

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. Can both mother and father take time off work after they have a baby in your country? How much time can they take?
2. Do parents receive full salary when they are on parental leave?
3. Should fathers receive as much time with their kids as mothers do? Why (not)?

Parental leave for all

- 1 In recent years, many UK companies have made good changes to their employee policies. Some policies are about parents taking time away from work to care for a new child. The changes allow parents to share time away from work. This benefit will make leave opportunities more equal between both partners.
- 2 A company called CharlieHR carried out research to help it improve its own policy. This research showed that parents weren't happy about their past experiences with leave from work. They felt that their employer needed to be more flexible. They wanted to take time off in stages and not all at once. They also wanted to share the time off with their partners. The company agreed with their staff and gave them these new benefits.
- 3 In the past, women usually took care of children at home while men went out to work. Opinions are changing, and more men take care of their children now. But not all parents are biological mothers or fathers. There are different kinds of families. Policies should be more inclusive of family diversity.
- 4 New laws in the UK let parents share up to 52 weeks of leave (39 paid). Parents can decide how to share the time the best. They can take leave at the same time or at different times.
- 5 Even with these changes, many men only want to take the first two weeks after having a baby. This may be because they worry that they will lose their jobs or become less important. They also often get paid less than women when they take leave. Many people still see women as the ones who will care for the child most of the time.
- 6 Women can also have problems when they take time to care for a child. As many as 54,000 women lose their jobs every year after having a child. This can make it very difficult for women to go on leave.
- 7 Some people find taking leave difficult for other reasons. They might get bored at home and want to go back to work. Others find the return to work very hard, as they don't want to leave their babies.
- 8 Parental leave policies should be more equal for all parents. This will help workers in different family situations have enough time to take care of their children.

Glossary:

biological (father/mother/parent): someone's natural father or mother

stage: a particular part of a process

leave: a period of time away from your job

policy: a set of plans or actions agreed on by a government, business, or other group

2 Reading comprehension

a. Are these statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Parents cannot share parenting leave to take care of a child.
2. Parents at CharlieHR weren't happy with their past experiences of family leave.
3. CharlieHR gave parents new benefits like sharing leave and taking time off in stages.
4. Men never stay home and take care of their babies.
5. New UK laws give parents up to 39 weeks of paid family leave.
6. Men get paid as much as women when they take parental leave.
7. Over 50,000 women decide not to go back to work every year.
8. A really equal family leave policy can help different kinds of parents.

3 Vocabulary practice

a. Put each word or phrase into the correct gap.

allow equal flexible improve laws opportunity research take care of

1. The school doesn't _____ children to use their phones in class.
2. That new job sounds like a great _____.
3. Men and women with the same jobs should get _____ pay.
4. I can talk to my manager, so he can _____ my parental leave benefits.
5. They are doing _____ on how parental leave helps children.
6. My office hours are _____ – some days I go in after lunch.
7. There are _____ that help keep children safe.
8. My brother is going to _____ my children this week.

b. Choose five words from task A and use them in personalised sentences.

4 Grammar practice

a. Choose the correct modal auxiliary / verb to complete the sentences from the article.

1. Policies **can** / **need to** help all parents.
2. New laws in the UK let parents share up to 52 weeks of leave; 39 weeks **can** / **have to** be paid.
3. Parents **can** / **have to** decide how to share the time the best.
4. They **can** / **have to** take leave at the same time or at different times.
5. This **may** / **has to** be because they worry that they will lose their jobs
6. This **can** / **has to** make it very difficult for women to go on leave.
7. They **can** / **might** get bored at home and want to go back to work.

b. Complete the sentences using modal auxiliaries / verbs from task A.

1. The CEO _____ talk to the board of directors every month.
2. In this company, you _____ adapt your schedule when you are a parent.
3. The café near the school _____ have fewer customers during the summer.
4. We _____ go over the budget for the next quarter.
5. It's really sunny today, but my weather app says it _____ rain.

5 Communicative practice

a. Discuss the questions.

- What parental leave policies are there in your company or business?
- What can you change to make them better?

b. Now, write an email to management to make your suggestions. Talk about how they can benefit all employees and the company. You can use the template below as reference.

Dear all,

We want to suggest some changes to our current parental leave policies.

We believe that all parents (both men and women) need to . . .

In our new policy, parents can . . .

These changes will bene it the company because employees may. . .

Please contact ... if you have any questions.

Best regards,