

TEACHER'S GUIDE · EVERYDAY ENGLISH

How many hours can you work?

LEVEL
A2 · Elementary

TIME
60 min

SKILLS
Reading · Speaking · Grammar · Vocabulary

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Learning objectives

In this lesson, you can:

- understand official rules about working hours
- use *have to / don't have to / can / can't*
- talk about jobs and working conditions
- give your opinion about long working weeks

Key vocabulary

average · employer · employee · law · opt out · overtime · limit · record · exception · advice

Materials

- this worksheet
- web page: *Maximum weekly working hours* (GOV.UK)

1 Warm up

SPEAKING

Look at the pictures. What can you see? How are they connected to the topic? Then answer the questions with your teacher.



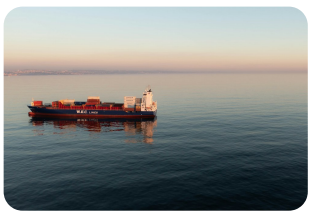
PICTURE A · working late



PICTURE B · a clock



PICTURE C · a hospital worker



PICTURE D · a ship

1. How many hours do you work a day?
2. What time do you start and finish work?
3. Which jobs have very long hours?

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2 Vocabulary preparation

VOCABULARY

Part A: Match the words with the definitions.

employer (n) | law (n) | overtime (n) | average (n) | employee (n) | opt out (v)

1. _____ the normal number when you add numbers and divide them
2. _____ the company or person you work for
3. _____ a person who works for a company
4. _____ a rule from the government
5. _____ to choose not to be part of something
6. _____ extra hours of work after your normal hours

Part B: Jobs. Complete the sentences with the words in the box.

police officer | nurse | cleaner | sailor | manager | security guard

1. A _____ works in a hospital.
2. A _____ works on a ship.
3. A _____ protects a building at night.
4. A _____ helps people when there is a crime.
5. A _____ makes decisions and leads a team.
6. A _____ cleans offices.

3 Main input: read and learn

READING · GRAMMAR

In the UK, there is a law about the maximum number of hours people can work. Read the official government page (the "Overview").

READING

Maximum weekly working hours
GOV.UK (UK government) · official guide · Overview page (about 2 minutes) · free
https://www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours

Read the first part. Answer: What is the maximum number of hours a week on average? Can workers choose to work more?

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Language focus: *have to / don't have to / can / can't*

We use these words to talk about rules at work.

Meaning	Example
It is necessary: have to / has to	Your employer has to keep some records about working hours.
It is not necessary: don't have to / doesn't have to	You don't have to opt out. It's your choice.
It is allowed: can	You can choose to work more.
It is not allowed: can't	If you're under 18, you can't work more than 8 hours a day.

Careful: *don't have to* (not necessary) is very different from *can't* (not allowed). Questions: *Do you have to...? / Does she have to...?*

Practice: Complete the sentences with *can, can't, has to* or *have to*.

1. Normally, you _____ work more than 48 hours a week on average.
2. Your employer _____ keep some records about your working hours.
3. You _____ work more than 48 hours if you opt out.
4. If you're under 18, you _____ work more than 40 hours a week.
5. Do you _____ wear a uniform at work?

4 Reading comprehension

READING

Part A: Read again. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)? Circle.

1. The normal limit is 48 hours a week on average. T / F
2. The average is normally calculated over 17 weeks. T / F
3. Workers can't choose to work more than 48 hours. T / F
4. Workers under 18 can work 10 hours a day. T / F
5. Police officers may have to work more than 48 hours. T / F
6. Employers don't have to keep any records. T / F

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Part B: Who may have to work more than 48 hours a week? Write ✓ or ×.

Job	✓ / ×
a police officer	
a seafarer (a person who works at sea)	
a security guard	
a managing executive who controls his or her own decisions	
a shop assistant	

Part C: Think and answer.

1. Where can workers get advice about working hours?

2. Why do you think there is a limit of 48 hours?

3. Write two sentences about your job. Use *I have to... / I don't have to...*

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5 Speaking practice and discussion

SPEAKING

Part A: Choose TWO cue cards. Talk about each card with your teacher for 1–2 minutes.

Cue card 1: My working week

- How many hours?
- Busy days
- Free time

Cue card 2: Overtime

- Do I do overtime?
- Is it paid?
- Why?

Cue card 3: Work-life balance

- Family time
- Sport and hobbies
- Holidays

Cue card 4: Rules at my company

- Things I have to do
- Things I can't do
- A rule I like

Cue card 5: My ideal job

- Hours
- Place
- Salary and benefits

Part B: Answer the questions with your teacher. Give reasons and examples.

1. How many hours do you work a week? Is it too much? Why?
2. What do you have to do at work every day?
3. What don't you have to do in your job, but you like to do?
4. Is a 48-hour limit a good idea for your country? Why? / Why not?
5. What can companies do to help employees with long hours?

6 Lesson takeaway and wrap-up

REVIEW

Complete the sentences. Then tell your teacher.

1. Three new words from today: _____
2. One rule from the UK law: _____
3. In my job, I have to _____ , but I don't have to _____ .
4. One thing my company can do for a better work-life balance: _____

Takeaway: In the UK, most people can't work more than 48 hours a week on average, unless they choose to. Know the rules in your country — and your limits.

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+ Optional extension / homework

WRITING

Write 50–70 words with the title "Rules in my job". Use: *I have to… / I don't have to… / I can… / I can't…*

Alternative activity:

Make a list of five rules for a healthy working week in your team (for example: "We can't send emails after 8 p.m."). Present it to your teacher in the next class.

References

GOV.UK. (n.d.). *Maximum weekly working hours*. https://www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours

Original materials: vocabulary, language examples and exercises were written for NATeacher for A2 learners.

