

## On the road again

**Level:** Pre-intermediate +

**Time:** 90 minutes +

**Summary:** This lesson is about business trips. In this lesson, students:

1. discuss their experience of going away for business;
2. study a text that focuses on the impact of business trips on family life;
3. look at some common blended words;
4. discuss companies' responsibilities to travelling employees;
5. make a list of useful tips for business travellers.

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student; one copy of the vocabulary record per student; one copy of the extra reading text per student (optional)

**Group size:** Any

**Note:** This lesson plan is for both pre-experience and in-work business students based on an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 6/2015.

### Warmer

These two questions introduce the topic of travel for business purposes. Ask for further information if you feel it is appropriate or you notice that the students are willing to talk about their business trips.

### Key words

Students read the definitions and find the key words in the article. After you have checked the answers, they should read the article again to see how the words are used in context. Note that the definitions for the words are given in the order the words appear in the article.

**Key:**

1. *absence*
2. *neglecting*
3. *escape*
4. *infidelity*
5. *predisposition*

6. *regrets*
7. *blended*
8. *crops up*
9. *sneak off*
10. *jet lag*
11. *re-entry*
12. *sluggish*

### Expressions

Students match the expressions from the article with the best meaning and, then, find them in the article to read them in context.

**Key:**

1. *g*; 2. *f*; 3. *i*; 4. *j*; 5. *c*; 6. *b*; 7. *a*; 8. *d*; 9. *h*; 10. *e*

### Understanding the article

Students read the statements and decide whether they are true or false according to the article. They should correct any that are false.

**Key:**

1. *T*
2. *T*
3. *T*
4. *F* – *She suggests a re-entry day, meaning that the business traveller should keep the first day back at work simple and without appointments or meetings.*
5. *F* – *Business travel doesn't cause infidelity. Instead, it provides an opportunity to do what an individual would most likely do anyway.*
6. *F* – *There are many advantages of face-to-face meetings. For example, they allow the business person to form an impression of their business partner's situation.*
7. *T*
8. *F* – *Although many people are doing this (combining business and pleasure), it does have its disadvantages.*

### Blended words

Without referring back to the article, students should remember or work out which two words are combined to make up the word *bleisure*.

Then, ask students to work out which two words make up each blended word in activity b. Finally, ask them if they know of any more blended words, also known as portmanteau words.

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**Extension:** If your students are feeling creative, get them to make up new blended words and to say when and how they would be useful.

**Key:**

a. *business + leisure*

b.

*breakfast + lunch*

*motor + hotel*

*information + commercial*

*educational + entertainment*



**TEACHING TIP:**

**Blended or portmanteau words**

Read about portmanteau words on the Macmillan English dictionary blog.

- [www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/lesser-spotted-portmanteau-words](http://www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/lesser-spotted-portmanteau-words)
- [www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/your-favourite-portmanteau-words](http://www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/your-favourite-portmanteau-words)
- [www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/whats-your-favourite-alice-portmanteau](http://www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/whats-your-favourite-alice-portmanteau)

### Discussion

Students discuss the questions related to the topic of the article, either as a whole class or in groups. If this is done in groups, follow the discussions up with a whole-class feedback session.

### Giving advice

Divide the four points up between pairs or small groups of students. Tell them to discuss what advice they would give to inexperienced business travellers and to make a list of helpful tips, based on their own experience if possible, which they should then present to the rest of the class. You may wish, if you have time, to direct them to the extra reading section for inspiration – an interview with Carolyn Pearson, the founder of an online networking website for women travellers, who gives her tips for staying safe while travelling alone.

### Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all of the new and useful vocabulary they have learnt during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

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### 1 Warmer

- How often do you or your partner go on business trips or stay away overnight because of work?
- Have you ever accompanied your partner on a business trip or has your partner ever accompanied you?

