

## We need permanent summer time to lift our mood

**Level:** Advanced (C1–C2)

**Time:** 60–90 minutes

**Business topics:** Human resources, health

**Business language focus:** Language related to behaviour, analysis of the effects of change, the office environment

**Activities:** In this lesson, students will:

- read a business article first published in the *Financial Times* and look at the language necessary to understand and talk about the article;
- look at business-specific words and expressions and apply them to their own personal work experience;
- discuss aspects of the article in greater depth;
- research and discuss three further principles concerned with the effect on productivity of different types of light.

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student, internet access for exercise 6

**Group size:** All of the tasks can be completed in pairs or groups, so that as much communication as possible takes place in the class. However, this lesson plan can also be used in a one-to-one teaching situation.

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This lesson is based on an authentic article from the *Financial Times*, republished here with its full, original text.

The article talks about the decision to end the process of changing the clocks for summer and winter time. It also discusses the possible benefits of doing so.

### 1. Warmer

Students discuss the question in pairs. In a group class, you could do a whole class feedback session, noting key concepts/vocabulary on the board, finding out if there is a class consensus, etc.

### 2. Key words and expressions

Students search for words and expressions in the text and write them next to the definitions while noticing how the words are used in context.

**Key:**

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>plunge</i>       | 7. <i>hassle</i>         |
| 2. <i>remain</i>       | 8. <i>alert</i>          |
| 3. <i>in line with</i> | 9. <i>brazen</i>         |
| 4. <i>transition</i>   | 10. <i>endure</i>        |
| 5. <i>needlessly</i>   | 11. <i>inconsistent</i>  |
| 6. <i>opting</i>       | 12. <i>interventions</i> |

### 3. Understanding the article

Students work in pairs and answer the questions with as much information as possible from the article.

**Key (suggested answers):**

1. *European countries will stop changing the time in summer and winter.*
2. *2021; it was due in 2019 but was delayed.*
3. *The majority are positive.*
4. *People think it will reduce crime, stimulate the economy and reduce car accidents. The article's author also thinks it will increase happiness.*
5. *There is no quantifiable evidence that the change will improve the situation or that people behave differently when there is an extra hour of daylight in the evening.*

### 4. Business language

In part a, students read the business words and phrases in the box and find and underline them in the article, noticing how they were used. In part b, students then use these words and phrases to complete the sentences.

Finally, in part c, students decide which of these are likely to be useful for them and write sentences of their own that contain these words but also reflect their own work situation or previous work experience.

**Key:**

- |                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>approved</i>   | 6. <i>qualitative</i> |
| 2. <i>disruptive</i> | 7. <i>benefits</i>    |
| 3. <i>quantify</i>   | 8. <i>delay</i>       |
| 4. <i>stimulate</i>  | 9. <i>impact</i>      |
| 5. <i>retail</i>     | 10. <i>purchasing</i> |

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### 5. Discussion

In small groups, students discuss the questions which pick up on and expand on topics from the article. Hold a short whole-group feedback session and compare and contrast each group's answers and input.

### 6. Wider business theme – Light and productivity

In part a, divide the students into As, Bs and Cs. The As should work together and find information on the effect of artificial light on productivity and make notes in the appropriate box on the worksheet, while the Bs do the same for the effect of natural light and Cs for cool light.

Then the students sit together in A, B and C groups and tell each other what they have found out. While they do this, they complete the remaining two boxes with the information they are given.

#### Key (possible answers):

- Working under artificial light with little to no natural light is linked to poor productivity, high stress levels and irritability.
- High levels of natural light is linked to high concentration levels, motivation and productivity.
- Workers working under cool lighting (bright, white lighting) report higher levels of concentration and productivity.
- The best way to boost productivity is to have lots of windows and lots of natural light. If this isn't possible, use cool lighting to improve productivity.

Then, in part b, learners discuss the lighting conditions in their companies/school and how they think it could be improved.



#### One-to-one teaching

This task can be adapted so that the student researches the lighting conditions as homework and then reports back (to you) in the next lesson what they found out. They should also be prepared to discuss the effects in the way outlined above.

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### 1 Warmer

Is it easier for you to work in the summer or the winter?

