Working From Home

EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

Learn more about vowel pronunciation. Discuss working from home. Comprehension and pronunciation practice. Discussions.



Activity One: Ask and answer with your teacher.

1. Do you work from home?
2. If you do, what did you like about it?
3. If you don't, why don't you?
4. What's the ideal set up for working from home?
5. When you work from home what do you miss about the office?

Activity Two: Pronouncing vowel sounds in English.

Vowel sounds can be quite tricky to pronounce in English. Let's practice by reading the text and paying particular attention to the words in **bold**.

When I **meet** people from work it's always fun because we don't get much opportunity any more to spend time together. Before we would **greet** each other at the door and ask how the weekend had gone. We would **eat** together at lunchtime. We share stories of who we had **met** up with outside of work. It was much more fun. Today I just **read** the paper and had a little **sleep** at lunchtime! It's **great** fun working in an office with lots of people. There is always the office gossip which makes some people's **cheeks** go **red**! There's always the office **creep** who chats everyone up with the same **corny** chat up lines at the coffee machine. Now we are just **chained** to our desks working from home!

- What do you notice about the pronunciation of those vowel sounds in the text?
- In this text there are long and short vowel sounds. Which are long and which are short?
- What do you think about the issues mentioned in the text? Do you think that socialisation is an important part of the life of any employee? What could replace it if working from home becomes the norm?

Activity Three: Stressed and unstressed vowels.

As well as having long and short vowel sounds we also have stressed and unstressed vowel sounds. Listeners rely on stress as a way to identify words. For example if you stress the second A in the word Arabic instead of correctly stressing the first A, listeners might hear 'a rabbit'.

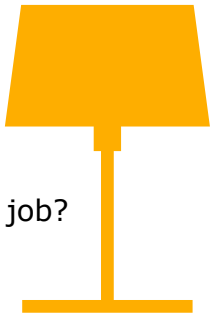
My boyfriend is a rabbit. My boyfriend is Arabic.
Instead of

Stress is attributed to vowels by saying the sound for longer, louder and sometimes in higher pitch than a vowel without stress.

Each word with several syllables also has specific syllabic stress which helps us to identify the word.

Read the text paying attention to the pronunciation of the words in bold again.

People in **managerial** positions who **interview** new staff for **positions** in the **accounting** department should talk to them about working from home. Before they visit the office and think that the daily **business** will take place from the main building, they should be open to the **possibility** of working from home several days a week. That way they can decide not to **pursue** the opportunity if they are not open to working from home.



- Which vowels and syllables were stressed in those words?
- What do you think about the issue discussed in the short text?
- Did you know that you would have to work from home before you took your job?

Activity Four: Illogically-spelled vowels.

Many words can have the same vowel sound but not the same spelling. This makes it interesting! :-) If you watch TV with the subtitles in English and take notice of pronunciation then you will gain confidence quickly with these unexpected words. Through practice and exposure to the language you will master this pronunciation.

Here are some examples, can you pronounce these words correctly?

Thread, instead, measure, meadow, jealous, cleanse, weapon, leather, realm, buried treasure,

leisure, friend, village, advantage, average, message, massage, passage, knowledge, women, minute, busy,

captain, forfeit, biscuit, circuit, guilt, guitar, challenge, surface, purchase, determine, discipline, promise.

What about these?

Accomplish, worry, wonderful, stone, love, does, southern, touch,

double, trouble, rough, tough, enough, flood.

Sh**oulder, halt, wander, quantity, quarry,**

quantify, quarrel, entrepreneur.
Pear, bear, tear, wear, vary, area, scare, scarcity, heir, mayor.

So, as you can see there are lot's of illogical pronunciations and when ou have struggled to pronounce some words correctly it's really understandable! It's not just you! However, if you trust yourself, stay open and expose yourself to the language as much as possible you will be able to acquire the correct pronunciation. There are no particular rules to learn it's just a question of repeating and practicing often. It will eventually sink in! It's also important not to worry about making a mistake with pronunciation, the context will help the listener to understand what you mean. So, don't stress about vowel stress!

Activity Five: Comprehension and Pronunciation practice - Reading.
Read the text and then answer the comprehension questions.

Why Working From Home Might Make You Depressed — During and Even After COVID-19

From Thrive Global by Diane Barth

Joanie* is a working mother with three teenaged children. Ten years ago, shortly after the birth of her second child, Joanie began working from home (wfh) one day a week. "I thought it would be the solution to my feelings of guilt about being away from my kids," she told me. "But it ended up making my life harder. I felt torn all the time – I could nurse while I was on a conference call, as long as I remembered to mute myself; but I couldn't be with my older daughter while I was working, and she couldn't understand why I wasn't spending time with her. And of course, if I was spending time with them, I wasn't really devoting my full energy to my job."

