

Activity 6: Changing work patterns (CEFR C1)

Level:

CEFR C1

Time:

45minutes

Resources:

- ✓ Handout
- ✓ Audio scripts

Aims:

- ✓ To develop skills and knowledge in speaking and listening at Level 2
- ✓ To explore vocabulary connected to L2 topics
- ✓ To develop students' ability to take part in a discussion in the context of the impact of changing work patterns on the individual and society as a whole
- ✓ To practise giving views and opinions, responding to views and opinions, asking for confirmation, encouraging others to talk and interrupting

Exam task focus: Component 2 Task 4

Procedure:

Changing work patterns

1. Ask students (SS) to put up their hand if they have ever worked. Then asked them to put up their hand if they have worked since they've been in the UK. Tell them they are going to talk about certain aspects of working. Put them in small groups to do this. Encourage them to exchange views on their experiences. Before they do the activity, focus on the emboldened vocabulary that is noted in the glossary. Conduct whole class feedback focusing in particular on anyone's experience of working from home. In particular focus on one or two of the positive and negative aspects of working from home. Handout Activity 1
2. Tell SS that they are going to hear 2 people talking about their experiences of working from home during the pandemic. Introduce the characters and explain that whilst Nora has had a basically positive experience, Vinny has had the opposite. Ask students to predict what Nora and Vinny might say about their experience. Do an example using the first prompt e.g. working hours. Put students into pairs to complete the task. Conduct whole class feedback briefly to get a few ideas. Handout Activity 2 a and b
3. Tell SS that you are going to read their experiences and they should tick off anything Nora and Vinny say on their list. Conduct whole class feedback.
4. Put SS into small groups of 2 or 3 and tell some of them to look at A and others to look at B. The purpose of the activity is to brainstorm ideas for the discussion in Activity 3. Don't conduct feedback because they can use the ideas they have gathered in the discussion and it is more interesting if they haven't already been discussed.

Suggested answers:

A

- cheaper because they need less office space/ no office space, don't need to buy office supplies etc
- employers often work longer hours
- can keep tabs on their employees' computer use
- doesn't matter where people live i.e. time zones or geographical area so they can employ people from anywhere in the world
- people less likely to waste time chatting to each other

B

- death of businesses in the area where businesses are located e.g. shops, cafes, restaurants
- a lot of empty buildings which may never be filled again
- decline of big city centres and a move to more localised living
- deteriorating mental health because people don't get a change of scenery and are missing out on social interaction
- no distinction between homelife and worklife
- feelings of isolation

5. Tell SS that they are going to have a discussion about changing work patterns. Before they do, ask them to read through the task and make a few notes of what they might want to say. Focus attention on the language in the Language Box. Clarify this by focusing on use, pronunciation and form. Ensure there is some focus on register and when it is appropriate to interrupt. Focus attention on the response to being interrupted i.e. sure, no problem etc but also the fact that the response to Do /Would you mind is 'no, (not at all)'. Explain that each student must interrupt and bring someone into the conversation at least once during the discussion.
6. Put SS into pairs making sure that there is one person from Group A and one from Group B from Activity 2c. Highlight the fact that there are two parts to the task. Firstly, they should discuss the statement and to what extent they agree or disagree but they should also ensure they have enough time to think of possible solutions.
7. Tell them they have 10 minutes to complete the discussion Encourage them to use the language in the Language Box. Monitor whilst they are doing the activity (but don't intervene) and take notes for some delayed feedback.
8. Conduct whole class feedback on the content of the discussion -. Follow this with some delayed feedback on language you overheard.
9. Ask SS to look at the questions reflecting on their contributions to the discussion and ask them what they feel they need further practice in.
10. Focus SS attention on the exam box at the bottom of the handout to explain how the lesson has helped to prepare them for Task 4 of the Trinity Level 2 Skills for Life Speaking exam. Explain that in the actual exam the discussion will only be with one other person and it will last 15 minutes.

Handout
Activity 3
a, b and c

Listening Scripts

Nora

I thought I'd hate working from home but I have surprised myself and am really enjoying it. I'm actually working fewer hours than when I used to go into the office because I don't have constant interruptions. I choose when I speak to people. So, I'm a lot more productive in less time. This is probably helped by the fact that I used to spend ages sitting in traffic jams to get to work. Now I have no commute and of course I'm doing my bit for the environment by not driving every day. Amazingly I have more free time to do other things such as go out for long walks in my local area. That's so much better for my mental health than sitting in a stuffy office all day.

