

How to hide a message

Investigating - Decoding and analysing information

Purpose

To develop skills in observation, interpreting information and visualisation.

Age range (years)



Subjects

Art and Design,
History, ICT,
Mathematics



Background

Steganography is the art of hiding a message in something else. This contrasts with cryptography where the *existence* of a message is not hidden but it cannot be read without being decoded.

This activity introduces students to steganography by asking them to find and create hidden messages.

Steps

1. Show students the email transcript on page 2. This can be printed out or projected.
2. Can they find a hidden message?
3. The solution is on page 3:
Taking the first and last letter from each line of the main text reveals the letters:
IwILLmeetyouatthestatIon
“I will meet you at the station”
4. Now ask students to devise their own way of hiding text (e.g. making the hidden message up out of the first letter after every full stop, or the first letter of every word) and to use that method for concealing a message to a classmate. Explain that they can hide messages within recipes, song lyrics, text

messages etc. Remind students to keep their messages short!

5. Once students have swapped their hidden messages, ask:
 - Did anyone uncover a hidden message?
 - Who had the most inventive method of hiding their message?

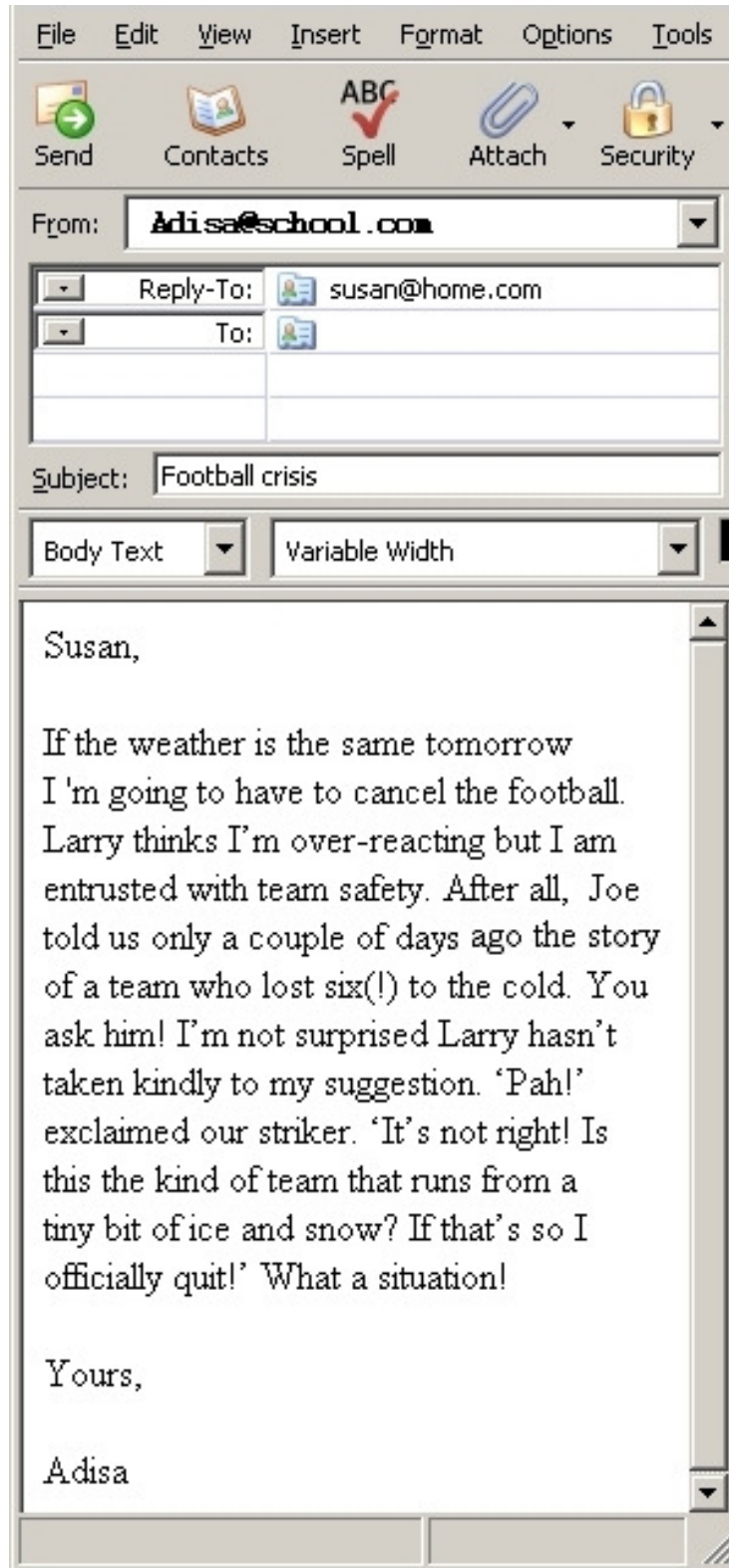
Extension

Get students to explore other approaches to steganography.

