

Task 1: Summarize the most important facts of the text. Write them down in note form. Compare your results with those of your partner and then present them to the class.

I'm British, and I experienced the biggest culture shock when I started working in the US



5 America. The land of the free and home of the brave. Where your rights include life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness — except if your pursuit of happiness takes you away from your desk for a few days. When it comes to paid time off, Americans are dealt a pretty unfair hand.

Two years ago, I packed all my belongings into a shipping container, waved goodbye to the English countryside, and moved across the pond to live among the bright lights and busy sidewalks of New York.

10 Born and raised in Birmingham, the UK's second city and one of the most multicultural places in Britain, I was moving to a country I'd visited plenty of times before. (What is it with the UK and family holidays to Orlando?). And with the ever-increasing spread of American culture — from TV and movies to politics — I thought I knew what I was getting myself into. Despite all my preparation — and even with a big old book about American customs that the relocation company provided — I was woefully
15 underprepared for the various lifestyle adjustments and cultural differences between my old life in the UK and my new life in the States. Because while Americans and Brits may speak the same language, that's where the similarities end. At least for me anyway.

I've never felt more displaced than when I'm trying to navigate the healthcare system, on the hunt for a decent bar of chocolate, or realizing that Americans will talk to you absolutely anywhere. Stuck in an
20 elevator for 33 floors? Get ready to make an agonizing amount of small talk. Sitting at a bar by yourself? You can bet your next drink that a fellow patron will ask how your day has been.

Living the dream

The biggest culture shock came when I entered the workforce. It's well-documented that the American office culture is pretty different to the way we work in the UK, in part fuelled by the notion of the
25 American dream, that unwavering belief that anyone can be successful if they're determined and willing to work hard. And it seems that an all-work-and-no-play mentality has bred a workplace underpinned by a sense of fear that you're never quite working hard enough. And nowhere is this quite as obvious — to me at least — as Americans' attitudes toward vacation days.

In the UK, almost all full-time workers are legally entitled to at least 28 days of paid vacation a year.
30 Most employers will include the eight bank and public holidays into that figure, leaving the average British worker with about 20 days of vacation. At my previous job, I had 25 days of vacation, eight paid bank holidays, a day off for my birthday, and the opportunity to buy an additional five days off. We worked hard. But we were given adequate time away from the office to rest, reset, and rejuvenate.

So you can imagine my horror when I was offered my first job here in the States and found out my paid
35 time off was an accrued total of 10 days — a measly two weeks, including vacation and sick days. And the worst part was that the employer seemed to think that was generous, prefacing the section about PTO with: "We know how hard you work and recognize the importance of providing you with time for rest and relaxation."

Vacation deprivation

To me, 10 days was a deal breaker. But I know I was lucky to have even been offered that. A 2013 study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research found that the US was the only advanced economy in the world that didn't mandate any paid vacation for the workforce. Almost one in four Americans has no paid vacations and no paid holidays.

And those who are blessed with time off average just 10 days of paid vacation and about six paid holidays a year. That's less than the minimum legal standard for many of the world's richest economies — except Japan, which guarantees 10 paid vacation days but no paid holidays, according to the study.

A survey by Glassdoor found that among workers who receive vacation days, only 24% used their full allowance, in part because of a corporate culture that has come to view taking time off as slacking. For many Americans, the fear of returning to a mountain of work keeps them at their desk instead of the beach. And in a world of "at will" employment, where the work contract can be terminated at any time, almost a quarter of US employees fear being seen as replaceable.

Work smarter to work harder

More hours doesn't always mean more output — just take a look at Greece and Germany. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, the Greeks work more hours than citizens of any other European country but have an unemployment rate of 21.5% and a gross domestic product of \$26,765 per capita. Meanwhile, Germans work fewer hours but are much more productive, with a GDP of \$48,943 per capita and an unemployment rate of 3.7%.

Several studies have found that taking time away from work can improve productivity, increase happiness, and spark creativity. In other words, taking time off is a win for everyone — including you, your boss, and even the economy. If it's simply an issue of not knowing how to spend time off, this list of well-reviewed places around the world may offer some inspiration. And if you're worried about returning to work with a mountain of emails to tackle, there are some tips on managing that too.

annotations: (to) be dealt an unfair hand: unfair behandelt werden - **pond:** Teich – **spread:** sich ausbreiten - **woeful:** beklagenswert - **agonizing:** qualvoll - **unwavering:** unerschütterlich - **(to) underpin:** untermauern - **accrued:** akkumuliert - **measly:** mickrig - **allowance:** Zuteilung – **(to) slack:** faulenzten

Task 2: Follow the link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jYMF_GMLPw and watch the 1st episode of the documentary "*Under the Influence*" by the American comedian Des Bishop on YouTube. Answer the following questions

a) **While watching:** What is the relationship of the Irish to alcohol according to the episode? Give examples!

After watching:

b) How do you think this episode is related to the topic *working abroad*?

c) How would you deal with the aforementioned issue, if you worked for a company in the British Isles?



