

WORK / LIFE BALANCE

Watch the [video](#) titled “6 Tips to Improve Your Work-Life Balance” by BBC Ideas.

1 WARM UP

Task 1: Decide if the concepts below belong to traditional or modern workplaces.

1. Fixed working hours.
2. Work from home.
3. Open floor plan.
4. Office cubicles.
5. Flexible working hours.
6. Work from the office only.

Traditional Workplace	Modern Workplace
Fixed working hours Office cubicles Work from office only	Flexible working hours Open floor plan Work from home

Task 2: Discuss the following questions as a class.

- What are the pros and cons of each concept?
- Does your company follow any of the concepts?



2 WORK-LIFE BALANCE VOCABULARY

Task 1: Match the words from the box to the correct definitions.

Hot desk Maternity leave Overtime Chit chat Resign Amenities

1. A period of absence from work for a mother before and after the birth of her child. **Maternity Leave**
2. To work more hours than usual. **Overtime**
3. When workers use a single physical work space / desk at different times. **Hot Desk**
4. To decide to leave a job, through your own decision. **Resign**
5. A desirable or useful feature of a building / workspace. **Amenities**
6. Informal conversation about an unimportant topic. **Chit Chat**

Task 2: Practice using the words by answering the questions.

- a. What is your opinion of the **hot desk** concept?
- b. In your country, do workers receive paid **maternity leave**?
- c. In your job, do you receive paid **overtime**?
- d. Is having a **chit chat** an important part of office culture? And, is it good for productivity?
- e. Have you ever **resigned** from a job? Describe your experience.
- f. What office **amenities** would you like your company to add to your current office?



3 VIDEO ANALYSIS

Study the 6 tips to improve your work-life balance from the [video](#).

Tip 1: Turn Off Email

Task 1: Complete the text by using the words from the box, then answer the questions.

levels

check

reduce

“Half of all people who **check** their emails outside of work hours show signs of high **levels** of stress. The easiest thing you can do to **reduce** your stress levels from work is to take the number off your email app. That single act is the simplest thing we can do to reduce our stress levels.”

1. Do you check and respond to emails during your free time?
2. Have you ever turned off your email? Are there any disadvantages to doing this?

Tip 2: Take a Lunch Break

Task 2: Complete the text by swapping the underlined words for the synonyms in the box.

Illogical

Routine

Stimulated

“The second best change that anyone can make is to take a lunch break. The **routine** of eating 'al desco' has become so common now it's contributing to an increase in our stress levels. It is understandable that when you're sitting at your desk and you have hundreds of emails to respond to, walking away and taking a break can feel **illogical** but scientists advise that the best way to feel **stimulated** is to take that pause.”

1. Do you agree that taking a lunch break is important? Explain.
2. Describe a typical lunch break in your culture or at your company.



Tip 3: Monk Mode

Task 3: Complete the text by choosing the correct word, then answer the questions.

“More and more of us are finding it **hard** to get things done because of all the interruptions. Some experts **recommend** trying a monk mode **morning**. Monk mode is when we go somewhere that is **silent** where there's no interruptions, and we get a block of ninety minutes of work done, twice a week, then we go to the office as normal. The added **advantages** are that we've missed the **commute** and got our emails and our meetings done.”

1. Would it be possible for you to try a 'monk mode' morning?
2. Describe your ideal 'monk mode' morning.

Tip 4: Chat More

Task 4: Complete the text by using the words from the box, then answer the questions.

discussions

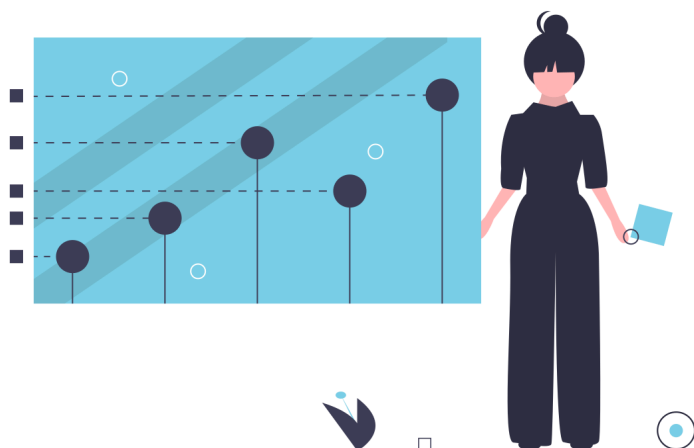
creativity

increase

lead

“Research shows that one of the best ways to increase workplace **creativity** is to **increase** the amount of chat. The chat can be about last night's TV, or can be about what's happening in sports games because normally those conversations then lead to work **discussions**. One of the best ways to increase creativity in your office is to move the location of the coffee machine. Having the coffee machine, the kettle and the water cooler in a different place will actually **lead** to more people having conversations.”

