



## Unit 2 Work

Business studies / Sociology: Workplace stress


Reading skills: Main and supporting ideas;  
making notes

Writing skills: Topic sentences

### 1 SPEAKING

- a**  Tell your partner about two or three things that cause you stress. Think about:
- study
  - money
  - work
  - travel/transport
  - family
- b**  Talk about different things that can cause people stress in these situations.
- 1 when they are studying at university
  - 2 when they are working

### 2 VOCABULARY Stress

- a** All these sentences include the word family *stress*. Is the meaning the same in each sentence?
- 1 She managed very well with the stress of studying and working part-time.
  - 2 The main stress in this phrase is on the noun.
  - 3 That exam was one of the most stressful I have ever done.
  - 4 The tutor stressed the importance of not using too many quotes in our essays.
  - 5 He feels stressed about the number of assignments he has to do in the next month.
  - 6 When 'record' is a noun, the first syllable is stressed.
- b** Sort sentences 1–6 into three groups according to the meaning.
- a worry
  - b strong pronunciation
  - c making a point very clear
- c** Decide if the word *stress* in each sentence is a noun, verb or adjective.
- d** Write three sentences using the word family *stress*. Use a different meaning in each sentence.
- e**  Read your sentences to your partner. Are your sentences similar?



### 3 READING

- a** Read the introduction to an essay about workplace stress. Choose the best summary of each paragraph.

Paragraph 1

- a Both workers and the companies are worried about how stressful many jobs have become.
- b Companies are worried about the way their workers use technology in the workplace.

Paragraph 2

- a Problems in families can cause as much stress for workers as their job does.
- b Trying to have a good life outside the workplace is one way to help with a stressful job.

Paragraph 3

- a Employees are worried about the health problems caused by sitting all day.
- b When workers take small breaks between tasks they do at work it can help with stress.

- b** Read the text again and answer the questions below by making notes.

- 1 What would companies like their employees to do?
- 2 What's the reaction of staff?
- 3 Why is work-life balance important?
- 4 Why doesn't work-life balance always help stress?
- 5 What kind of breaks should workers have during the day?
- 6 Why are they important?

#### STUDY SKILLS: NOTETAKING FROM READING TEXTS

- 1 Which notes in 3b match the correct summaries in 3a?
- 2 Which exercise focused on the main ideas in the text and which focused on more detailed points?
- 3 When you put the answers to these exercises together what do you have?
- 4 How can you use this strategy in the future?

## Managing workplace stress

- 1 The stress employees feel in the workplace has become a common problem in recent years for both employees and the companies they work for. Employers want their staff to work as hard as possible, but employees say they are always tired and have problems achieving work goals. Companies often say that technology has made many jobs easier to do and, as a result, they expect their workers to be more efficient. However, employees say that technology means that work becomes something they can never escape from and makes them feel more tired. Companies realise that their workers are stressed and they know that this makes them less productive.
- 2 One solution to workplace stress is making sure staff have good work-life balance (Delecta, 2011). This means that workers should think carefully about the number of hours they work, but, also, more importantly how they spend their free time. If an employee's work-life balance is good, they will probably be happier in their job and be more productive. Clearly, it is a good idea for workers to spend leisure time with their family doing activities they enjoy. However, families can sometimes have problems and this can also result in stress. While many people say it is important to have work-life balance this often depends on what a person's personal life is like. Workers' health, the number of people they have in their family and the amount of money they earn are all factors that play a part in the quality of a person's private life. It is not easy to have good work-life balance if these factors also create stress.
- 3 When we talk about taking breaks from work, we often think of weekends and holidays. However, it is also useful to consider breaks that workers make during their work day. It is not healthy for a worker to sit in front of their computer screen for eight hours a day. It is also difficult for them to concentrate on their work for all that time. Apart from the normal breaks for a hot drink and lunch, research has shown that short, informal breaks mean that employees work better (Trougakos & Hideg, 2009). For example, they may have a quick chat to their colleagues in the office next door or go and have a quick look at a newspaper. This means an employee can rest between one job and the next. Having short, informal breaks during the work day is one way that workplace stress can be reduced and employees can become more productive.



## 4 LANGUAGE FOCUS Topic sentences

**a** In paragraph 1 of the essay introduction, the first sentence is underlined. This is the topic sentence and it includes the main idea that is developed in the paragraph. Find the topic sentences in paragraphs 2 and 3. It is not always the first sentence in a paragraph.

**b** A topic sentence usually includes the main topic of the paragraph as well as the writer's point of view. Complete the table with the topic sentences from paragraphs 2 and 3.

main topic	point of view
1 The stress employees feel in the workplace	has become a common problem in recent years for both employees and the companies they work for
2	
3	

**c** Decide if the following are good ideas or bad ideas. Write *G* or *B*.

Topic sentences ...

