

## In it together

**Level:** Intermediate +

**Time:** 90 minutes +

**Summary:** This lesson is about teambuilding activities, work outings and awaydays. In this lesson, students:

1. talk about their own experiences of teambuilding;
2. study a text on the reasons for holding teambuilding activities, how to ensure they are successful and pitfalls to avoid;
3. find out what workers in the UK think about teambuilding and spending time with colleagues outside of the workplace;
4. work in groups to come up with, and evaluate, ideas for successful teambuilding days.

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student

**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 2/2018.

### Warmer

Students put a tick in the appropriate box to show how they feel about taking part in the activities with their colleagues. Keep this task short so that the students' answers are spontaneous. After that, have them talk with a partner and compare their answers.

### Key words

Students read the key words, write them next to the definitions, then find the words in the article to read them in context. The definitions are given in the order that the words appear in the article.

**Key:**

1. hampered
2. outings
3. awaydays
4. appreciate

5. camaraderie
6. tailor
7. random
8. affair
9. purposeful
10. appropriate
11. yield
12. debrief

### Understanding the article

Students write bullet points in the box to answer the questions, then elaborate on them in a short discussion or feedback session.

**Key (suggested answers):**

1. an essential part of the modern-day organization and central to organizational psychology; makes teams closer; colleagues get to know each other better and can appreciate each other's efforts; builds team spirit, camaraderie and allows colleagues to recognize each other's skills and personalities
2. bad coordination and low motivation; works better when members have a common culture; events often poorly planned with no concrete goals
3. purposeful and appropriate goals; no embarrassing activities; activities tailored to the needs of the participants; employ professional teambuilder; plenty of debriefing, questionnaires and surveys at appropriate time intervals

### Expressions

a. Students first complete the expressions in bold by rearranging the letters in brackets to find the missing word in each expression. They should find and underline the expressions in the article to check their answers.

**Key:**

1. achievement
2. most
3. return

b. Then, students complete the sentences, relating them to their own work situation where possible, e.g. *I get a great sense of achievement when I hand in a difficult report on time.*

### Discussion

Students read and discuss the information and compare it to their own experiences and preferences. Then, they discuss question 2 relating it again to their own personal experiences and preferences.

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### Group task

This task is split into small-group and whole-group steps. In groups of up to five students, get them to work on the steps together. The last step can be set as either a collaborative writing task in class or as homework. Throughout the task, the students should refer back to the answers they gave in task 1 (the warmer) and also evaluate their ideas using the PAY criteria as outlined in the article.

### Related topics on onestopenglish

Students can try out teambuilding for themselves with these team games from onestopenglish.

[www.onestopenglish.com/community/lesson-share/extras/team](http://www.onestopenglish.com/community/lesson-share/extras/team)

This lesson plan includes a teambuilding exercise and also asks what constitutes successful teamwork.

[www.onestopenglish.com/esp/hospitality-and-tourism/pdf-content/hospitality-and-tourism-event-hospitality-intermediate/157637.article](http://www.onestopenglish.com/esp/hospitality-and-tourism/pdf-content/hospitality-and-tourism-event-hospitality-intermediate/157637.article)

The following lesson presents some language for successful teamwork, such as polite ways of disagreeing. Students could make use of this language during the group task (task 6).

[www.onestopenglish.com/compass-lesson-11-teamwork-lesson-plan/555362.article](http://www.onestopenglish.com/compass-lesson-11-teamwork-lesson-plan/555362.article)

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### 1 Warmer

How do you feel about taking part in these activities with your colleagues?

	😊	😐	☹️
cooking a special meal			
getting a massage			
solving fun puzzles			
having a weekend city break in another country			
going on a week-long retreat in the desert			
having a long, relaxed lunch			
getting a pedicure*			
getting a card reading from a psychic**			

\*pedicure = a treatment for your feet and toenails that makes them look and feel good

\*\*psychic = someone who has a mysterious power that lets them know what is going to happen to other people

### 2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions below. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

affair	appreciate	appropriate	awaydays	camaraderie	debrief
hampered	outings	purposeful	random	tailor	yield

1. prevented from working effectively and progressing normally \_\_\_\_\_ (para 1)
2. short journeys that you take for enjoyment \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
3. work-related meetings that are held somewhere away from the usual workplace over a whole day, usually for the purpose of getting new ideas and building team spirit \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
4. recognize the good or special qualities of a person \_\_\_\_\_ (para 4)
5. friendship and trust between people in a group \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)
6. make or change something especially for a particular person or purpose \_\_\_\_\_ (para 6)
7. chosen or happening without any particular method, pattern or purpose \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7)
8. event \_\_\_\_\_ (para 8)
9. intended to achieve something useful \_\_\_\_\_ (para 11)
10. suitable or right for a particular situation or purpose \_\_\_\_\_ (para 11)
11. what you get out of something after you have put effort and money into it \_\_\_\_\_ (para 11)
12. a series of questions you answer after you have finished something \_\_\_\_\_ (para 11)

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by Julian Earwaker



**For successful teamwork, you need appropriate teambuilding exercises. JULIAN EARWAKER introduces some ideas and asks how to get the most out of teambuilding.**