### 2 Key words

Read the definitions. Then, find the key words in the article. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. a period of time when someone is not where they should be or where they usually are (para 1)
2. not looking after someone or spending enough time with them (para 2)
3. a way of helping yourself to stop thinking about an unpleasant situation that you are in (para 4)
4. a situation in which someone is unfaithful to their husband, wife or partner (para 6)
5. the fact that someone is likely to behave in a particular way (para 6)
6. feels sorry or sad about something that he or she has done (para 7)
7. combined with other things in an effective way (para 11)
8. happens suddenly or unexpectedly (two words, para 12)
9. leave quietly without being seen or heard (two words, para 13)
10. the feeling of being very tired and sometimes confused because you have travelled quickly on a plane across parts of the world where the time is different (two words, para 16)
11. a situation in which someone returns to something such as a place or activity (para 16)
12. not performing or reacting as well as usual (para 17)

### 3 Expressions

Match the expressions from the article with their meanings. Find them in the article to read them in context.

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. on the road                  | a. make your own opinion of something   |
| 2. occupy your attention        | b. fail, cease to exist, not be there anymore   |
| 3. parallel universe            | c. everybody and everything in general  |
| 4. per se                       | d. people who you care about very much, especially members of your family   |
| 5. the world at large           | e. being so close to each other that you feel uncomfortable   |
| 6. disappear down a plughole    | f. is in your thoughts  |
| 7. form an impression           | g. travelling   |
| 8. loved ones                   | h. getting in each other's way as there's not enough room for both of you   |
| 9. walking on each other's feet | i. another reality, happening at the same time but not connected with your own life                               |
| 10. invading each other's space | j. considered by itself: used for emphasizing that you are not considering something in relation to anything else |

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### On the road again

by Margaret Davis



**The worries associated with leaving your family at home will be familiar to anyone who has to travel often for business. But Margaret Davis reassures us that, despite frequent business trips, it is possible to remain fair to your family and, in particular, your children.**

- 1 When was the last time you went on a business trip without worrying about what was going on at home in your absence? Perhaps the thought of children missing dental appointments, partners not eating properly or the dog chewing the legs off the coffee table occupies more of your attention on the road than you'd like to admit. Or perhaps you feel guilty because, in fact, you're glad to leave kids, spouse and pets behind to have a bit of time for yourself.
- 2 For many people, business travel causes feelings of anxiety, guilt and loneliness. Parents may be away from home when the baby takes its first steps; couples may feel stressed, not only during the time they're apart but, also, when they're back together again; children and spouse may feel that the travelling parent or partner is neglecting them.
- 3 Meanwhile, high expectations of a joyful reunion with children or a romantic evening with the partner disappear when, after a few moments of excitement, the children return to their computer games or the partner is exhausted after having coped alone with family demands. The whole family may have got used to a routine that does not include the travelling member and may find it difficult to get used to having the traveller back.
- 4 **Frequent travellers develop** their own methods of dealing with being away from home. "I miss my children terribly but, at the same time, my way of coping is to pretend almost that they are not there," a business traveller and mother of three told the *Financial Times*. "It's like they are living in a parallel universe but not one that I'm in at the moment." The same woman notes that, because her husband recently lost his job, business travel is also an escape. "When things are so awful, it is nice to be on another continent and to pretend that none of this is happening. It's like your own little world that belongs to you, where you're not a mother and you are not necessarily an employee; you're just this person that goes and sees people."

**And, while they're out** seeing people, business travellers are likely to behave badly – or at least that's what the people back home seem to think. A 2012 study by On24, a webcasting company, found that many people believe that business travellers drink too much and are more likely to have affairs than their stay-at-home colleagues.

But is it true? Psychologist Dr Michael Santo told *Forbes* that "business travel doesn't cause infidelity per se but, instead, the travel itself provides an opportunity to do what there was a predisposition to already do". Business travellers should think about the consequences of their actions, Santo warns. "Do you want to be known as the cheater or the drinker? It's pretty clear that what happens on the road doesn't stay on the road. Often the consequences of actions taken while on a business trip may directly impact your ability to move ahead within your job back home."

