

## Outdoor office

**Level:** Intermediate upwards

**Timing:** 90 minutes plus

**Material needed:** One copy of the student worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

**Group size:** Any, including one-to-one

### Overview

This lesson plan, for both pre-experience and in-work business students, is based around an article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 3/2012. The article is about a man who successfully managed to turn his hobby and passion into his job. It describes the challenges he needed to overcome and the solutions he found which allowed him to do so and become *the* leading expert in his field.

The tasks in the student worksheets encourage the students to learn and use new business vocabulary and functional language and to practise useful business skills, such as researching and summarizing information.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys and extension tasks (for in class or as homework).

### Warmer

This checks that the students don't start reading the article without understanding the absolute pivotal key words. The words *reptiles* and *amphibians* may also provoke a reaction from some students which you could then use as a point of reference in later discussions.

**Key:** (example answers)

*Reptiles:* snake, crocodile, alligator

*Amphibians:* frog, newt, toad

*Note:* Reptiles are cold-blooded animals that give birth to their young as eggs and whose bodies are often covered in scales.

*Amphibians* are animals that live mainly on land, but produce eggs and develop into adult form in water.

### Scanning for information

This scanning task introduces the students to the topic of working in eco-conservation and gives them a brief overview of the article.

**Key:**

1. an ecological consultancy business; 2. palaeoecology (the study of fossil organisms and their associated remains, including their life cycle, living interactions, natural environment and manner of death); 3. working for a charity was too time consuming and there aren't many jobs in his area of speciality.

### Key words

Tell the students to complete the sentences and definitions with the key words from the article. The paragraph numbers are given to help them. The three sets of words can be divided up amongst the students who should then exchange and share their answers.

**Key:**

1. consultancy; 2. conservation; 3. development; 4. volunteer; 5. PhD; 6. stewing; 7. species; 8. extinct; 9. indulge; 10. research; 11. survey; 12. charity; 13. rewarding; 14. camaraderie; 15. stability

Tell the students to complete the sentences and definitions with the key words from the article. The paragraph numbers are given to help them. The three sets of words can be divided up amongst the students who should then exchange and share their answers.

### Understanding the article

Tell the students to read the article and then read the three paragraph headings and decide which paragraph each one best describes. They should then write the headings in the lines provided above each paragraph.

Using the three headings as examples, the students should work together and find similar descriptive headings for the remaining five untitled paragraphs.

**Key:**

Moving house and changing job (paragraph 5); From hobby to own business (paragraph 1); The problem with charity work (paragraph 7); other paragraphs = students' own answers

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### Teaching and learning strategy: Paragraph headings to check comprehension

There are many ways in which we can check students' understanding of a text. This method requires them to read and summarize each section carefully so that they are able to come up with their own heading for each paragraph or section. Providing them with a few examples first (as in task 3) will give them an idea as to what the task requires.

To successfully achieve this kind of task, students will have to read the article closely and be able to understand its main points. Doing this task with other students will increase their understanding because they will need to discuss the content of the article as well as agree on a summary or heading.

In a larger group, comparing the different headings that the students have come up with will provide an opportunity for clarification of any misunderstood points or vocabulary.

### Idiomatic expressions

Ask the students to find the idiomatic expressions in the article and then make up five sentences of their own, each containing one of the expressions.

#### Key:

1. *data monkey*; 2. *broaden someone's (his) horizons*;
3. *for the greater good*; 4. *never say never*; 5. *in good hands*

### Discussion

The discussion questions encourage the students to talk about what they have read and widen the topic to include their own opinions, experience and feelings.

### Web task

Send the students to Chris Gleed-Owen's website and encourage them to follow the links to other sites and find out more about this field of work. Ask the students to report back on what they have found out.

### Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

### Related topics on onestopenglish

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics go to the following lesson plans in the Business section on onestopenglish:

Business Spotlight: Masters of the universe

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/masters-of-the-universe/551805.article>

Business Spotlight: Specialist or generalist?

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/specialist-or-generalist/550367.article>

You may also find topical and relevant *Guardian* news lessons here on onestopenglish:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/news-lessons/>

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### 1 Warmer

What are reptiles and amphibians? Give examples.

### 2 Scanning for information

Scan the article to find out ...

1. ... what kind of business Chris Gleed-Owen runs.
2. ... the topic of his PhD.
3. ... why he decided to start his own business.

