

'The only thing you need is your own mind': how to start meditating

Level 2: Intermediate

Article summary: This article discusses some of the benefits and techniques of meditation.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Zero conditional

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

Key:

1. *benefits*
2. *failed*
3. *relationship*
4. *Awareness*
5. *Rewards*
6. *complex*
7. *Wondering*
8. *mindfulness*
9. *upright*
10. *balanced*
11. *spine*
12. *Perfectionism*

1. Warmer

- a. The purpose of this activity is to activate students' prior knowledge about meditation and share some information about the practice.

Key:

1. ✓
2. *In most meditation practices, you observe your thoughts without judging them, but you don't stop them completely.*
3. *Meditating for even 5–10 minutes can be helpful, especially for beginners.*
4. ✓
5. ✓

- b. The discussion provides students with an opportunity to share their reactions to task a and share personal experiences, anecdotes or questions they may have about meditation.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do the activity individually and then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. As an extension activity, ask students to highlight the key words in the article.

- b. Before reading the article carefully, students use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand and know how the words are used in other contexts.

Key:

1. *Awareness*
2. *reward*
3. *balanced*
4. *Perfectionism*
5. *wonder*
6. *spine*
7. *relationship*
8. *complex*

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students answer the questions based on the information in the article. They may do this in different ways, e.g. in item 1, they may say, 'Meditation can help with anxiety, depression, insomnia and gut health' or similar.

Key (suggested answers):

1. *Help with anxiety, depression, insomnia and gut health.*
2. *Salzberg says that the goal is to change our relationship to our thoughts (and develop 'a balanced awareness'). The goal is not to stop our thoughts completely.*

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3. *It showed that many people would prefer to receive a mild electric shock rather than sit alone in silence for 15 minutes.*
4. *According to Davidson, our physical brains change, and those effects stay for a long time.*
5. *So you don't spend your meditation wondering how much time has passed.*
6. *Lingo suggests starting small and not trying to sit for too long. If it's too difficult, you may not want to continue the next day.*
7. *Comfortably with your back upright.*
8. *Your eyes can be open or closed. If they are open, focus on a spot on the floor a few feet in front of you.*
9. *How you feel. Don't change or do anything, just notice it and let it be.*
10. *Let go of whatever you were thinking about and return to noticing your breath.*

4. Key language

- a. The activity gives students an opportunity to practice the zero conditional. Remind students that the zero conditional is used to talk about general truths, scientific factors or predictable situations. Its form is *If / When + present simple + present simple*. You may want to remind students that when the *if* clause is first, it needs a comma, but when the main clause is first, there is no comma. As an extension activity, ask students to look for these and other examples in the article.

Key:

1. *If your eyes are open, let your gaze rest on a spot in front of you.*
2. *If you have to let go and begin again seven billion times in those few minutes, it's fine.*
3. *If you like meditating and want to continue, there are lots of resources available.*

- b. Students have the opportunity to get more familiar with how the two clauses in the zero conditional work together. You may want to ask students to identify the *if* clause and the main clause prior to beginning to activity.

Key:

1. *Let your gaze rest on a spot in front of you if your eyes are open.*
2. *It's fine if you have to let go and begin again seven billion times in those few minutes.*
3. *There are lots of resources available if you like meditating and want to continue.*

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the quotes about meditation. Ask students to share their thoughts and opinions about how the quotes made them think about the practice of meditation. Encourage students to give their reasons and justifications for each answer, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

6. In your own words

- a. Ask students to research more about a particular type of meditation, such as the ones mentioned in the article (loving-kindness, walking, transcendental), or any other type they are interested in. Ask them to answer one or more of these questions: *How is this form of meditation usually practiced? Where is it usually practiced? What kind(s) of breathwork are included? Is there a common script or mantra associated with it? What are some tips and/or resources for beginners?*
- b. Students could then present their reports to the class. Encourage students to include facts and information when they share their research findings. Encourage them to share their opinions and give reasons to support their answers.

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Extra teaching tip

The original version of this article isn't much more advanced than this intermediate one we created for the worksheet. You can ask your students to read the Advanced version of this article (available in the Advanced worksheet) at home carefully. Now that they have read, analysed and understood the graded version, the original should not be too difficult. Set a clear task to create a purpose for this reading activity. You can ask them to compare the two versions and write down anything that was confusing in the advanced one, like any new words or phrases. Then, ask them to use both versions to try and guess what the new words or phrases mean. Use this as an opportunity to encourage them to give online articles written for English-speaking audiences a try. They may often find that they're not as inaccessible as they think. Remind them that they don't always need to understand the entire text, or every single word, and that reading English sources online is always beneficial.