- 1 Teams are the building blocks of modern-day organizations. They are central to organizational psychology but according to *The Economist*, are often “hampered by problems of coordination and motivation”. Experts at Harvard University say that teams work best when members have a common culture.
- 2 This explains why so many firms today invest in teambuilding exercises, work outings and awaydays. “You certainly get to know people better,” says Ben. “I must say it makes us all far closer as a team.” Ben, 22, works for a specialist engineering consultancy. His firm organizes an awayday each year for teambuilding, as well as a company weekend abroad for all 18 members of staff.
- 3 According to the *Daily Mirror*, the average UK company spends €346 per employee each year on teambuilding activities. Considering the success of TV chefs and cooking programmes, it’s perhaps no surprise to find cooking activities growing in popularity as teambuilding exercises.
- 4 Clare Major, of Seasoned cookery school, near Birmingham, runs courses for awaydays and teambuilding focused on working together to produce top meals. As she told the *Daily Mirror*, it’s the dining room that really brings people together, “to appreciate each other’s efforts from the day, feel a great sense of achievement and get to know one another better.”
- 5 But apart from gaining an appetite, what do firms actually hope to achieve from work outings or teambuilding exercises? The traditional aim, explains Steve Perkins of Chillisaucce events management, is to build team spirit, camaraderie and recognition of each other’s skills and personalities.
- 6 Too often, however, activities are poorly planned, with no concrete goals beyond entertainment. “The solution,” Perkins told *The Guardian*, “is to look at what your team does on a day-to-day basis and how they function, then tailor an exercise around this.”
- 7 Ben’s firm uses its awayday as a structured form of teambuilding. A morning spent on updates on company strategy, development and planning is followed by a relaxed

lunch and an afternoon of teambuilding exercises. All of the activities are designed by “seniors” (middle-ranking staff) and recently included memory tests, a competition to build the tallest tower using just two pieces of paper plus sticky tape, and a game in which a tower constructed of random objects had to be reconstructed by teams using a series of “whispered” instructions along a chain of employees. Everybody joins in the exercises, which, Ben admits, tend to “confirm how some people work well in teams and others don’t.”

The weekend abroad is a more relaxed, informal affair – but, as Ben explains, it is a powerful tool for encouraging social interaction between team members and their partners. The company pays for flights and a Saturday evening meal and drinks. In 2017, 15 of the team holidayed in Lisbon together. Most recently, 13 of them (plus partners) travelled to Vienna.

No one talks about work, says Ben, “although we don’t avoid it if it does come up. But we wouldn’t at any point in a conversation discuss what we would talk about in the office.”

Most people would probably prefer to holiday with family and friends. Still, as Steve Gaskin, director of Right Angle Events, told *The Guardian*, “Many people spend more time at work than they do with their families. It is therefore important to communicate with each other. Teambuilding is an essential part of this.”

If you want to get the most out of your teambuilding activities, says employment expert Dr Stephen Choo, then focus on “PAY”. P is for “purpose” (set purposeful and appropriate goals); A is for “activities” (avoid embarrassing activities and tailor tasks to specific needs); and Y is for “yield” (return on investment, using a professional teambuilder and a proper debrief). Choo recommends gathering ideas from team members first and using a simple quantitative questionnaire, with a follow-up survey three to six months later.

And how about the activities to avoid? A group of US advertising and marketing managers presented some of their least successful experiences of teambuilding exercises on PrNewswire.com.

These included having a psychic come to the office to do readings; getting pedicures; trying indoor skydiving and surfing; receiving a massage from a colleague; and experiencing a one-week desert retreat.

**JULIAN EARWAKER** is a freelance journalist, prison writer-in-residence and book author.

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### 3 Understanding the article

Answer the questions in note form using information from the article. Then, discuss and compare your answers.

1. Why is teambuilding important?	
2. What are common reasons for the failure of teambuilding exercises?	
3. What can be done to ensure that the day will be a success?	

### 4 Expressions

a. Complete the expressions in bold from the article by rearranging the letters in brackets. Find the expressions in the article to check your answers.

b. Then complete the sentences, relating them to you and your work.

1. I get a **great sense of** \_\_\_\_\_ (*maivchenete*) when I ...
2. I try to **get the** \_\_\_\_\_ (*smto*) **out of** ... by ...
3. The best \_\_\_\_\_ (*nrteru*) **on investment** I ever experienced was ...

### 5 Discussion

1. Read the information in the box and compare it to your own experiences and preferences.
2. Have you ever taken part in teambuilding exercises, been on a work outing or awayday?
  - If so, talk about what you most and least enjoyed about it. What did you get out of the day?
  - If not, how would you feel if your company offered one? What type of teambuilding activity do you think you would most enjoy?

#### ON OUR TEAM

- 66%** of British workers have taken part in some sort of teambuilding activity.
- 56%** of workers have gone out for drinks or dinner with their teams.
- 10%** of those aged 55 and over say such activities would improve teamwork.
- 42%** of 18- to 24-year-olds say such activities would improve teamwork.
- 18%** of people support using adrenaline-increasing experiences such as bungee jumping or speedboating for teambuilding.

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### 6 Group task

You are going to organize a one-day outing, awayday or teambuilding exercise for your team or department.

#### Step 1 – Whole class

Decide ...

- how much money you can spend;
- who you are going to invite;
- when you are going to hold the event.

#### Step 2 – Small groups

Make five suggestions.

Discuss the positive and negative aspects of each – referring back to your answers in task 1 (the **Warmer**).

Choose your favourite.

#### Step 3 – Small groups

Come up with a rough outline for the day.

Evaluate it using the PAY criteria in paragraph 11 of the article.

Prepare to present your plan to the class.

#### Step 4 – Whole class

Listen to all the suggestions.

Ask other groups any questions you have.

Vote on your outing, awayday or teambuilding exercise.

#### Step 5 – Optional extension / Homework

Write an email to the participants.

- Provide a short outline of the day.
- Explain the reasons for the day.
- Say what the concrete goals are.