### 3 Key words

a. Write the key words from the article next to the definitions below.  
paragraphs 1-2

development

PhD

consultancy

volunteer

conservation

1. a company with expert knowledge about a particular subject which provides professional help and advice to other companies \_\_\_\_\_
2. the management of something, e.g. land and water, that prevents it from being damaged or destroyed \_\_\_\_\_
3. the process of putting new buildings on land \_\_\_\_\_
4. do some work without getting paid \_\_\_\_\_
5. Doctor of Philosophy: the highest university degree \_\_\_\_\_

paragraphs 2-4

extinct

research

species

indulge

stewing

6. cooking slowly in liquid \_\_\_\_\_
7. a plant or animal group whose members all have similar general features and are able to produce young plants or animals together \_\_\_\_\_
8. when something (usually a plant or animal) no longer exists \_\_\_\_\_
9. to allow yourself to have or do something that you enjoy \_\_\_\_\_
10. the detailed study of something in order to discover new facts, especially in a university or scientific institution \_\_\_\_\_

paragraphs 5-8

camaraderie

charity

rewarding

stability

survey

11. a set of questions that you ask a large number of people or organizations \_\_\_\_\_
12. an organization to which you give money so that it can help someone or something \_\_\_\_\_
13. giving you satisfaction or pleasure, but not necessarily money \_\_\_\_\_
14. friendship and trust between people in a group \_\_\_\_\_
15. a situation in which things remain constant and happen as they should and in which there are no harmful changes \_\_\_\_\_

b. Now find and circle these words in the article and notice which other words come before and after them. Do they form any useful expressions or word pairs together?

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by Rebecca Perl

Amphibians and reptiles were Dr Chris Gleed-Owen's childhood hobby – and this hobby led him to take up an exciting career. But the 42-year-old Briton has changed direction more than once. Here, he tells Rebecca Perl how he keeps learning new things, and how he eventually became his own boss.



1 Being paid to be outdoors looking for snakes and lizards sounds like every little boy's dream. Dr Chris Gleed-Owen does just that. In 2008, Gleed-Owen set up his own ecological consultancy business, specializing in reptile and amphibian conservation. He advises clients who have a legal responsibility to look after wild animals that are threatened by development. "I spend all day rescuing snakes and lizards. It doesn't feel like a job. It's like being paid for your hobby," he says. As a child, Gleed-Owen was interested in dinosaurs and fossils, but it was while studying geography at Coventry Polytechnic (now Coventry University) that he began learning about palaeontology. "I dug up soil from a cave in Scotland and studied the microorganism remains I found. It was fascinating." After finishing his studies, he volunteered on an archaeological dig in Oxfordshire, and spent the summer digging up woolly mammoth bones, as well as the remains of other ancient animals.

searching for remains of a species recently extinct in the UK. He also took part in archaeological digs in Scotland, North Yorkshire and Portsmouth.

4 But Gleed-Owen had trouble converting this work into a career. "A PhD is an opportunity to indulge yourself in something that fascinates you, but at the end of it, you have to join the real world," he says. The prospect of staying in the academic world was attractive, but he could not find what he wanted. "I was looking for a research career that didn't really exist," he says now.

2 Gleed-Owen returned to Coventry and worked as a cartographer and map librarian in the geography department for a year. While there, he decided he wanted to do a PhD. There were already people studying woolly mammoths, birds and fish, but no one studying reptiles and amphibians. He managed to get funding to study the history of reptiles and amphibians in Britain since the Ice Age. "I had to learn to identify the sub-fossil remains. To most people's disgust, this involved collecting dead animals from the road and stewing them up with chemicals. After 24 hours, you drain off a foul-smelling liquid, and you are left with the skeleton, which you can study."

5 Instead, Gleed-Owen changed direction – in both location and career. He moved to Southampton, on the south coast of England, and spent a year doing digital mapping with the UK's mapping agency, Ordnance Survey. The experience he gained there helped him find his next job, which was with a small charity in Bournemouth called the Herpetological Conservation Trust (now Amphibian and Reptile Conservation). "I had to talk my way in, really, because even though I had my PhD, it was a study of the past rather than the present."

3 When he was awarded his PhD in 1998, he was the only person in Britain with this speciality. As a result, he was asked to be an adviser on projects in such places as Madrid, Gibraltar, Malmö, Gothenburg and Dublin. He worked for English Nature, a government agency,

6 He got the job and started by setting up a rare-species database. The office was full of paper surveys from the past 25 years, and his job was to convert these into digital form. After a time, he got bored of being a "data monkey", so he introduced a new focus to his role. He helped to train members of the public so that they could collect data for the charity. "I became volunteer coordinator to about 500 people all over the country.

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And building on this, I set up a national survey project called NARRS (National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme)."

7 After six years in the job, Gleed-Owen wanted to broaden his horizons. Speaking of the frustrations, he says: "If you work in the charity sector, your work is never done. There are so many projects you don't finish. And although it's rewarding to do something for the greater good, you never switch off. I used to stay at work until 9 or 10pm., then go home and think some more."

8 He decided to take everything he had learned so far and start his own business. Speaking of the good and bad points of working for himself, Gleed-Owen naturally starts with the positive: "Being your own boss is great. You have the flexibility to decide when you want to work, and how to organize your jobs. I love the fact that I only work seven to eight months of the year and then take the winter off. And I get time to give lectures and training courses and to do volunteer work myself." The negative? "I miss the camaraderie of the office. And there's not much stability with my job. I don't know where my next job is coming from, or whether there'll be any work for me next year. Luckily, I'm not the worrying type."

