

STUDENT'S WORKSHEET · BUSINESS ENGLISH

Can we work less and achieve more?

LEVEL
B2 · Upper-Intermediate

TIME
60 min

SKILLS
Reading · Speaking · Grammar · Vocabulary

Learning objectives

In this lesson, you can:

- understand a news report about a large workplace experiment
- use the passive and impersonal reporting structures
- evaluate evidence for and against a four-day week
- make recommendations about working patterns

Key vocabulary

trial · burnout · revenue · productivity · permanent · breakthrough · loss of pay · embrace · sceptical · work-life balance

Materials

- this worksheet
- news article: *UK four-day week trial hailed as a 'major breakthrough'...* (Euronews)

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 · a calendar



PICTURE B · a team at work

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1. How many days a week do you work? Would you change it?
2. What would you do with one extra day off every week?
3. Do you think people work better with shorter weeks? Why?

2 Vocabulary preparation

VOCABULARY

Part A: Match the words with the definitions.

revenue (n) | breakthrough (n) | trial (n) | permanent (adj) | burnout (n) | productivity (n)

1. _____ a test of a new idea for a limited period
2. _____ physical and mental exhaustion caused by long-term stress at work
3. _____ the money a company receives from its sales
4. _____ how much work is done compared with the time or money used
5. _____ lasting for a long time or for ever
6. _____ an important development that solves a problem

Part B: Prepositions. Complete the phrases with *in*, *of*, *to*, *by* or *from*.

1. take part _____ a trial
2. with no loss _____ pay
3. results were presented _____ MPs
4. revenue rose _____ 1.4% on average
5. switch _____ five days _____ four
6. a significant decline _____ burnout

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3 Main input: read and learn

READING · GRAMMAR

In 2022, 61 UK companies tested a four-day week. Euronews, a European news channel, reported the results. Read the whole article.

NEWS

UK four-day week trial hailed as a 'major breakthrough' as 92% of companies keep the shorter week

Euronews · Luke Hurst · 21 February 2023 · about 600 words (3 minutes) · free
https://www.euronews.com/2023/02/21/uk-four-day-week-trial-hailed-as-a-major-breakthrough-as-92-of-companies-keep-the-shorter-

Read the first paragraphs. Answer: How many companies took part in the trial? What percentage are continuing with the four-day week?

Language focus: the passive and impersonal reporting

News reports often use the passive to focus on results, not on who did the action.

Structure	Example
Past passive: was / were + past participle	The trial was hailed as a major breakthrough.
Agent with by	The trial was run by 4 Day Week Global.
Future passive: will be + past participle	The results will be presented to MPs.
Impersonal: It is said / reported that...	It was reported that burnout declined significantly.
Personal: is said / reported to + infinitive	Burnout was reported to have declined significantly.

Practice: Rewrite the sentences in the passive. Start with the words given.

1. 4 Day Week Global ran the trial. → The trial _____ by 4 Day Week Global.
2. Researchers analysed the results. → The results _____ .
3. The companies cut working weeks from five days to four. → Working weeks _____ from five days to four.
4. They will present the findings to MPs. → The findings _____ to MPs.
5. People say the four-day week works. → The four-day week is _____ work.

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4 Reading comprehension

READING

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

1. 61 UK companies took part in a six-month trial. T / F
2. Employees received less pay for the shorter week. T / F
3. 56 companies are continuing with the four-day week. T / F
4. 18 companies have made the change permanent. T / F
5. Average revenue fell slightly during the trial. T / F
6. 71% of workers reported lower levels of burnout. T / F

Part B: Choose the correct answer.

1. Who ran the trial?
   (a) The UK government.
   (b) 4 Day Week Global, with Autonomy, the 4 Day Week Campaign and university researchers.
   (c) Tyler Grange.
2. At Tyler Grange, workers were...
   (a) 28% more productive. (b) 14% less tired. (c) 28% less tired.
3. In the earlier international trial with 33 companies...
   (a) 96.9% of employees wanted to keep the shorter week.
   (b) most companies returned to five days. (c) only US companies took part.
4. Which organisation was the first UK local authority to trial a four-day week?
   (a) Boston College. (b) Autonomy. (c) South Cambridgeshire District Council.

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Part C: Think and answer.

1. Why might some employers still be sceptical, even after these results? Give two reasons.

2. Simon Ursell says employers "should embrace" the four-day week. Do you agree? Why? / Why not?

3. What would need to change in your company to make a four-day week work?

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: Work-life balance

- What it means to me
- My biggest challenge
- One change I'd make

Cue card 2: Productivity

- How we measure it
- Time-wasters
- Tools that help

Cue card 3: Company culture

- Long hours: a sign of commitment?
- Trust
- Flexibility

Cue card 4: Experiments at work

- A change we tested
- Results
- What we learnt

Cue card 5: Burnout

- Warning signs
- Causes
- Prevention

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

1. What would you do with an extra day off every week, and how would it affect your work?
2. Which industries could adopt a four-day week easily, and which couldn't? Why?
3. How should a company measure whether a four-day week is working?
4. Do shorter weeks really reduce burnout, or do they just put more pressure on the other four days?
5. If your CEO proposed a four-day week trial, what would you advise them to do first?

6 Lesson takeaway and wrap-up

REVIEW

Complete the sentences. Then tell your teacher.

1. Three useful expressions from today: _____
2. The most convincing piece of evidence in the article: _____
3. It is often said that _____ , but in my opinion _____
4. One idea from today that I could suggest at work: _____

Takeaway: In the UK trial, most companies kept the four-day week, revenue stayed broadly stable and burnout fell. Good workplace experiments measure results carefully before making permanent decisions.

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+ Optional extension / homework

WRITING

Write a short proposal (150–180 words) to your manager recommending (or not recommending) a four-day week trial. Use evidence from the article and at least three passive structures.

Alternative activity:

Prepare a two-minute presentation for your team: “The four-day week: what the evidence says”. Present it to your teacher in the next class.

References

Hurst, L. (2023, February 21). *UK four-day week trial hailed as a ‘major breakthrough’ as 92% of companies keep the shorter week*. Euronews. https://www.euronews.com/2023/02/21/uk-four-day-week-trial-hailed-as-a-major-breakthrough-as-92-of-companies-keep-the-shorter-

Original materials: vocabulary, language examples and exercises were written for NATeacher for B2 learners.

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