- For younger students the invisible ink activity in this resource pack may be useful.
- Older students could research how steganography can be used to hide messages in computer files, images and audio content.

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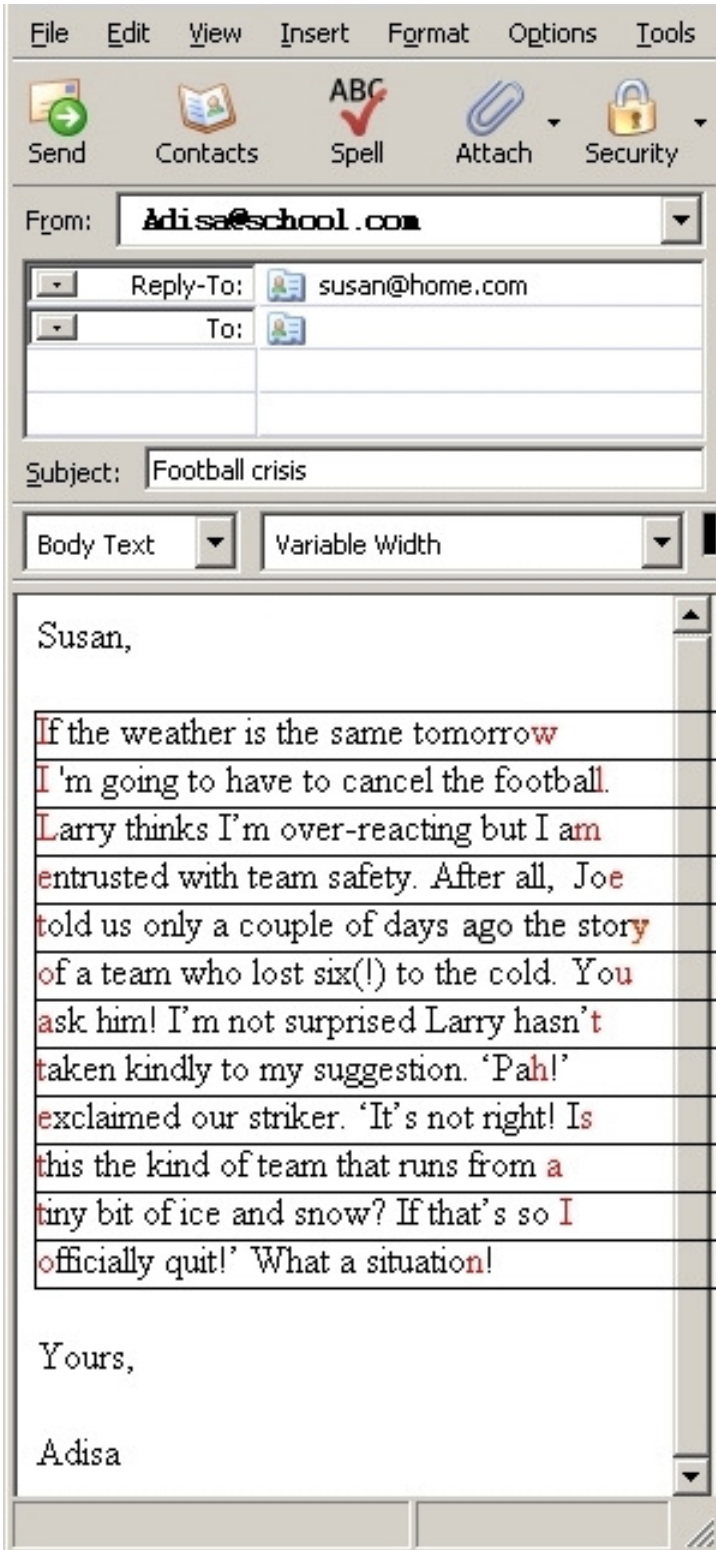
Can you find the hidden message?



SPYING

How to hide a message

Message revealed



I will meet you
 at the
 station