9 As for the future, Gleed-Owen's main aim is to keep learning. "I would never say never about totally changing my career again. I've always been interested in doing humanitarian work." But for now, at least, Britain's reptiles and amphibians are in good hands.

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### CHRIS GLEED-OWEN

**Date of birth:** 7 April 1970

**Nationality:** British

**Current position:** director and principal ecologist, CGO Ecology Ltd

**Work experience:** volunteer on archaeological digs; cartographer / map librarian at Coventry University; digital map editor at Ordnance Survey; research and monitoring officer at the Herpetological Conservation Trust

**Education and training:** BSc in geography; PhD in palaeoecology

**Languages:** French, Spanish

**Hobbies:** travel, music, reading, photography, nature

**Website:** [www.cgoecology.com](http://www.cgoecology.com)

### 4 Understanding the article

a. Decide which paragraph each heading best describes and write them into the article.

Moving house and changing job

From hobby to own business

The problem with charity work

b. Write suitable paragraph headings for the remaining five paragraphs.

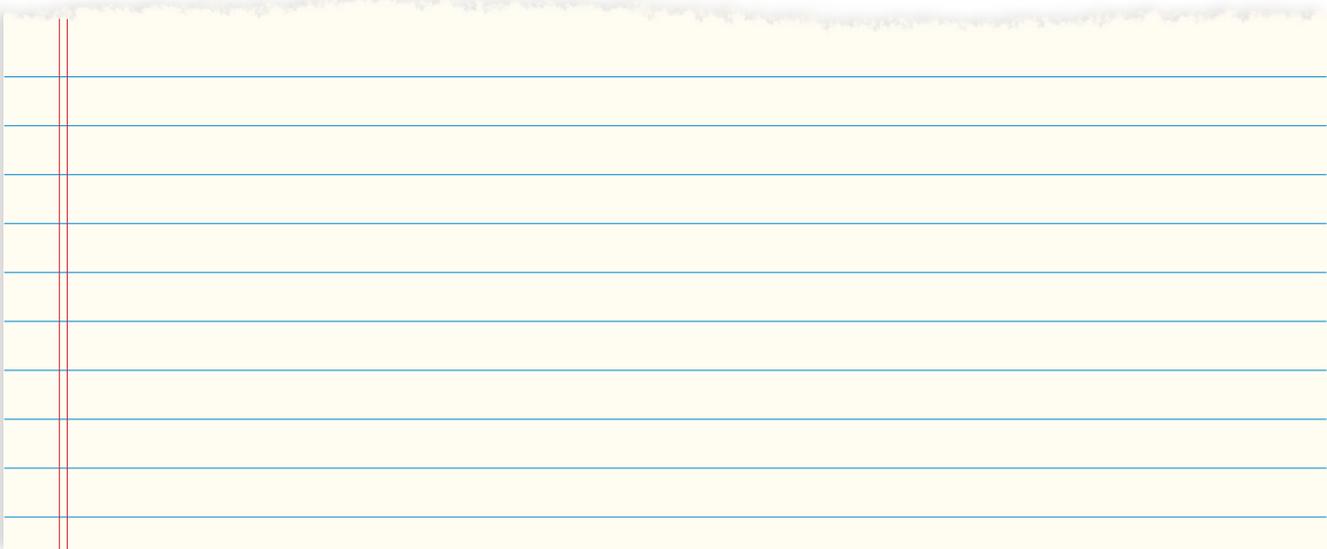
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### 5 Idiomatic expressions

a. Find expressions in the article that match the definitions below.

1. an informal description of an employee whose job it is to move pieces of information around \_\_\_\_\_ (two words, para 6)
2. increase the range of things that someone knows about, has experienced or is able to do \_\_\_\_\_ (three words, para 7)
3. when something is done with the aim of making positive social, political or economical changes \_\_\_\_\_ (four words, para 7)
4. nothing is impossible, anything can happen \_\_\_\_\_ (three words, para 9)
5. managed or cared for with great attention \_\_\_\_\_ (three words, para 9)

b. Make sentences of your own for each of the expressions.



### 6 Idiomatic expressions

Discuss the questions below in small groups.

- Who do you think Glead-Owen's potential clients might be?
- What risks has he taken to set up his own business? Do you consider him to be brave or foolish?
- Do you know of anyone who has turned his or her hobby into a business or job?
- What were you most interested in when you were young? Would it have been possible to turn this interest into a hobby?

### 7 Web task

Go to [www.cgoecology.com](http://www.cgoecology.com) to read more about Glead-Owen's work and see his photographs. Then, follow the links to other related websites to find out more.

