

**Collaborative Task:
Just Another Day at the Office**

At a glance

Level: ISE II

Focus: Collaborative task

Aims: To develop speaking skills by responding to prompts related to the workplace

Objectives: To take initiative in conversation by eliciting further information, to express agreement and disagreement in response to prompts and to give advice in response to prompts

Topic: Personal values and ideals and the world of work

Language functions: Expressing agreement and disagreement, giving advice and eliciting further information

Grammar: Modal verbs

Lexis: Work, phrases to express agreement and disagreement, elicit further information and give advice

Materials needed: Whiteboard, one student worksheet per student, pens, and prompt cards

Timing: Approximately 75 minutes

Procedure

Preparation

1. Print one student worksheet per student.
2. Cut up the prompt cards. Ensure you have at least one prompt card for each student. You will need to duplicate cards if you teach a group larger than twelve students.

In class

1. Explain to the class that they will be doing a speaking activity which will help them to prepare for the Collaborative task in the ISE II Speaking & Listening exam.
2. Tell the students that the topic of today's lesson is 'work'. Write the following two statements on the board.
 1. *I really don't like working nine to five.*

2. *I don't think requiring people to work nine to five is productive.*

Elicit from the students which statement is more an opinion and which one is a dilemma. Explain to the students that in the Collaborative task of the exam the examiner reads a prompt that expresses an opinion or a dilemma and the candidate needs to find out more information and keep the conversation going for four minutes.

3. Write on the board: *'the five questions of a good journalist'* and elicit what they may be.

Answer key:

Who? What? Where? Why? How?

4. Write the following prompt on the whiteboard:

I love working with my colleagues but dealing with the customers I find a lot harder.

Read the prompt out loud. Tell the students to use the five questions of a good journalist to ask **you** what may have happened. Encourage the students to ask as many questions as possible until the background of the story is clear.

5. Write *'background story'* on the whiteboard and tell the students that the background story is what may have happened to the speaker before the dilemma occurred or before the speaker arrived at his/her opinion. Tell the students that in this part of the ISE Speaking & Listening exam, they need to find out what the background story is by asking the examiner questions.
6. Hand out the student worksheet. Tell the students that they are going to complete Task A. Elicit the meaning of *'deadline'* and *'divide'*. Ask the students, in pairs, to come up with a background story for each prompt. Tell them that they can use the five questions of a good journalist for this. Monitor and assist if necessary.
7. Put the students in new pairs. Tell them to take turns reading out a prompt. The other student asks questions until the full background story is clear. Carry out feedback as a group.
8. Ask the students to carry out Task B. Elicit the meaning of *'take criticism'*. Tell students to work alone this time and ask them to write one sentence in response to each opinion in which they either agree or disagree with the opinion. Monitor and correct errors. After the students have finished, ask students to read out the responses and ask other students which prompt it is a response to. Write useful phrases used for agreeing and disagreeing on the board. For example:

In my opinion,...

In my view,...

From my point-of-view,...

I do not totally agree with this because...

I see what you mean but I think that...

I see where you are coming from, but to be honest I don't think...

9. Elicit from the students different ways to give advice and write them on the board. For example:

If I were you,...

You should,...

You shouldn't...

You'd better...

You ought to...

Why don't you...

10. Tell the students to carry out Task C. Ask the students to work in pairs and discuss pieces of advice they could give for each dilemma. Monitor and assist if necessary. Carry out feedback as a group.

11. Write the following words and phrases on the whiteboard and ask students to discuss their meaning in pairs:

gossip, office hours, messy, appreciate

Carry out feedback in open-class.

12. Tell the students that these words are used in the prompts. Give each student one prompt card. Tell the students that they have one minute to think of a background story.

13. Ask all of the students to stand up and stand in two lines facing each other (eight students on each side for example or ten students on each side). Ask the students in the first line to read out their prompt to their partner. Tell the other students that they need to ask questions to find out more information, give advice and agree or disagree.

14. After a few minutes, ask the students in the second line to move one spot. The last student in the row moves to the first spot (similar to a conveyor belt). Now, tell the students in the second line to read out their prompt and their new partner responds. Repeat this until everyone has worked with at least four different partners.

15. Monitor and collect errors in a notebook for group error correction later.

16. Carry out group feedback and ask two or three students to read out loud a prompt and elicit responses from the class. Tell the students

how well they have completed the task. Tell them what they are doing well and what they still need to improve on.

17. Write out on the board a number of the incorrect sentences that you heard. Ask the students to discuss the errors with their partner and then carry out feedback in open-class.
18. Tell the students they can prepare for this part of the ISE Speaking & Listening exam by practising with another student. Tell them to alternate the examiner role after four minutes. Tell them to select in advance at least three phrases they are planning to use in the conversation.

Extension activity

Ask the students to write their own work-related prompt and think of a background story. Ask them to work with a partner. One student reads out the prompt and the other student responds.

Further support activity

Ask weaker students to use the same prompt for Tasks A-C.

After class

Ask the students to swap their prompt and ask them to think of a background story, advice and reasons to agree or disagree with the prompt. Ask the students to report back in the next class.

Student Worksheet

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Task A

Work with a partner and come up with a background story for each prompt. Use the questions: Who? What? Where? Why and How? to guide you.

1. I've built a successful career without ever having gone to university. I believe in the university of life.
2. I prefer working to strict deadlines.
3. There is a big divide between the different departments in our office.

Task B

Read the opinions and write a reply in which you either agree or disagree.

1. Young people nowadays can't take criticism.
2. After a certain age, it is just too difficult to learn a new skill.

Task C

Talk to your partner. What advice could you give to someone facing the following dilemmas?

1. I don't think that working in an office really suits me.
2. I'm thinking of looking for a new job.
3. I think my new colleague is more talented than me. My manager also seems to like him more than me.

PROMPT CARDS

I guess I'm good at generating ideas but less at executing them. Still, what I'm doing all day is making other people's ideas work.

I'm often so jealous of the people I'm managing. They just have a lot less responsibility.

I think that young people when they leave university are not prepared for the workplace.

There is a lot of gossip in our office.

The young people that joined our company recently don't seem to be able to take any criticism.

I do my best work in the morning. After lunch I'm not productive anymore.

My boss often calls me at the weekend or after office hours. A lot of extra work for which I'm not getting paid.

I have a manager who leaves me alone all the time. I actually like to be managed. I need structure in order to perform.

Once in a while I need to refocus and then just check my personal emails or call a friend to chat. I've been told that I can't do that during office hours.

I leave everything to the last minute. I only seem to be able to work under pressure.

I can't stand working on a messy desk, but my colleague sitting next to me obviously is of a different opinion.

My manager doesn't seem to appreciate it when I give her my opinion on her performance.