



15

Career breaks

Starting point

- 1 How common are career breaks in your country? What do people use the time for?
- 2 What problems might a career break cause?

Working with words | Taking a career break

- 1 Read about three people who took careers breaks in different countries. Which two people ...?
 - 1 went to the same part of the world
 - 2 are back working for the same company
 - 3 give similar advice about taking a career break
 - 4 spent time helping other people
 - 5 have changed in similar ways

FREYA

Advertising Manager

STAGE IN CAREER: 'I'd worked in marketing for ten years and had just completed my Advanced Certificate. I resigned.'

MY CAREER BREAK: 'I travelled around the world for 18 months and did voluntary work in Australia. My career break **revitalized** me – it has given me a new **perspective** on life and re-ordered my priorities; quality of life is more important to me now. I'm also more confident. If you're **hesitating** about taking a career break, the best **piece of advice** I'd give is to make sure you've got good relevant career experience before you leave – so it's much easier to get back on the career ladder.'

EFFECT ON CAREER: 'The break acted as a catalyst for me to change career. I **put off** looking for a permanent job for a while, but now I've applied to join a government office.'

ROBERTO

Business Analyst

STAGE IN CAREER: 'I'd worked for the bank for 14 years, so they offered to keep a job open. I **postponed** my planned departure for a year to suit them.'

MY CAREER BREAK: 'I spent a year travelling through South-east Asia and Australia, doing a series of scuba-diving courses. I also learnt to ride a motorbike and fly a helicopter. My **tip** for anyone considering a career break is: take it after you've worked for at least five years. That way you'll really **appreciate** the time off and have enough money to enjoy it. It's the best thing I've ever done.'

EFFECT ON CAREER: 'I came back with my batteries **recharged** and new enthusiasm; and now I am doing a better version of my old job.'



JENNY

Management Consultant

STAGE IN CAREER: 'I was with my company for nine years and having a mid-career crisis. I intended to resign – they said they'd hold my job open.'

MY CAREER BREAK: 'I was in Bangladesh, attached to a **voluntary organization** working with local communities to improve education and healthcare, and to develop new skills and earning potential. It broadened my **outlook** and I experienced a completely different pace of life. I am now less materialistic, and I **feel grateful** for the things I have got. If you're **feeling uncertain** about a career break, just do it – life's too short.'

EFFECT ON CAREER: 'I went back to exactly the same job, but I now do four days a week, spending the fifth volunteering with a children's **charity**.'

- 2** Work with a partner. Which of the career breaks in **1** would you most like to take and why?
- 3** Put the words in **bold** in the texts in **1** into pairs that have similar meanings.
Example: revitalized / recharged
- 4** Complete these sentences using some of the words from **3**.
- How would you enjoy working for a _____ like the Red Cross or Médecins Sans Frontières?
 - Would you return from a career break feeling _____ and ready to get back to your old job or would you be uninterested in going back to work? Explain why.
 - Have you got any unfulfilled ambitions that you have had to _____ for career reasons?
 - Have you ever done anything that has given you a new _____ on life?
 - Are you constantly seeking new things/opportunities or do you _____ the things that you have?
 - What's the most useful _____ anyone has given you about dealing with boredom or stress at work?
- 5** Work with a partner. Ask and answer the questions in **4**.
- 6** ▶ **15.1** Listen to an employer talking about the benefits of career breaks. Work with a partner and answer questions 1–5.
- Why did the company originally introduce flexiwork?
 - Why was flexiwork particularly suited to this company?
 - What are the current benefits of flexiwork?
 - Why is flexiwork described as a win-win situation?
 - Would the same arguments for flexiwork apply in your company?
- 7** Choose the correct words in *italics* in each statement.

1 A break might help me head <i>off</i> / <i>round</i> in a new direction.	1	2	3	4	5
2 I would like the opportunity to develop some <i>light</i> / <i>soft</i> skills.	1	2	3	4	5
3 I think I would return to work with <i>renewed</i> / <i>improved</i> enthusiasm.	1	2	3	4	5
4 I would like to <i>broaden</i> / <i>enlarge</i> my horizons through travel.	1	2	3	4	5
5 My boss would see a break as an important part of my career <i>development</i> / <i>improvement</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
6 Allowing career breaks will at some stage become our official company <i>policy</i> / <i>doctrine</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
7 Allowing career breaks would help the <i>maintenance</i> / <i>retention</i> rate in my company.	1	2	3	4	5

- 8** For each statement in **7**, circle a number from 1 to 5 using the scoring system below. Compare and discuss your answers with a partner.
- 1 = agree very much
2 = agree
3 = unsure
4 = disagree
5 = disagree strongly

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 15** on page 134.

