

Let's be honest about the current wave of lay-offs

Level: Intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Overview: This article discusses the current culture and how people are being fired during the increasing wave of lay-offs.

Business topic: Productivity, work culture, work hacks

Business language: Formal, neutral and informal language

Activities: Key words, understanding the text, business language, summarising an article, discussion, writing a summary

Groups: Whole class, pairs, small groups, one-to-one

Key:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. chief executive | 9. grapevine |
| 2. lacking | 10. retrenchment |
| 3. badge | 11. sharp-elbowed |
| 4. unavoidable | 12. remote |
| 5. dismal | 13. be dispensed with |
| 6. laid bare | 14. cowardice |
| 7. doubtless | 15. dismayed |
| 8. acquisition | 16. blot |

4. Understanding the article

- a. Ask students to read the article carefully. Then ask them to read the summary. Have them analyse and predict what words should be used in each gap. For example, if the gap is followed by the word *per cent*, then they'll probably need a number to fill it with, or if it has an article in front of it, they'll need a noun or an adjective to the following noun. After that, they should go back to the article and find the relevant information to fill the gaps. Have them share their answers in pairs or small groups before eliciting answers from the whole class. Allow different answers in places where it's possible. For example, in item 16, they may also use the word *rude* or something similar.

Key:

- lay-offs
- impersonal
- email
- Vivek Gulati
- engineer
- Google
- Harvard Business Review
- April
- 57
- 30
- manager
- help
- Sharyn Ghidella
- hairstresser's
- sacking / iring
- cruel

1. Warmer

- a. Ask students to discuss the questions in small groups. Monitor and write any useful vocabulary on the board. Elicit the main ideas that arise from the discussion from the whole class.

2. Reading for gist

- a. Have students skim the article and choose the main idea. Then ask students to scan for phrases that support their answer.

Key:

2

3. Key words

- a. Have students match the key words to the definitions individually and then compare their answers in pairs. Elicit answers from the whole class.

5. Business language – formal and informal phrases

- a. You could set up this activity as a Total Physical Response (TPR) activity. Put the table on the board or the walls of the classroom and have students physically add the words to the table. This could be done as a competition or as a group activity. If you are teaching online, you could set up virtual boards to do the same.

Key:

Formal	Neutral	Informal
<i>be dispensed with</i>	<i>lay-off</i>	<i>be axed</i>
<i>be dismissed</i>	<i>be laid off</i>	<i>fire</i>
<i>make redundant</i>	<i>lose your job</i>	<i>sacking</i>
<i>terminate</i>	<i>job cuts</i>	<i>your time's up</i> <i>the chop</i>

- b. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to complete the task.

Key:

- were terminated*
- is going to lay off*
- was let go*
- has been dismissed*
- lay-offs*
- to give him the boot*
- sacked*
- will fire*
- dismissal*
- the chop*

6. Discussion

- a. Put the students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. When students have covered all the questions, bring the whole class back together so that they can share their answers and any interesting information that arose from their discussions.

7. Wider business theme – writing a business article summary

- a. Explain that students are going to write a summary of an article similar to the one they read in today's class.
- Ask students to work individually and put the steps in order. Have them compare the answers in groups and provide the answer key on the board.

Key:

Number	Step
1	<i>Read the full article slowly and carefully to understand the big picture.</i>
2	<i>Identify what the article is really about. What is the overall message or focus?</i>
3	<i>Highlight important names, numbers, places, dates and other key facts that should be included in your summary.</i>
4	<i>Pay attention to the way the article is structured. Is it chronological, problem-solution or something else?</i>
5	<i>Underline the topic sentence in each paragraph to help you follow that structure and identify key points.</i>
6	<i>Ask yourself which information is essential, and which can be left out. What does the reader really need to know?</i>

- Have students look back at the summary in Activity 4. Hold a class discussion on how much the author of the summary followed the steps above.
- Ask students to look online for similar articles. Alternatively, you can prepare a few links beforehand. Especially if you're doing this in class, it'll be better to provide the students with articles that are not too long or too complex. Have students work individually on their summaries. Remind them to use the phrases provided for them in the worksheet.
- Have students work in pairs and exchange their summaries to give each other feedback.