London child psychoanalyst Peter Fonagy told the *Financial Times* that he regrets the amount of time he spent travelling while his children were growing up. "If you ask me now if this was the best way to bring up a family, I would say no. I might have pretended that it was all to do with supporting the family, when it actually was much more to do with my career."

Fonagy adds: "My suspicion is that a lot of men are a little bit like me. We persuade ourselves that we are not necessary because our wives are so wonderful and better without us. And we convince ourselves that what we are doing for the family and the world at large is just so important that, without that degree of person-to-person contact, the world as we know it would disappear down a plughole."

If you want your business trips to be successful, you have to be convinced that they are a valuable use of your time. If you have doubts – and flexibility – you might want instead to consider video technology such as Skype or holding conference calls to discuss business. Still, there are many advantages to face-to-face meetings, where you can form an impression of your business partners' situation. Getting together outside the workplace over a meal can also strengthen a business relationship.

Depending on your job, business travel may be essential. But, thanks to technology, staying in touch with loved ones is easier than ever before. Still, a growing number

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of business people are combining business with pleasure by taking their families with them to locations that have sightseeing potential.

- 11** The trend, known as blended travel, or “bleisure” (a combination of “business” and “leisure”), often involves adding a day or two at the beginning or end of a trip for sightseeing. Major hotels are providing incentives to encourage business travellers to stay into the weekend.
- 12** **While this gives families** more time together, it does have disadvantages, according to Janine Truitt, owner of the talent management firm Talent Think Innovations. “Dedicating specific time for leisure is difficult when on business because a party or some unique situation usually crops up, leaving you to choose between business and leisure,” Truitt told *Entrepreneur* magazine.
- 13** If taking the children along is not an option, there are ways of making the separation less stressful. Since small children have trouble understanding the concept of time, it is better not to tell them of your planned trip more than a few days beforehand, according to psychologist Stephanie Mihalas. Otherwise, they will be likely to worry, Mihalas told *Parents* magazine. When the time comes to say goodbye, don’t just sneak off, she advises. At the same time, avoid long departures, which are hard on everyone. Kiss the child goodbye and say something like, “I love you. I can’t wait to see you when I come back but I know you’re going to have a good time.” Then, go.
- 14** It’s important to reassure children that the absent parent still cares, says child psychotherapist Barbara Segal.

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“The child may wonder, ‘Does he care about me? Has he forgotten me? Is he doing something much nicer away from me?’” Segal says. Back home, the parent or caregiver left behind should try to keep the routine as normal as possible, with regular meals and bedtimes.

Be aware that it can take time to get used to being together when a partner returns from an extended business trip. Tim Estes of Miami says that, after his wife, Cali, comes back from travelling, it takes several days before they feel comfortable. “You’re walking on each other’s feet and invading each other’s space,” Estes told *Entrepreneur* magazine. “It takes a little bit of getting used to.”

**Travelling through different** time zones is especially tiring and jet lag is unlikely to improve the way you deal with your family or your efficiency at work when you get back. Productivity expert Maura Nevel Thomas therefore recommends adding a “re-entry day” to your trip. “Extend your out-of-office message to include both the day before you leave and the day after you get back,” she writes in *Entrepreneur*.

“During low-energy days, like when you return from a trip, expect the sluggish feeling and plan for it. Schedule no meetings or appointments for your first day back but do schedule lots of breaks for quiet time or physical activity, even just a walk around the building or up and down the stairs a few times.”

*Margaret Davis is the editor of the Careers and Global Business sections of Business Spotlight.*

### 4 Understanding the article

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

- When business people are away, their families often feel neglected.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- The business traveller may worry that they are missing out on important family events.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- When a business traveller returns home, they might take a while to get used to family life again.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- An expert suggests that the traveller should spend an extra day at home after the trip before returning to work.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Business travel is known to be the main cause of infidelity in marriages.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. There are no real advantages of face-to-face meetings and so the business person is advised to use video technology such as Skype.