- 9** Think of a career break that might appeal to you *and* your company. Give a short presentation of your idea, outlining:
- the basic proposition
 - what the benefits would be for you
 - what the benefits would be for your employer
 - what financial arrangements you would propose

Business communication | Putting forward a case

Context

Lena Johnson currently works for an IT company leading a team of technical writers. She has a diploma in photography and has decided to request a nine-month sabbatical to act as photographer for journalists making a documentary in the Antarctic.



- 1 ► 15.2 Read the *Context*. Listen to the meeting between Lena and her manager. Which of the benefits and arguments in the list did she use for taking a sabbatical?

- I've been a loyal employee.
- I'll have to resign if I'm not allowed to take the sabbatical.
- I'll feel more settled and focused after the trip.
- I'll gain experience I can bring to the company.
- It's a lifelong ambition of mine.
- I'm feeling burnt-out!
- If you sponsor my trip, the company will gain advertising opportunities.
- My creativity is being suppressed in my present job.

- 2 ► 15.2 Listen again and number phrases a–i in the order you hear them (1–9).

- a It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. ____
- b This is a chance I can't afford to miss. ____
- c That's hardly fair. I've never refused to take ... ____
- d It's been a long-term goal of mine. 1
- e I've been inspired by ... ____
- f I understand your misgivings. ____
- g I'd really appreciate it ... ____
- h It's a win-win situation. ____
- i The experience I'd gain would be invaluable ... ____

- 3 Match the underlined words in sentences 1–9 to phrases a–i with the same meaning in 2.

- 1 It's something I've wanted to do for a long time. d
- 2 The people I studied with have given me the desire to do this. ____
- 3 I'll never get this opportunity again in my life. ____
- 4 It's a situation where we'll both gain something. ____
- 5 I'd obtain skills that would be very useful for managing the team. ____
- 6 I know you'll have a lot of worries. ____
- 7 If I don't take up this opportunity, I'll regret it. ____
- 8 That's not very reasonable – I've always taken on extra work. ____
- 9 I'd be very grateful if you could speak to HR. ____

Tip | *valuable* and *invaluable*

Valuable can be used to talk about how much money something is worth.

It was a **valuable** piece of equipment.

However, *invaluable* is not the opposite of *valuable* and is not used to talk about monetary value.

An experience can be *valuable*, meaning 'useful'. You can use *invaluable* to emphasize that it was 'very useful'.

The experience was **invaluable**.

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 15** on page 134.

Key expressions

Stating what you want

It's been a long-term goal of mine to ...

I intend to ...

I'd really appreciate it if ...

Stating motivation

I've been inspired by ...

I'd like to do this because ...

My motivation for this comes from ...

Explaining benefits

It's a win-win situation.

The experience I'd gain would be invaluable for ...

The plus points are ...

Arguing persuasively

It's a once in a lifetime opportunity.

This is a chance I can't (afford to) miss.

I'll never be satisfied unless I do it.

Dealing with objections

I understand your misgivings, but ...

That's hardly fair. I've never refused to ...

But there are also (other) benefits for (you / the company).

4 Work with a partner. Read this information.

You left your college course halfway through for personal reasons. You have performed extremely well in your job, especially since most of your colleagues are better qualified than you. You would now like to go back to college and complete your studies, but the only way to do this is to take a career break for a year.

- 1 Decide what type of job you have and what type of course you want to complete (use your own job if you like).
- 2 Discuss how you would present your case for a career break to your manager. Make sure you think of two phrases for:
 - stating what you want
 - stating your motivation
 - explaining the benefits
 - arguing persuasively
- 3 Think of two objections your boss might have and counter these with appropriate phrases.
- 4 Work with another pair. Talk them through your case and arguments.

5 Choose one of these things that you would like to do (or an idea of your own) and prepare your case.

- take paternity leave / extended maternity leave (assuming it isn't a legal option in your country)
- restructure your department
- introduce a new procedure in your office
- apply for a better position internally in your company
- take a temporary transfer abroad with your company

6 Work with a partner. Take turns to present your case. When you are listening, object to some of the proposals you hear.

Practically speaking | Taking time off

1 ▶ 15.3 Listen to conversations 1–3. How did each speaker spend their time off?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

2 ▶ 15.3 Listen again. Match the questions and phrases a–i to the conversations in 1.

- a Did you manage to get away? ____
- b How did you spend the weekend? ____
- c What did you get up to? ____
- d I've always wanted to ... ____
- e It needed doing. ____
- f I caught up on ... ____
- g It turned out to be ... ____
- h We managed to fit in ... ____
- i It was a relaxing way to spend ... ____

3 Work in groups of four. Think of three examples of recent time off (you can invent the information if you like). Have a different conversation about your time off with each member of the group. Use as many of the questions and phrases from 2 as possible.