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Teacher's guide

Learning objectives. By the end of the lesson, the student can: understand the main rules in an official guide about working hours; use *have to / don't have to / can / can't* for obligation and permission; talk about jobs and working conditions; give an opinion with a reason.
Total time: approx. 60 minutes — Warm up 6 · Vocabulary 7 · Main input 10 · Comprehension 14 · Speaking 18 · Wrap-up 5. The extension is optional homework.

▶. Main input: about the resource

Resource: *Maximum weekly working hours: Overview*, GOV.UK (official UK government guide). Free; no login. https://www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours

What to read: the "Overview" page only (about 250 words, 2 minutes). These are UK rules; other countries have different laws — do not compare numbers without checking the law of the student's country.

Copyright: GOV.UK content is published under the Open Government Licence; we show it from the official page so the student uses the real source.

Key information: You cannot work more than 48 hours a week on average – normally averaged over 17 weeks (the 'working time directive' or 'working time regulations'). You can choose to work more by opting out. Under 18: no more than 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week. Exceptions (you may have to work more than 48 hours): jobs with 24-hour staffing; armed forces, emergency services or police; security and surveillance; domestic servants in a private household; seafarers and similar; jobs where working time is not measured and you control your decisions (e.g. a managing executive). Advice: the Acas helpline. Employers need to keep some records about working hours.

1. Warm up

6 mins.

Show the pictures and elicit words (*office, clock, nurse, ship*). Ask the questions. Help the student answer in full sentences: "I work nine hours a day."

Possible answers: "They are about working hours: working late, time, and jobs with long hours like nurses and sailors."
Support: give times on the board (8:00–17:00). **Challenge:** ask "Is overtime normal in your country?"

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2. Vocabulary preparation

7 mins.

The student completes Part A and Part B alone. Check together, say the words aloud and ask the student to repeat the difficult ones.

Part A

1. average
2. employer
3. employee
4. law
5. opt out
6. overtime

Part B

1. nurse 2. sailor 3. security guard 4. police officer 5. manager 6. cleaner

British and American English: British *a 48-hour week*, *holiday*; American often *vacation*. *Seafarer* (formal) = *sailor*. *Opt out* is a phrasal verb: "I opted out of the 48-hour week."

3. Main input and language focus

10 mins.

Open the page on screen. The student reads the first three paragraphs for the gist questions, then the rest of the Overview. **Answers:** 48 hours a week on average (normally averaged over 17 weeks); yes, they can opt out of the 48-hour week.

Present the language focus in 1–2 minutes: elicit the rule from the examples, then move to the practice.

Practice

1. can't
2. has to
3. can
4. can't
5. have to

Common mistakes: "She have to" → "She **has** to"; "I must to work" → "I **must work** / I **have to** work"; "You don't have to smoke here" when the meaning is "not allowed" → "You **can't** smoke here".

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4. Reading comprehension

14 mins.

The student reads again and works alone. Check together and ask the student to show the sentence in the text.

Part A

1. T 2. T 3. F (they can opt out) 4. F (maximum 8 hours a day) 5. T 6. F (they need to keep some records)

Part B

police officer ✓ · seafarer ✓ · security guard ✓ (security and surveillance) · managing executive ✓ · shop assistant × (not in the list)

Part C

1. From the Acas helpline (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service). 2. Open answer, e.g. "Because long hours are bad for health and safety." 3. Open answer, e.g. "I have to answer emails every day. I don't have to work at the weekend."

Accept: "Acas" or "the Acas helpline" in Part C1; any logical reason in C2. **Support:** read the list of exceptions together and explain difficult jobs with gestures or examples. **Challenge:** the student explains the UK rules to a new colleague in four sentences with *have to / can / can't*.

5. Speaking practice and discussion

18 mins (cue cards 6 · questions 12).

The student chooses two cards and speaks for 1–2 minutes on each. Then ask the five questions one by one. Let the student finish, then ask follow-up questions: "Why?", "How often?", "And your colleagues?"

Model answer (Q1): "I work about 50 hours a week. It's too much, because I don't have time for my family."
Evaluate: correct *have to / has to / don't have to / can / can't*; work vocabulary; an opinion with *because*; answers longer than one sentence.
Correction: note mistakes while the student speaks and correct 2–3 of them at the end, so you don't interrupt fluency.

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6. Lesson takeaway and wrap-up

5 mins.

The student completes the sentences and says them aloud. Read the takeaway and ask: "What are the rules about working hours in your country?" (if the student doesn't know, suggest checking an official source).

Possible answers: "employer, average, opt out"; "Workers under 18 can't work more than 8 hours a day."; "I have to write reports, but I don't have to travel."

+. Optional extension / homework

Check: 50–70 words; correct *have to / has to / don't have to / can / can't*; work vocabulary. Model: "I work in a bank. I have to start at 8 a.m. and I have to wear a suit. I don't have to work at weekends. I can work from home on Fridays, but I can't use my phone with clients."

✓. Did the student reach the objectives?

- Can the student explain the main UK rules (48 hours, opt out, under 18)?
- Does the student distinguish *don't have to* and *can't*?
- Can the student describe the rules of their own job?
- Can the student give an opinion about long working weeks with a reason?

✓. Resource verification log

Resource	Institution / URL	Type · length	Checks (21 Oct 2026)	Result
Maximum weekly working hours	GOV.UK (UK government) https://www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours	Official web guide · Overview page, about 250 words (2 min)	Page loads; content matches the exercises; free, no login; plain English suitable for A2; not a language school	**Approved**

Photos: credits listed in the references (Unsplash). No image links are included in the worksheet.

References

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