

Remote vs Office Work (teacher's notes)

1. Warm-up (Activity 1) 5 mins

Aims: to break the ice and foster a safe environment for learning.

Procedure: introduce the topic. Ask students if they work in an office or from home? Which in their opinion is better?

2. Vocabulary work (Activity 2) 5 mins

Aims: to learn topic-related vocabulary

Procedure: Ask students to put collocations into two groups: those related to remote work and those related to office work.

Key:

Remote work:

allocate time toward side projects

eschew personal visits

thrive while working independently

check in consistently

focus without supervision

evade extensive work commutes

reduces expenses across the board

experience issues with work / personal boundaries

"well-defined deliverables"

measure performance in terms of output

Office work:

casual banter

impromptu meetings

touch base with the employer

water cooler gossip

excessive commuting

serendipitous encounters

foster a more collaborative culture

3. What do you think? (Activity 3) 10 mins

Aims: to raise students' interest in the topic, provide free speaking practice and apply new vocabulary in the discussion

Procedure: tell the students they will now look at some facts about telecommuting in the US from the report "2017 State of Telecommuting in the U.S. Employee Workforce".

Participants read the statements and choose the option they think is correct. For each statement ask several participants their opinion before saying the correct answer.

Key:

1. 3.9 million U.S. employees, or 2.9 percent of the total U.S. workforce, work from home at least half of the time.
2. There has been a 115% percent increase in telecommuting between 2005 - 2015 (3.9 million employees in 2015, up from 1.8 million in 2005).
3. The average telecommuter is 46 years of age or older, and 50% of telecommuters are 45 or older.
4. Approximately 53% have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 37% of non-telecommuters.
5. The average annual income of telecommuters is \$4000 per year higher than those who work on-site.
6. About the same number of women and men telecommute.
7. Full-time employees are four times more likely to have the option to work at home than part-time employees.
8. Forty percent more U.S. employers offered flexible workplace options in 2017 than did in 2010.

4. Discussion (Activity 4) 10 mins

Aims: to raise students' interest in the topic, provide free speaking practice and apply new vocabulary in the discussion

Procedure: Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs. Have a short group feedback in the end.

5. Pros and Cons (Activity 5) 15 mins

Aims: to provide student(s) with speaking practices and apply lesson vocabulary in practice

Procedure:

Show students the video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXWW62f8hF8>

Then tell the students they will need to work in pairs. Together they will need to come up with pros and cons for remote work and office work and complete the table.

Possible answers:

The benefits of telecommuting

For the employer:

Cost savings on offices and parking.

Travel costs (both to and from work offices, from other sites or even from home).

Lower equipment costs (when employees work at home, many of them use their own computers, phones, faxes, paper, etc.).

Relocation costs (if you are hiring new employees, you might not need to pay to relocate them).

Retention of talented employees who are trying to juggle work, family and other obligations, or who might want to work in a different location.

For the employee:

Savings of time and money because they do not have to travel to and from work.

Savings in parking fees, gas and car maintenance.

Avoiding commuting stress.

More opportunities (you are no longer tied to one location).

Greater productivity (because of fewer interruptions and more total time to work).

More flexibility managing daily life.

Less exposure to people who come to work sick.

Savings from purchasing fewer work-related clothes, shoes, accessories, etc.

The downsides of telecommuting

For the employer:

Lack of oversight and the potential for employees to shirk duties.

Security concerns (not all jobs allow for sensitive work to be transferred to home computers).

Departmental morale might suffer, especially if some employees are allowed to telecommute and others are not allowed.

Loss of on-site brainstorming.

Need to provide appropriate technology to work at home.

For the employee:

Isolation. Some employees may no longer feel connected to others at work.

Loss of clear boundaries between work and home.

Accomplishments can be harder to showcase.

You may lack the discipline and drive to work on your own.

Potential loss of direction from the boss.

6. The right decision? (Activity 6) 10 mins

Aims: to provide student(s) with listening and speaking practice.

Procedure: Tell the students that in 2013 the newly-appointed CEO of the popular website Yahoo, Marissa Mayer famously shut down the company's telecommuting arrangements. Then play the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0cNZZL1PY0>

After watching the video, tell the students to discuss with their partner the following questions:

What were her reasons?

What do you think about this decision?

8. Sum up 5 mins

Put errors on the board or whiteboard and let student(s) correct them.

Summarise the lesson and tell student(s) what results they have achieved (Now you can ... After our speaking lesson you will be able to....)

Ask them if they have any questions.