Language at work | -ing form or infinitive?

- 1 Work with a partner. Read the pairs of sentences 1–5.
 - In which pair of sentences is there little or no change of meaning of the verbs in **bold** before the use of the -ing form and infinitive form?
 - Discuss the change in meaning of the verbs in **bold** in the other four pairs.
 - 1 a I **remember spending** my year off in Australia. It was so much fun!
b Did you **remember to book** time off for your next holiday?
 - 2 a They **went on working** for the same company all their life.
b After they left, they **went on to open** their own business.
 - 3 a Do you **prefer working** for large companies or small businesses?
b Do you **prefer to take** an early or a late lunchbreak?
 - 4 a Sheila **stopped working** when she injured her back.
b Sheila **stopped to take** a year off from her job.
 - 5 a I **regret leaving** school at 16 and **not spending** longer at school.
b I **regret to inform** you that your order has been delayed.
- 2 Read the *Language point*. Complete the table with the sentences (a or b) in 1.

LANGUAGE POINT

Some verbs can be followed by either the -ing form or the infinitive form with little or no change in meaning. For example, the verbs *like, hate, love, prefer*, etc.: *I prefer working on my own. I prefer to work on my own.*

Some verbs can be followed by either form, but the meaning changes. For example, the verbs *remember, forget, go on, stop* and *regret*.

remember (and forget)	to talk about memories <u>1a</u>	to talk about necessary actions ____
go on	to talk about continuing actions ____	to talk about a change in actions ____
stop	to talk about an action which ended ____	to talk about the reason for stopping ____
regret	to express you feel sorry about something you did ____	to introduce bad news ____

» For more information, go to **Grammar reference** on page 135.

- 3 Underline the correct verb in *italics*.
 - 1 Sorry, I didn't remember *sending* / *to send* you the job description.
 - 2 I'll never forget *visiting* / *to visit* Singapore for the first time.
 - 3 After working at our Paris office, I went on *running* / *to run* the office in Berlin.
 - 4 Stop *doing* / *to do* everything yourself. Learn to delegate!
 - 5 I'm sure they'll regret *not taking* / *not to take* a career break later in life.
 - 6 They forgot *bringing* / *to bring* the contract for your signature.
 - 7 I'm late because I stopped *seeing* / *to see* a client on the way here.
- 4 Complete questions 1–4 with the correct form of the verb in brackets.
 - 1 On your CV, it says you stopped _____ (work) for a year. What did you do?
 - 2 Can you remember _____ (deal with) a major problem at work? How did you solve it?
 - 3 After you left school, why didn't you go on _____ (do) a university degree?
 - 4 What is one decision you regret _____ (make) in your career?

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 15** on page 135.

- 5 Work with a partner and discuss why a job interviewer might ask the questions in 4. What answers do you think a successful candidate would give?

TALKING POINT

Goodbye and see you next year

Career breaks and gap years might sound great, but what if you can't afford to give up your job for a year? Or you don't want to stop working, but you do want to see the world? Remote Year is one solution. The company isn't a job provider because all its participants already have a job. Its role is to set up a 12-month travel programme for remote



workers – people who do their job as long as they have a laptop and an Internet connection.

In its first year, Remote Year received applications from 25,000 people – yes, you have to apply and attend an interview. This number was reduced to a final list of 75 'digital nomads' who want to spend 12 months together in 12 different cities. Remote Year organizes accommodation and workspaces in each new location. It will even provide guidance on how to get your employer on board with the idea.

Of course, there are some difficulties. First, you have to convince your boss that you can still work as effectively on the other side of the world as you can in the office or from home. And what happens if there's no Wi-fi in your hotel or your laptop breaks in the middle of the desert? In reality, these kinds of problems can happen anywhere.

What you learn – according to Remote Year – is that good work doesn't always happen in an office cubicle. 'Your best work happens when you feel inspired. It's hard to find inspiration in routine.'

Discussion

- 1 What are the advantages of Remote Year compared to taking a career break or gap year?
- 2 If you went away for 12 months with Remote Year, which 12 cities would you like to visit? Why?
- 3 Do you think your employer would agree to your plans? What objections might your employer have?

Task

- 1 Work with a partner. Imagine you work for Remote Year and you are going to interview someone who would like to travel with your organization for 12 months. Think about the types of qualities and skills that a person would need for this way of working and living. Then write a list of around ten interview questions.
- 2 Change partners with another pair. Take turns to role-play an interview. Ask and answer questions from your list in 1.
- 3 Work with your partner in 1 again. Report back on your interview and explain if you think the person you interviewed is suitable for the Remote Year program.