1. Do you think that too many conversations could lead to a decrease in productivity?
2. Does your company encourage people to socialise at work? Explain.



Tip 5: Have a Digital Sabbath

Task 5: Match the vocabulary to their meaning, read the quote, then answer the questions.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 1. Sabbath | a. A physical or mental obstacle preventing progress. 2 |
| 2. Barrier | b. Feeling worried / nervous about something. 3 |
| 3. Anxious | c. A weekly day of rest. The word has a religious origin. 1 |

“Scientists have found that one of the biggest barriers to being creative in our jobs is stress, and all of us with our phones feel more stressed than ever before. You need to give yourself permission to have a digital Sabbath, to take time away from your work at the weekend, for a bit of refreshment. Discourage your boss from emailing at the weekend because it leads to people feeling anxious. Anxious people can't be creative.”

1. In the modern world, is it possible to take a digital sabbath?
2. How do you try to reduce stress and be creative in your professional life?

Tip 6: 40 Hours is Enough

Task 6: Complete the text by swapping the underlined words for the synonyms in the box.

Invigorate

Honour

Rejuvenated

“In the modern world we often **honour** overwork and people working long hours. But, in fact all of the evidence is starting to point to the fact that maybe that's not the best idea. Maybe 40 hours of work a week is the right amount. Use our breaks and our evenings to **invigorate** ourselves so when we come back to our desks we're **rejuvenated**. Doing 40 hours of work is probably enough.”

1. In your culture, is overwork celebrated?
2. Do you ever work more than 40 hours? How do you feel afterwards?



4 WORK BENEFITS

Task 1: Rank the work benefits below from most to least important for you.

- _____: Flexible Hours.
- _____: Sick pay.
- _____: Company car. .
- _____: Remote work.
- _____: 30 days of paid holiday.
- _____: Free gym access.
- _____: Health insurance.
- _____: Company car.

Task 2: Discuss the following questions as a class.

- a. Which of the benefits from the list are a legal requirement in your country?
- b. Why do companies offer employee benefits?
- c. Are there any other benefits that you think are essential?
- d. Are you more productive when working from home or the office?
- e. For the company, what are the advantages of offering free gym access?
- f. Would you like to have a company car? Are there any disadvantages?
- g. Discuss why each point from the list is considered a benefit.



5 COMMON BUSINESS EXPRESSIONS

Task 1: Create the idiom by choosing the correct word.

1. Move up in the **world**.
a. world b. shop.
2. Get the **sack**.
a. pull b. sack
3. Burn the **candle** at both ends.
a. newspaper b. candle
4. Off the **hook**.
a. hook b. habit.
5. Hanging by a **thread**.
a. needle b. thread



Task 2: Match the following meanings (a-e) to the correct idioms above (1-5).

- a. To work from early in the morning, until late at night. **3**
- b. To be in a dangerous, uncertain position. **5**
- c. To no longer be in difficulty or trouble. **4**
- d. To lose your job suddenly. To be fired. **2**
- e. To become more wealthy, successful, etc. **1**

Task 3: Discuss each of the idioms as a class.

1. Describe a time you **burned the candle at both ends** to meet a deadline.
2. Have you ever **gotten the sack**? Describe your experience.
3. Describe a time when a project was **hanging by a thread**. What happened?
4. Describe your plan to **move up in the world**.
5. If a worker at your job is constantly late, are they punished or **let off the hook**?



6 GRAMMAR: REVIEW OF THE TENSES

Task 1: Each table gives a recap of a tense. Choose the correct title from the box.

Past Simple	Past Continuous Tense
Present Continuous Tense	Present Simple

Present Simple	
Use	Used to talk about habits, general truths, repeated actions or unchanging situations, emotions and wishes.
Structure	Subject + base form of the verb <i>The 3rd person singular takes an -s at the end.</i>
Negative	Subject + do not / don't + base form of verb <i>The 3rd person singular</i> Subject + does not / doesn't + base form of verb
Examples	• I don't go to school on weekends. • She doesn't talk to her sister every week. • He walks to work.

Present Continuous	
Use	1. To talk about something that is happening right now. When we use the tense for this purpose, you can use time words like <i>now</i> and <i>at the moment</i>. 2. To talk about something that might happen in the future.
Structure	Subject + <u>am</u> / <u>is</u> / <u>are</u> + verb + ing
Negative	Subject + <u>am</u> / <u>is</u> / <u>are</u> + not + verb + ing
Examples	• I am not talking to you. • She is walking the dog. • He is cooking dinner. • It is raining outside. • We are not swimming in the pool. • They are going to the cinema.