I'm saving money too – no more visits to the coffee shop or take away lunches. I make everything at home; it's much cheaper. But I am aware that I live on my own so I have plenty of space and I do worry that I am getting too used to my own company. I do miss just sitting down with people for a nice long face to face chat. It's just not the same on a computer screen.

Vinny

Working from home has been a total nightmare for me. It's been really bad for my physical and mental health. I spend hours staring at a screen and am getting terrible headaches. I hate being in the same place hour after hour day after day.

I live in a small flat with my wife and two children. My son goes to school or did before the pandemic and my daughter used to go to a child minder but now they are both at home and need to be entertained. I need space and a laptop to work so does my wife and my son needs one to do his schoolwork. We only have one laptop between us so have to take it in turns to use it on the kitchen table. My wife and I have had to draw up a rota of who is working and who is looking after the children so we have no breathing space for ourselves. And we have ended up working all sort of strange hours. I'm often working until midnight to fit everything in. My manager seems to think I should be available 24:7! I've lost my work:life balance. it's all work!

I used to look forward to my commute to work on the train. It was my time and I could read, listen to music or even play games on my phone. I just loved getting out of the house. I badly miss the face to face interaction with my colleagues and the informal discussions we used to have which often ended up with some great ideas. Now every conversation has to be planned. It's so unnatural. I just wish it would all end and I could go back to my 9-5 routine but I wonder whether it'll ever be the same again!

Handout Activity 6: Changing work patterns

Activity 1: Your experience of work



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Work in small groups. Find out who has had any of the work-related experiences listed below. How do / did they feel about their experience?

- being on a **zero hours contract**
- having a **commute** that's over an hour
- working from home 100% of the time
- working 9-5 rather than on a flexible work schedule
- doing a job that can't be done from home
- expected to be **contactable 24:7**

Glossary

zero hours contract = a work agreement in which an employer doesn't have to give the employees fixed working hours and can change the number of hours worked. On a zero hours contract, the employer does not need to offer any hours if they don't have any to offer

a commute = a regular journey between work and home

contactable 24:7 = able to be contacted with usually by email or phone 24 hrs a day i.e. all the time

Activity 2: Working from home

You are going to listen to two people describing their recent experiences of working from home during the Covid 19 pandemic. *Nora*, who lives on her own, has basically found the experience positive. *Vinny*, who is married with 2 children, has had a mainly negative experience.

a What do you think they will say? Write some notes in the table below.

Think about:

- working hours
- travelling to work
- socialising
- space / equipment
- mental health
- anything else

Nora 	Vinny 

b Listen to their stories. Tick any of things you predicted they might say as you hear them.

c Work in 2 groups.

<p>A Make a list of reasons why, in the future, companies might want their employees to continue working from home.</p>	<p>B Make a list of possible positive and negative impact on the economy of people working mainly from home.</p>
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Activity 3: Discussion

a Read the task below. Work in pairs to discuss the statement. One in the pair should be from Activity 2c Group A, and one should be from Activity 2c Group B.

Recent changes to working patterns resulting in a lot more people working from home, is storing up problems for the future both for individuals and society as a whole. Discuss the extent to which you agree with this statement and suggest solutions to any problems you see.

You must ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to speak. In addition to giving your own views, encourage other people in the group to say what they think. Practise interrupting people politely and asking for confirmation/clarification on the points they make.

B Reflection on your performance in the discussion.

- What do you think you did well in the discussion?
- What do you need to get better at? Giving your own opinion, interrupting, confirming what someone else has said, agreeing or disagreeing with other people in the group?
- How can you improve your performance?

Language Box: Interrupting, encouraging other people to talk and asking for confirmation

Interrupting (semi-formal)

Sorry to interrupt but can I just ask / add something?

Do / would you mind if I add something here?

Interrupting (informal)

Can I say something?

Can I just butt in for a minute?

Could I just jump in there?

Do you mind if I chip in here?

Encouraging people to talk

XXX, what do you think?

XXX, have you got any thoughts on this?

XXX, can you add anything more to the discussion?

Asking for confirmation

Do you mean ...?

Do you really believe / think ...?

Could I just check something you said?

You seem to be suggesting that ...? I'm not sure I agree with that

Exam Hint

In task 4 of the Level 2 Skills for Life exam, you will take part in a discussion with another person. You will need to demonstrate that you are able to contribute constructively to a discussion.

You will also need to demonstrate that you can understand and use specific communicative functions such as *giving views and opinions, responding to views and opinions, asking for confirmation and interrupting*. You have practised doing this in this lesson.