\_\_\_\_\_

7. It's best to explain to your children that you are going away on a business trip so that they understand where and when you are going.

\_\_\_\_\_

8. The best solution for business people is to take their family with them on business trips.

\_\_\_\_\_

### 5 Blended words

a. Without referring back to the article say which two words are combined to make up the word *bleisure*.

bleisure = \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

b. Which two words have been combined to make the blended words below? Discuss your answers with a partner.

brunch = \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

motel = \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

infomercial = \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

edutainment = \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

### 6 Discussion

- Do companies have a responsibility to the families of their employees?
- What are the arguments for and against sending employees who are single on business trips in preference to their married colleagues who have children?

### 7 Giving advice

Choose one of the points below and make a list of helpful tips for business travellers. Present your advice to the students in your group.

- packing
- expenses and paying
- eating out and free time
- personal safety and security

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### Vocabulary record: On the road again

verb	noun	adjective	adverb
convince			
	suspicion		
		joyful	
			terribly

Vocabulary record



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### Extra reading – interview

Carolyn Pearson is the founder of Maiden Voyage, an online networking website for women travellers. Pearson, who has travelled widely for IT jobs with companies including the BBC, KLM and easyJet, says she got the idea for the company while on a business trip to Los Angeles. "I realized that my visit would have been enriched if I had somebody familiar with the area to share the experience with and offer female-friendly tips," Pearson told H&E North. Via email, Pearson provided Margaret Davis with advice for women business travellers.

### **One of the most uncomfortable situations for women travellers is eating alone. Do you have any tips for making this more pleasant?**

Here are some of my top tips. Dine early in the evening, when it's less busy. Ask for a seat facing the centre of the room rather than right in the middle of the restaurant. A window seat also allows you to avoid making uncomfortable eye contact with other diners. Take something to read with you. A book, a Kindle or even an iPad are not frowned upon when you are by yourself. Don't be afraid to talk to the waiting staff – they can be amusing company and they will look after you well if you are friendly.

### **Sometimes, it seems safer to use public transport rather than take a taxi, especially at night. At least there will be other people on a train or bus.**

When you are in a strange city, not knowing where you are going, often in a cab that has auto-locking doors, you can feel very vulnerable. If a taxi is the best means of transport, then use a well-known company and look at Google Maps beforehand to have an idea of the route the driver should be taking. While you might feel safer in a public place, my experience has been that, sometimes, people are in their own worlds and don't always notice what is going on around them or don't want to get involved. So look for another woman or group of women if you become concerned and let them know. If you are taking public transport, try to sit close to the guard and/or driver in occupied carriages. Remember, politeness should come second to personal safety so think about your safety rather than worrying that you might offend somebody by getting up and moving.

### **I once checked into a hotel, opened the door to my room with a key card – and saw a man's suitcase and shoes inside the door.**

You might be surprised how often this happens. A quick, polite exit is the best way to handle this. However, there have been cases of sexual assaults of female guests or theft of personal objects. I would advise you to stay in hotels with a secondary lock such as a chain (the single locks can be overridden with a room key, even when you think you have double-locked it from the inside) and keep the chain on at all times.

### **What about Airbnb? Is staying in a private home a useful alternative to a hotel?**

Airbnb properties do not have the same regulations, security and safety restrictions as commercial hotels. Owners are likely to be able to get inside the room or apartment. I would be happy to risk Airbnb with my husband or a larger group but not as a woman travelling alone.

### **For more information**

Bright Horizons Family Solutions offers advice and resources for working parents. [www.brighthorizons.com](http://www.brighthorizons.com)  
Maiden Voyage offers a range of information for women business travellers, including safety tips and networking opportunities. [www.maiden-voyage.com](http://www.maiden-voyage.com)