However, during the COVID-19 lockdown, Joanie discovered that working from home with three teenagers was a completely different thing. "I've loved it in a lot of ways," Joanie said. "I'm even thinking about asking if I can continue once businesses open back up. But there are a couple of things I'd do differently now. Because I still saw glimmers of the problems I had when the kids were little – there were times during the day when I'd just start to feel stressed and unhappy. And it wasn't just because of COVID."

If you are one of the lucky ones who has enjoyed some parts of the lockdown, you might just be one of many who are thinking about turning this temporary wfh solution to COVID-19 into a permanent way of life. But before you make that decision, it can be useful to recognize that being at home for your job has both benefits and drawbacks. In a fascinating study, Stanford professor Nicholas Bloom found that telecommuting raised worker productivity and decreased employee attrition, sick days, and time off and saved the company money by reducing the need for office space, at the same time that employees saved commute time, gas money, and the wear and tear of having to get to work on time. At first glance, it looked like a win for everyone. But there was one problem. At the end of the study, more than half of the volunteers chose not to work at home 100% of the time. The reason? They felt lonely.

The Importance of Social Contact

David*, who, like Joanie had been working from home at least part of every week before the coronavirus pandemic, described a similar feeling. He told me that he had enjoyed the combination of being on his own part of the time and being with colleagues and business contacts the other part. "I didn't realize how important those connections were until the COVID shutdown," he said. "Now I really crave those in-person contacts. I'm socializing with friends and business connections all the time on the screen, but it's not the same. I don't really



understand it, but I'm missing even just being able to shake hands with someone."



Feelings of isolation and loneliness can make it hard to get your work done. But even if you're still productive, those feelings can lead to emotional difficulties, including depression and anxiety; and they can also contribute to a wide range of physical issues.

Researchers have long recognized the importance of social contact in maintaining physical and mental health. There are even studies explaining the physiological impact of David's missing handshakes. According to research, social contact can calm and soothe some of the chemical reactions to stress that make our bodies and psyches more vulnerable. Which is simply to say that there are physiological reasons that even if you like working from home, it can make you feel a little down simply because you are not having social contact with your work buddies.

What's important is to remember that when working from home, you can get surprisingly lonely, and to make adjustments accordingly, so that your loneliness doesn't morph into depression, anxiety, or just a general sense of the blahs.

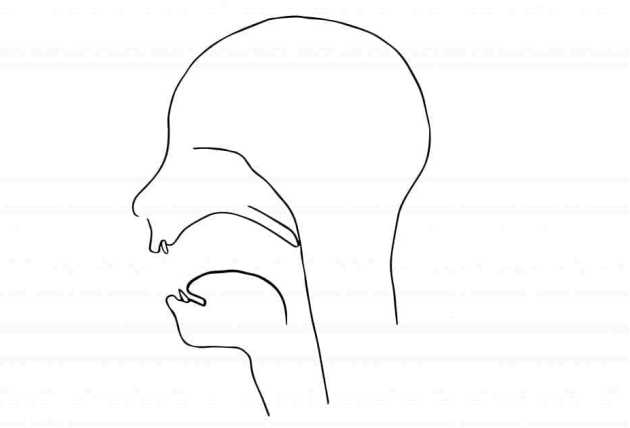
Both Joanie and David are looking forward to getting back to their offices. "I want to see people again," Joanie said. "I'm even looking forward to a couple of time-wasting meetings," David said. "And it'll be great to be away from the house when my husband decides it's time to run the vacuum," he added. But they are also both very happy that they are able to work from home part of the time. As Joanie put it, "I understand now that part of the difficulty with working from home is that you can end up feeling kind of lonely and unsupported. You're doing it all on your own, and you don't get those off-handed 'good job' comments that you get when you're at work. So you put extra pressure on yourself. And then you end up stressed and worried. So I'll make an extra effort to arrange some 'in person' work time. But I do like being able to set my own schedule. And responding to work emails while I'm having coffee and still in my pj's is really the best."

*Names and identifying information have been changed to protect privacy.
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1. *What problems did Joanie experience with working from home?*
2. *What does the word drawback mean?*
3. *What does the word attrition mean?*
4. *What does David experience when wfh?*
5. *Why is social contact important?*



Activity Six - Home, House, Home working, housework, home sweet home, honesty - Pronouncing h sounds...



To pronounce the h sound you need to keep your tongue low in your mouth, part your lips and create a hiss like breath.

There are three important points to know about this h sound:
1 Don't add an 'h' as a kind of liaison near a vowel when there is no h.
2 When there is an 'h' you should usually pronounce it - try these -have, house, home, help, homework, hundred, happy, holiday
3 There are some words with a silent h but not many: honest, hour.

Activity Seven - Listen to the song and answer the questions.



What might you just as well be if you are searching for tenderness?

What kind of word is honesty?

What is everyone?

How often is honesty heard?

How often can he find someone to say they sympathise?

Activity Eight - Working from home pros and cons.

What are the pros and cons you have experienced or you think you would experience when working from home? Outline them to your teacher. If you have time, prepare a short written piece about this on the 'bloc notes' of myeasyaccessenglish.



