (Maya used to enjoy social media but these days she doesn't).

2b

- *Why does Donna want people to write #healthyhearts on their social media?*
She wants her charity's events to get as much publicity as possible so if people write #healthyhearts, there is more chance that other internet users will see it.
- *In Maya's opinion, what is the main way that social media has changed?*
She feels that years ago, social media was more personalised and a good way of interacting with family and friends. These days she finds it very commercial and anonymous.
- *What happened to Jeff after he mentioned Chelsea Clinton on Twitter?*
After Jeff's initial tweet, Chelsea Clinton shared it on Twitter. This meant that Jeff's tweet was seen by many people, some of whom gave online reactions to it.
- *How did Phil solve his problem with Simon?*
After Simon's disrespectful behaviour, Phil instructed the website not to allow Simon to write any more messages to him. Phil also contacted the website to inform them that Simon had broken their rules.

3a

Nouns from the text	Definition
1. a hashtag (text: Donna)	(3) A sentence that a person writes publicly on Facebook (this sentence is not a response to a different person).
2. a newsfeed (text: Maya)	(4) An eye-catching or shocking headline/photo/video with the objective of attracting people to click on a link.
3. a status update (text: Maya)	(2) Usually the initial page that you see on a social network, showing you videos, photos, etc from the people who you follow.
4. clickbait (text: Maya)	(6) A person's name on Twitter, which comes after an @ sign (e.g. @chelseaclinton). Using this allows you to publicly mention a person.
5. a like (text: Maya)	(1) A word or phrase that comes after a # sign to identify a certain topic on social media.
6. a handle (text: Jeff)	(7) A sequence of comments which appear below an initial comment or post. These comments are reactions to the initial post.
7. a thread (text: Jeff)	(5) An action in which a person reacts to an item on social media by clicking an icon to show that they like this item.

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- 3b**
1. follow
 2. friended
 3. trolled
 4. go viral
 5. shared
 6. trended / was trending
 7. blocked
 8. posted
 9. DM (Note: *DM = to send a direct message*. To express the same idea, it is also possible to say *PM*, meaning to send a personal message.)
 10. retweeted
- 3c**
1. hashtag
 2. likes
 3. followed
 4. DM
 5. tag
 6. trend
 7. newsfeed
 8. trolled
- 4a** students' own answers
- 4b**
- *What type of video is it?*
Funny (The comment includes the term *LOL*. This means 'Laugh Out Loud' and is commonly used to suggest that something is very funny.)
 - *Where would be the best place to watch the video?*
At home (Your friend has included the term *NSFW*. This means 'Not Safe For Work'. It is commonly used to suggest that a video or image may be rude or offensive to some people, so it is not ideal to look at if you are at work or in a public place.)
- 4c**
1. No. Tim thinks that Beyoncé's performance was wonderful but Jess was not completely impressed by it.
 2. No. Alex feels a little shocked by it and Clare thinks that it makes him less attractive.
 3. Yes. Maggie had been feeling sad that she was going to miss lunch. When Nina suggests that she cancel her dentist appointment, Maggie admits that perhaps it would be a good idea to seize the moment.
 4. Yes. Terry thinks that she seems to be clever and in touch with everyday people. Emma agrees and adds that Meghan is a role model for her.
- 4d** See the 'Social Media Slang' worksheet