

The benefits of a sabbatical

Level: Advanced (C1–C2)

Time: 60–90 minutes

Business topics: work/life balance, taking time off work, employer/employee relationship

Business language focus: language associated with the benefits of taking time off work

Activities: In this lesson, students will:

- read a business article and look at the language necessary to understand and talk about it;
- learn or revise some business collocations;
- discuss aspects of the article in greater depth;
- discuss the pros and cons of taking a sabbatical.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student, possible 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, republished here with its full, original text.

The article discusses the pros and cons of taking a sabbatical.

1. Warmer

Students decide which of the benefits are the most important and which are the least important by ranking them from one to six. They should be prepared to give reasons for their choice. They can also be asked to think of further benefits that would be attractive to prospective employees.

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. *work/life balance*
2. *sabbatical*
3. *advocate*
4. *misconception*
5. *initiative*
6. *norms*
7. *flexibility*
8. *stress-test*
9. *raring to go*
10. *frugally*
11. *impetus*
12. *take someone up on something*

3. Understanding the article

Students work individually to read the article again and answer the questions. They then compare their answers in pairs.

Key:

1. *She thought carefully about how she was going to spend her time and what she aimed to get out of it.*
2. *They should not make snap decisions.*
3. *That they are just a big holiday so people taking sabbaticals should make clear to their employers what they have learnt.*
4. *She learnt about social media, marketing and advertising, and working in an environment of constant change. This showed that she had initiative and could challenge norms.*
5. *They allow them to stress-test the company and see if it could survive a more unexpected employee departure.*
6. *The downside for employees is loss of income and for employers it is the loss of an employee for a time.*

4. Business language – Collocations

Students match the verbs with the nouns or noun phrases. They then check their answers by looking in the text and seeing the expressions in context as this will help them to see how each collocation is used.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. <i>d</i> | 5. <i>h</i> |
| 2. <i>g</i> | 6. <i>c</i> |
| 3. <i>b</i> | 7. <i>a</i> |
| 4. <i>f</i> | 8. <i>e</i> |

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 – Taking unpaid leave

Ask students to work individually to consider the factors listed in the instructions regarding preparing for a sabbatical, what they will do during it, and how it will benefit their company. Make sure they provide reasons for their choice in each case. When they have completed this stage of the task, ask each student to present their ideas to the class. If appropriate, ask the class to take a vote on which proposal would be the most beneficial for the company.



One-to-one teaching

This task can be adapted so that the student does the above as homework and then reports back (to you) in the next lesson. They should also be prepared to present their ideas as a marketing strategy.