Discuss the question with your partner. Think about:

- Going to work
- Doing your work
- Going home

### 2 Key words and expressions

Find the words in the article that match the definitions below. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. Enter something at high speed. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 1)
2. To stay in a particular place or position and not leave it. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
3. Be the same as something. \_\_\_\_\_ (3 words, para 3)
4. A period when you adapt to a change. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 4)
5. Doing something unnecessarily. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 4)
6. Choosing. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)
7. Something that is difficult and offers little benefit. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 6)
8. Awake and aware. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7)
9. Doing something bad with no shame. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 8)
10. To experience difficulties. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10)
11. When things that should be the same are different. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 12)
12. When an authority stops something or changes something. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 13)

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It is difficult to quantify the benefits of lighter afternoons

BY MICHAEL SKAPINKER



Michael Skapinker, 2 April 2019.  
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- 1 As I leave the Financial Times building after work this week, I walk into daylight. The clocks have changed. The sun-blessed evenings have begun. It is now seven months until that crushing Sunday at the end of October when the clocks go back and we plunge once again into mid-afternoon darkness.
- 2 Except the time-shifting should soon stop. The European Parliament voted last week to put an end to the twice-yearly changing of the clocks. All EU countries, the parliament said, should remain either on summer or winter time all year long.
- 3 The change was meant to start this year, but, in line with the EU's penchant for delay, the parliament said it should now begin in 2021. The vote needs to be approved by EU ministers.
- 4 If the UK is still an EU member, or serving out its transition period, it will have to adopt the change too. But even if it is not, if all its European trading partners have ended clock-changing, it would be needlessly disruptive not to do so as well.
- 5 The move seems popular: 4.6m EU citizens responded to a consultation, with 84 per cent saying they wanted clock-changing to stop. The majority – 56 per cent – said they wanted permanent summer time, with 36 per cent opting for endless winter time and 8 per cent having no view, apart from not having to change the clocks.
- 6 Changing the clocks is a hassle; the one on the oven is many people's most irksome. But the real prize is an extra hour of daylight in winter. Of course, the actual number of daylight hours does not change; it just means that, in winter, what looked like a gloomy 4pm becomes a gloomy 5pm.

Many claims have been made for an extra hour of daylight. Its champions say that it reduces accidents, because drivers are more alert on dark mornings on their way to work than they are coming home in the dark. Children walking home from school are less likely to be hit by a car if it is still light.

The extra daylight hour is said to stimulate the retail, leisure and tourist economies. People are more likely to go shopping or out with friends. Many believe that crime goes down because criminals are less brazen when it is light.

What is the truth of these claims? There has already been an experiment with "continuous summer time": Britain tried it between 1968 and 1971. A government White Paper towards the end of the experiment said that the advantages and disadvantages had been difficult to quantify.

Opposition to endless summer time was strong during that trial. Farmers, the building industry and many in Scotland, who had to endure dark winter mornings, disliked it. In December 1970, the House of Commons voted overwhelmingly, by 366 votes to 81, to revert to twice-yearly clock changing.

The difficulty in quantifying the benefits of lighter afternoons continues. A survey of 24 studies into the effect of clock changes on road accidents, published by the BMJ, found some evidence that extending daylight hours reduced road accidents, fatalities and injuries, particularly to pedestrians and cyclists. But, the survey warned, the number of accidents can fall for reasons unrelated to light, such as weather and road conditions.

The research was too inconsistent to reach definite conclusions. Extra daylight "could possibly have a positive or negative impact on collisions, but may also have no effect," the survey concluded.

What of the impact on crime? A US study found that lighter afternoons did reduce robbery rates by 7 per cent. But other interventions reduced crime too.

*Continued on next page*

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Anti-theft technology reduced car theft by 10 per cent. Requiring frequent breathalyser tests for prisoners on probation led to a fall in drunken driving and domestic violence, the study said.

**14** We can probably say the same about shopping. Yes, an hour of daylight could get more people into the shops. But the retail trade is more likely to be affected by the drive to online purchasing, which keeps people away from stores, however bright it is.

As the White Paper said at the end of the UK's last experiment with continuous summer time, these are qualitative rather than quantitative choices. They are personal preferences. I vote for an extra hour of winter daylight. I think it would lift our spirits.

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### 3 Understanding the article

Answer the questions with as much information as possible from the article.

1. What will soon change?

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2. When will the change happen?

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3. How do people feel about the change?

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4. Why is the change being made?

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### 5 Discussion questions

- Do you think setting clocks to permanent summer or winter time is a good idea? Why (not)?
- The article says most of the benefits of setting clocks to permanent summer cannot be proved. Do you think it would have a positive or negative impact on business and the economy? If so, what do think the impact would be?

### 6 Wider business theme – Light and productivity

- a. Find information on the relationship between lighting and productivity at work.

Make notes in the boxes. Discuss your findings in small groups.

**Artificial light**

**Natural light**

**Cool light**

- b. Discuss the lighting conditions at your place of work or study. How could they be improved?