Simple Past		
Use	Used to talk about an action that is finished in the past. The action can be in the recent past or distant past - the duration is not important.	
Structure	Subject + verb in past form	
Negative	Subject + did not / didn't + verb in base form	
Examples	Regular Verbs Add -ed to the end of the verb. Irregular Verbs Learn irregular forms.	• I didn't talk to you. • She walked to school yesterday. • He cooked dinner last night. • It didn't rain last week. • We went to the mall last night. • They ran the race this morning. • You found your keys in the room.

Past Continuous		
Use	Used to talk about an action that continued for some time in the past. The tense describes actions that happened at a specific time in the past.	
Structure	Subject + <u>was</u> / <u>were</u> + verb + ing	
Negative	Subject + <u>was</u> / <u>were</u> + not + verb + ing	
Examples	• I was talking to her at 9:00. • She was walking the dog at that time. • He was cooking dinner when we arrived. • It was raining outside when we went on the hike. • We were not swimming in the pool at that time. • They were going to the cinema when I spoke to them. • You were running the race.	



Task 2: Read the text and decide which tense to use. Fill in the gaps, think carefully!

John (to be) **is** 33 years old. He (to live) **lives** in Liverpool, England. However, he (to be) **was** born in Wales. His family (to move) **moved** to Liverpool when he (to be) **was** 10 years old. Now, he (to work) **works** as a marketing manager for a multinational company, and his job is very tiring.

He (to wake up) **wakes** at 6:00 am every day, and he (to get) **gets** home at 8:00 pm. Therefore, he (to think) **is thinking** of resigning. It is a difficult decision because he (to receive) **receives** great benefits. He (to get) **gets** 30 days of paid holiday, a company car and free gym access. In his previous job, 5 years ago, he (to have) **had** no benefits which was a nightmare. So, John is going to look for a new job with good benefits, and a better work-life balance.

Task 3: Discuss the following questions as a class.

- Do you work in the same city in which you were born?
- What is your job title?
- How long have you worked in your current position?
- Describe your work routine.
- Do you have a good work-life balance?
- Describe how you manage your work-life balance.



HOMework

Read the [article](#) titled “Tips to Maintain a Work/Life Balance” by NaturalTalent.com.

1 WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Read the article below, then write detailed answers to the questions on the next page.

1. Create a Routine: We are creatures of habit and need routine. Those employees who are now working from home are often missing their routine, are getting bored and even feeling guilty, especially if their partner is working even longer hours at home. Maintaining some sort of new routine with specific boundaries between work and ‘play’ is important.

2. Create a ‘Virtual Commute’: The commute to the office created physical distance between the home and work; it was a time to plan the day ahead, review it or start to unwind. Walking from a bedroom into a home office doesn’t have the same effect. So, try to get some exercise in the morning and after work to help you destress.

3. Communicate. Explaining to your loved ones that, even though you are at home, you still have to work is important. After a full day of online meetings you may also have to explain that you don’t fancy filling every evening with more screen time at Zoom parties or virtual quiz nights! But, either way, communication is important as you need to express how you feel to your loved ones.

4. Avoid ‘Screen Fatigue:’ Working from home has resulted in an increase in meetings and for some has meant over 10

hours in front of the laptop. ‘Screen fatigue’ has become commonplace. So, it’s more important than ever to review which meetings are essential, change the frequency of them and allow for 5 - 15 minutes in-between each one.

5. Take Your Breaks: Make sure that you are not sedentary for 10 hours or more a day in virtual meetings and take regular breaks; go for a short walk if you can, sit in the garden, or do some home exercise. You’ll be more engaged and productive as a result.

6. Block out Time in Your Diary: If a number of people have access to your online diary, make sure that you diarize your regular breaks and block out time during the day to actually do your work and for strategic planning time; this means you can avoid having to work longer in the evenings just to catch up with emails and write reports.

7. Unplug: If you’ve physically left the ‘home office’ and are dedicating time to children or a ‘date night’ then switch off the notifications of your work emails. Similarly, do so when you are exercising. Then try to switch off all devices at least 1 hour before bedtime. Again, if you can, have one day a week without work emails or, better still, any emails.

Task 2: On a separate piece of paper, write detailed answers to the questions

1. Why is it important to have a routine? Describe your routine.
2. What are the benefits of a commute? Describe your commute.
3. How does effective communication improve your work-life balance?
4. Have you ever experienced 'screen fatigue'? How can you avoid it in the future?
5. Do you take regular breaks at work? Describe how you relax at work.
6. Do you block out time for a lunch break each day? Describe what you do on your lunch break.
7. Describe how you "unplug" from work in your free time.
8. How does routine benefit remote workers' engagement and avoid boredom?
9. Why is a 'virtual commute' helpful for transitioning between home and work when remote?
10. Why are breaks and physical activity essential for remote work productivity?
11. How does time blocking in your schedule contribute to work-life balance?
12. What's the value of disconnecting from work notifications during personal time?

