

The advantages of paternity leave

Level: Advanced (C1–C2)

Time: 60–90 minutes

Business topics: Maternity and paternity leave, the gender pay gap, company benefits

Business language focus: Language associated with benefits such as maternity leave and the advantages these may present for companies.

Activities: In this lesson, students will:

- read a business article and look at the language necessary to understand and talk about it;
- 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 company benefits and suggest a possible future benefit that would be attractive to employees.

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.

1. Warmer

Students work in pairs to match the countries with the number of weeks of statutory maternity leave they typically offer. Make sure they give reasons for their choices. At the feedback stage, ask students if they were surprised by any of the correct answers and ask them to compare the amount of statutory maternity leave in these countries with the amount in their own country or countries. (Note that there may be maternity leave in the USA but it is not a legal requirement or right. The amount of maternity leave may also vary depending on whether it is the first child or not.)

Key:

1. Estonia
2. The UK
3. France
4. Japan
5. The USA

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. eligible | 7. bias |
| 2. paternity leave | 8. impact |
| 3. statutory | 9. empathise |
| 4. non-transferable | 10. stance |
| 5. spouse | 11. empirical |
| 6. level playing field | 12. productivity |

3. Understanding the article

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

Key:

1. He was thrilled. (It 'blew his mind').
2. All new parents, male and female, can take up to a year off after the birth or adoption of a child, including 26 weeks at full basic pay.
3. Two weeks for fathers and 52 weeks for mothers.
4. It found that fathers who took paternity leave were likely to share childcare and household responsibilities and that their spouses spent more time in paid work, more time physically at the workplace and were more likely to be full-time employed.
5. He was worried that his job might not be safe and that taking so much time off might affect his career and impact his team.
6. It only offers 12 weeks at full pay but all new mothers and fathers have to take this leave as it is mandatory.

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 context.

In part b they then use them to complete the sentences before, in part c, deciding which of them are likely to be useful for them and writing sentences of their own that contain these words but also reflect their own company's activity or the potential activity of a company they might work for in the future. For example, a student decides that *statutory* and *insurer* are not important for them but that being able to talk about *benefits* and *recruitment* is, so they concentrate on writing sentences that focus on the benefits a company or their company can offer and how this could affect recruitment.

Key:

1. *benefits*
2. *pay gap*
3. *insurer*
4. *basic pay*
5. *recruitment*
6. *statutory*
7. *career*
8. *policy*
9. *earnings*
10. *budget*

5. Discussion

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

6. Wider business theme – Benefits over and above basic pay

Ask students to go online and use search engines to find information on the kind of benefits that companies typically offer their employees. Note that such benefits are sometimes described as 'perks.' A typical example would be the use of a company car or a private health insurance scheme. Then ask them to find any unusual or unique benefits that companies offer (e.g. free fruit in the office, games rooms, on-site laundry services, etc).

As an alternative way of doing this exercise, you could give each group a company or two to research (e.g. Google, Facebook, Walmart, John Lewis, etc), and ask them to fill out standard and non-standard benefits they find.

Then ask students to work individually and think of a benefit that would encourage loyalty to their company or attract people to work for it. They should note the advantages and possible disadvantages of introducing the benefit. They then present their ideas to the class. Take a class vote to find out which benefit would be the most popular.