

Lesson 14: Previous Jobs

William and Samantha are co-workers at an accounting firm. Listen to them share memories about their previous jobs, and try to answer the questions below:

Listening Comprehension

- 1. Samantha is feeling pressure from...**
 - a. clients
 - b. co-workers
 - c. the boss
- 2. William says that ten years ago the workload was...**
 - a. about the same
 - b. heavier
 - c. lighter
- 3. William sometimes does extra work...**
 - a. at home
 - b. at night
 - c. near the pool
- 4. Samantha stopped teaching because...**
 - a. the schedule was unpredictable
 - b. the salary was too low
 - c. the kids were hard to control
- 5. Samantha is considering...**
 - a. going back to school
 - b. having children
 - c. looking for a less stressful job
- 6. Before being an accountant, William...**
 - a. did manual labor
 - b. was a stay-at-home dad
 - c. worked at a gym

Conversation Text

William: Gosh, it's only 10:00 and I've already got a ton **on my plate**.

Samantha: Me too, I'm **up to my ears in** paperwork and at least three clients are **breathing down my neck**, wanting to **seal the deal** on their contracts.

William: I remember when I first started working here ten years ago. Things were busy then, but not like this. Nowadays it feels like no matter how many hours you put in, you can never **make a dent in** the workload.

Samantha: Part of the problem is that every single client wants the work done, like, **yesterday**. I don't understand how they can give us the work **on such short notice** and expect us to finish so fast.

William: You just have to **give it your best shot**. Sometimes I take work home on the weekends, but **it sucks** to be **cooped up in** my home office while the sun is shining and the kids are in the pool.

Vocabulary

on my plate = things I am responsible for doing

up to my ears in = overwhelmed with (work)

breathing down my neck = watch/monitor closely, putting pressure on

seal the deal = confirm the agreement

make a dent in = make a little bit of progress in (a big project or amount of work)

yesterday = very fast, as soon as possible

on short notice = with little time before the event

give it your best shot = try your best

it sucks (*slang*) = it's bad, it's annoying. Also: it stinks

cooped up in = staying inside a small place

Samantha: Ugh, I feel your pain! This time of year makes me **long for** the days when I was a teacher – sure, the semesters were stressful, but we had almost three months of summer vacation.

William: Sounds like **you had it made!** How come you stopped teaching?

Samantha: Well, **the catch** was that the wages were **lousy**. My husband was about to go to grad school, so it would've been hard to **make ends meet** on a teacher's salary.

William: Right. So do you think you'll go back to teaching after your husband graduates?

Samantha: I'm not sure. We're thinking about having kids in the next few years, so I might like to try my hand at being a stay-at-home mom.

William: That'd certainly be a **change of pace**... only then you'd be **on call 24/7** instead of just 9 to 5!

Samantha: That's true! How about you, William? What did you do before you were an accountant?

Vocabulary

long for = desire strongly

you had it made! = be successful for life, not have to worry

the catch (*informal*) = the bad aspect that might ruin a good situation

lousy = very bad

make ends meet = survive financially

a change of pace = a difference in routine

on call = available to work

24/7 = constantly, all the time

William: My dad owns a **landscaping** company, so I used to work for him during the summers. Doing yardwork, planting trees and bushes, that type of thing.

Samantha: Really? Must have been tiring.

William: Nah, the work was **a cinch**. **Then again**, I was in better shape back then. Now I've got bad knees and **a beer belly**!

Samantha: Haha! What was it like working for your dad?

William: Well, he was pretty demanding – but that's what made him successful in business, because he always **went above and beyond** for his customers.

Samantha: I guess that's one reason you've got such a strong **work ethic**.

William: Yeah. Speaking of which, I should probably get back to work.

Samantha: Same here. See you around.

Vocabulary

landscaping = the work of designing outdoor spaces

a cinch = very easy

Then again = use this phrase to introduce something that contradicts or modifies your previous statement

a beer belly = a fat stomach due to drinking too much beer

went above and beyond = made special extra effort, did much more than what was required

work ethic = a belief that hard work is very important

Vocabulary Quiz

Complete each sentence with an expression from the box. Two are not used.

breathing down my neck

change of pace

cinch

cooped up

gave it my best shot

gone above and beyond

longing for

lousy

made ends meet

on my plate

sealed the deal

short notice

1. He joined the military because he's been _____ a chance to travel and see the world.
2. I'm against circuses because I can't stand the thought of wild animals _____ in cages.
3. I said no to volunteering at the animal shelter on Saturdays. I just don't want another thing _____.
4. My company recently bought another business; they _____ last Friday.
5. I'm not sure if I'll win the writing contest, but I _____.
6. Making travel arrangements is a _____ these days - you can do everything online.
7. I especially want to thank Greta for her work; she has really _____ in making this project a success.
8. The weather was _____ - it was cold and rainy every single day.
9. We can't get a dentist appointment on such _____ unless it's an emergency.
10. I'd like to take the kids camping; it'll be a _____ from city life.

Speaking Task

Talk about one of your previous jobs. What were your responsibilities? How were your co-workers and boss? Why did you end up leaving the job?

Record your answer at www.speakpipe.com/espressoenglish - or, if you prefer, you can e-mail me the MP3 to homework@espressoenglish.net for feedback on your spoken English.

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. a
2. c
3. a
4. b
5. b
6. a

Vocabulary Quiz

1. longing for
2. cooped up
3. on my plate
4. sealed the deal
5. gave it my best shot
6. cinch
7. gone above and beyond
8. lousy
9. short notice
10. change of pace