

We need permanent summer time to lift our mood

Level: Intermediate to upper intermediate (B1–B2)

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 as well as the effect of different types of light on productivity at work.

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.



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/vocab 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>voted</i> | 6. <i>opting</i> |
| 2. <i>remain</i> | 7. <i>actual</i> |
| 3. <i>in line with</i> | 8. <i>alert</i> |
| 4. <i>transition</i> | 9. <i>claims</i> |
| 5. <i>needlessly</i> | 10. <i>trial</i> |

3. Understanding the article

Students work in pairs, read the article and choose the correct word in each sentence based on the information in the article.

Key:

1. *stop*
2. *2021*
3. *support*
4. *reduce, help*
5. *not a lot*

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, they then use these words and phrases to complete the sentences.

Finally, in part c, they decide which of them are likely to be useful for themselves 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> | 5. <i>benefits</i> |
| 2. <i>disruptive</i> | 6. <i>delay</i> |
| 3. <i>retail</i> | 7. <i>impact</i> |
| 4. <i>qualitative</i> | 8. <i>purchasing</i> |

5. Discussion

In small groups, students discuss the questions which pick up on and expand on topics and quotes from the article. The first question is a simple yes/no one, so you might like to ask the group to raise their hands to answer it.

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Hold a short whole-class feedback session and compare and contrast each group's answers and input.

6. Wider business theme – Light and productivity

Learners work individually and complete the text with their own ideas. Then, encourage learners to work in small groups and use the internet to check their answers. Lead a group feedback session to confirm answers.

Put learners into small groups and ask them to discuss the questions about their office/school.



One-to-one teaching

This task can be adapted so that the student completes the text as homework, checks their answers and reports back (to you) in the next lesson what they found out. You could then discuss the questions in 6b together.

Key:

- People who have lots of natural light at work, from windows and skylights, are happier and more productive.
- People who work in mostly artificial light find it harder to concentrate, have higher stress levels and lower quality work.

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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. To express an opinion by choosing between two or more issues, people, etc.
_____ (para 2)
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 unnecessary. _____ (para 4)
6. Choosing. _____ (para 5)
7. Real. _____ (para 6)
8. Awake and aware. _____ (para 7)
9. Things people say that may or may not be true _____ (para 9)
10. A test of something for a period of time. _____ (para 10)

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It is difficult to quantify the benefits of lighter afternoons

BY MICHAEL SKAPINKER

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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.

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7. The market crash had a big _____ on our share price.

8. The _____ department buys our raw materials.

c. **Decide which of the sentences above are useful for you, and then use them in sentences of your own that reflect your own work situation or previous work experience.**

5 Discussion questions

- Do you change the clocks in summer and winter in your country?
- Is changing the clocks a good or bad thing? Why?
- Do you think European countries should choose summer or winter time?

6 Wider business theme – Light and productivity

a. **Complete the text with the words in the box and then check your answers by researching on the internet.**

concentrate natural artificial productive stress quality

People who have lots of _____ light at work, from windows and skylights, are happier and more _____.

People who work in mostly _____ light find it harder to _____, have higher _____ levels and lower _____ work.

b. **Discuss the questions in small groups.**

1. What light is used in your office or place of study?
2. Does the light make it easy or difficult to work?
3. How could the light be improved?