

Can reducing public holidays inject the much-needed extra cash into the economy?

Level: Intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Overview: This article discusses the economic costs of days off and whether it is beneficial for state budgets to reduce them.

Business topic: Productivity, work culture in different countries, workers rights

Business language: Reducing clauses with *-ing*

Activities: Key words, understanding the text, business language, comprehension, discussion, writing a description

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

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. It is also a good moment to elicit and explain the following phrases that are related to the topic: *bank holiday, public holiday, paid time off (PTO)*.

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 look for the words in the wordpool in the article and see if they can guess the meaning. Since there are a lot of words, you may want to divide students into pairs and assign some words to each pair. Then have them match the key words to the definitions individually without looking at the article. Finally, have them compare their answers in pairs. Elicit answers from the whole class.

Key:

1. *policymakers*
2. *lambasted*
3. *went down like a lead balloon*
4. *output*
5. *yawning*
6. *gee-up*
7. *enticingly*
8. *federal*
9. *proclaiming*
10. *cutbacks*
11. *negligible*
12. *measly*
13. *offset*
14. *bounceback*
15. *conducive*
16. *the daily grind*
17. *enable*
18. *slip into*
19. *manoeuvre*
20. *trade union*
21. *law-abiding*
22. *nebulous*
23. *embedded*

4. Understanding the article

- a. Ask students to read the article carefully. Then ask them to choose the correct option a, b or c.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. <i>a</i> | 6. <i>c</i> |
| 2. <i>b</i> | 7. <i>a</i> |
| 3. <i>a</i> | 8. <i>b</i> |
| 4. <i>b</i> | 9. <i>b</i> |
| 5. <i>c</i> | 10. <i>a</i> |

5. Business language – reduction with -ing forms

- a. Have students read the four sentences carefully. Ask students to tell you which sentences are from the article without looking at the article again.
- b. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to complete the task. Then have a class discussion.

Key:

1. *the first one, by using -ing, the first one with -ing*
2. *by using -ing*
3. *to make the sentence more concise, formal and avoid repeating words like 'to be' or 'he / she'*

- c. Have students transform the sentences. Depending on the abilities of your group you may want to tell them which word should be turned into an -ing form to help.

Key:

1. *The CEO announced changes to the use of office space encouraging remote work.*
2. *She entered the meeting room carrying the necessary legal documents.*
3. *The company hired several new programmers specialising in AI.*
4. *He explained the plan, highlighting its potential risks.*
5. *The report outlined a strategy aiming to reduce costs.*

6. Discussion

- a. Put 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. Be mindful that this does not turn into a list of stereotypes about different cultures. You may want to discuss how stereotypes are harmful and should not be repeated, while acknowledging that cultural differences do exist.

7. Wider business theme – working with different cultures

- a. Explain that students are going to write a short description of the culture around holidays and time off in their country.

1. Ask students to work individually, read the text and fill in the notes. Have them compare the answers in groups and provide the answer key on the board.

Key:

1. *long*
2. *work-life balance*
3. *pressure*
4. *legally*
5. *discouraged*
6. *full*

2. Have students look back at the table. Discuss briefly what elements each of the points in the left-hand column covers. Then have students work individually and write their descriptions. They should aim at a similar text to the one above, just focused on one country.
3. Ask students to work with a partner and exchange their writing. Hold a class discussion about the cultural and legal differences regarding paid time off in different countries.