- 1 should be clear and easy to understand \_\_\_\_
- 2 should be as long as possible \_\_\_\_
- 3 shouldn't include too much detail \_\_\_\_
- 4 shouldn't make a link between paragraphs \_\_\_\_

**d** Read the sentence halves and decide which are main topics (MT) and which are points of view (PV).

- 1 often means dissatisfied staff who are not productive \_\_\_\_
- 2 the physical work environment and employee workspaces \_\_\_\_
- 3 has often resulted in more work for those employees who are left \_\_\_\_
- 4 keeping salary costs low to increase profit \_\_\_\_
- 5 can be an effective way for a company to manage employee stress \_\_\_\_
- 6 have an important part to play in decreasing employee stress \_\_\_\_
- 7 staff cuts as a result of IT \_\_\_\_
- 8 providing a free physical fitness programme \_\_\_\_

**e** Join the halves in 4d together to make topic sentences.

### f CRITICAL THINKING IDENTIFYING POINT OF VIEW

In the sentences in 4d, is the writer's point of view given in a very direct way (for example, *in my opinion*, *I believe*, etc.)? Why / Why not?


**g** Write a topic sentence for the paragraph below.

Many employees enjoy their work because of the people they work with. They often become friendly with their colleagues and see each other outside work time. This means that a workplace can also be a social environment where employees develop beneficial relationships. Allowing employees to have short breaks increases the opportunities for them to do this. Many studies (Page 2016, Jory 2015) recognise the importance of social relationships in the workplace. They suggest that a healthy social environment usually means that employees have a positive attitude towards their work and makes them more productive.

## 5 WRITING

**a** Work in pairs. Use the notes below to write a paragraph about work-life balance and free time. Add your own topic sentence.

- key part of free time → manage carefully → use of technology
- a lot of time online / checking phones → don't connect with family & friends
- time with people = more satisfying, relaxing
- good management of finances important → use credit card too much → debt → stress
- free time not enjoyable → worried about money
- third area needs management → household tasks (cleaning, shopping, washing clothes)
- household tasks boring → people living in same house share → more quality free time
- result: employee wants work-life balance → think about all three areas

**b**  Compare your paragraph and topic sentence with another pair.



## 6 READING EXTENSION

**a** Read the text below and choose the correct answer to each question.

- |                                |  |                                  |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 Who is the text written for? | 2 Where can you find a text like this? | 3 What is the style of the text? |
| a university lecturers         | a in an academic journal               | a direct and neutral             |
| b university students          | b in a textbook                        | b indirect and formal            |
| c high school students         | c in a student handbook                | c direct and informal            |

**b** Find solutions in the text to these student problems.

- I did some study today, but my bedroom really needed cleaning and I didn't get as much done as I'd hoped. I'm a bit worried about my progress.
- I'm studying really hard – about 15 hours a day – and not really stopping to eat meals. The problem is I can't remember a lot of what I've studied.
- I've got a large family and I miss them if I don't see them. It's a bit difficult achieving all my study goals.
- After studying all day, I feel really tired at night. But then I have trouble getting to sleep.
- I think I'm doing all the right things: I have a study programme, I try to relax and do some exercise but I still feel stressed!

**c** Read the text again and note down useful new vocabulary.

## Maintaining a healthy study-life balance

**Maintaining a steady and on-going work-life balance can be especially hard for students, particularly when you have to manage study with family life, social commitments, free time activities and perhaps even a part-time job. But a healthy balance is extremely important not only for study success but also for mental and physical health too.**

› Here's a list of some key strategies:

### Time management

This is often the most important factor in achieving good study-life balance. It's easy to get distracted and do no study, and then you end up feeling stressed. This, of course, means you are unproductive and you achieve nothing. Then, in your free time, you worry about the fact that you're unproductive and you never manage to relax. Altogether, this is a dangerous combination and the simple answer is to create a schedule – and stick to it.

### Study programmes

Draw up a study programme that gives you plenty of time to complete assignments and revise for tests and exams. Intensive study at the last minute isn't effective and will disrupt your daily routine. Once again, you will feel stressed and probably sleep badly. Create a schedule built around your regular hours and work towards achievable goals. Each time you reach one of your goals, you will have a sense of accomplishment and this will motivate you to keep going. But remember to include some down-time in your schedule – time when you do something else in order to relax. And don't always work late into the evening otherwise you won't get enough essential rest. When you create a study programme it's important to draw a line between what is study-time and what is down-time. There's a good chance that you study in your bedroom and it's very easy for the distinction between the two to become unclear so it's difficult to know when you're studying and when you're resting or relaxing.

### Free time

It's important to think about making time for friends and family when you are studying. Doing something fun that takes you right away from study is an effective way of relaxing. However, at the same time, don't be afraid to say 'no' to invitations if you feel you are under a lot of study pressure. Be practical and sensible about how much free time you can allow yourself.

### Health

If you eat well, sleep well and get some exercise then you should have good health. This is important because a healthy body also means a healthy brain and you can manage the demands that study puts on you. So pay attention to your diet and try to get between seven and nine hours sleep each night. Exercise is not only healthy it is also a good way to decrease stress, so getting some exercise is a very beneficial way of using non-study time. If you can get the right study-life balance, you have a greater chance of succeeding at university. However, if you try all of the suggestions above and you still feel anxious or stressed, then it would be a good idea to talk to your tutor or a counsellor.

