

## The case against self-employment

**Level:** Lower Intermediate and above

**Timing:** 90 minutes (can be extended)

**Material needed:** One copy of the worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

**Group size:** A minimum of four students in order to satisfactorily carry out the business simulations

### Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is adapted from an original article first published in Business Spotlight Issue 5/2009. The article deals with the advantages and disadvantages between having a full-time (or part-time) employment contract and being self-employed. It looks at which kinds of personal attributes and characteristics, as well as motivation, are required for each type of employment.

The tasks in the student worksheets will encourage the students to not only learn and use new business vocabulary and functional language related to the topic of employment, but also to bring their own professional experiences into the classroom.

The teacher's notes aim to provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, plus any necessary answer keys, and follow-on extension tasks and lesson plans.

Encourage students to record new and useful vocabulary in the Vocabulary record. Some words have already been included. The students should use their dictionaries to fill out the other related boxes.

**Note:** This article is in American English.

### Introduction

If you do not already know, find out which of your students are employed on a full-time or part-time contract, which are self-employed, and which have a different sort of employment contract.

### Brainstorming

In addition to the types of contracts and employment mentioned in the introduction, how many others can the students think of, e.g. temporary or casual, maternity

cover, limited, holiday period, fixed-term contracts, contracts for a certain amount of work, job-sharing, etc.

Ask if they have always had the same kind of contract. If they have had different kinds of contracts or terms of employment in the past, find out what they were. Which type of contract or employment do they prefer and why?

### Teaching and learning strategy: Brainstorming

Brainstorming can be an effective way to generate lots of ideas on and around a specific issue or topic. Its use can be extended to determine which idea – or ideas – is the best solution. Brainstorming is most effective with small- to medium-sized groups of students and, if possible, it should be performed in a relaxed environment as this will encourage the students to be more creative. A brainstorming session requires a facilitator – in this case the teacher – and something on which to write ideas, such as a white-board, a flip chart or simply a large piece of paper. The teacher's role is to guide the session, encourage everyone to contribute, and to write the ideas down.

### Skimming for information

The students should first read the questions so that they know what information is required and then skim the article to find the information. Encourage them not to read the whole article word for word, but to just look for the specific information that the task requires. It may help to set a time limit on this task to ensure it remains a skim-reading task and does not become a translating task.

### Key:

1. *His wife and his daughter.*
2. *Self-employed.*
3. *No.*
4. *(possible answers) You are your own boss, you can choose your own working hours, you can decide to buy what you want for your business, you can choose your clients.*
5. *(possible answers) Employers take care of the details, they provide training and equipment, you get a retirement plan and health benefits, and there is a social side to your job.*
6. *20 to 30 hours a week.*
7. *A business plan.*
8. *Everyone in their personal network.*

### Language: Opposites

This task will encourage students to think about the meanings of certain words in the article by asking them to find opposites. In part a) they will need to find words in the text, and in part b) they will need to use their knowledge or online or paper dictionaries to find

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opposites of some words that appear in the text. Pay particular attention to the use of prefixes in part b). For part a) there is only one correct answer, but for part b) there may be more than one correct answer.

### Key:

a) 1. *rent out – lease*; 2. *great cost – no cost*; 3. *easy – hard*; 4. *do something immediately – procrastinate*; 5. *short hours – long hours*; 6. *cursory – thorough*; 7. *single – multiple*

b) 1. *buy – sell*; 2. *frequently – infrequently / seldom*; 3. *by yourself – with others / in company*; 4. *solve problems – make problems / create problems*; 5. *advantages – disadvantages*; 6. *likable – unlikable / dislikable*; 7. *fantasy – reality*; 8. *continue – discontinue / stop*; 9. *intelligent – unintelligent*; 10. *increase – decrease*; 11. *available – unavailable*; 12. *successful – unsuccessful*

### Teaching and learning strategy: Opposites or antonyms

Learning words together with their opposites is a powerful way of understanding the relationships of words. When asked what word they associate with hot, many people will immediately answer cold, rather than desert, sun or weather. Learners may find it useful to make notes of words alongside other words that convey an opposing concept such as single / multiple, and cursory / thorough.

Learners should also make a note of all the (correct) prefixes that can be attached to a certain word to give it the opposite meaning. For example, which prefix can be attached to the word 'happy' in order to give it the opposite meaning, un-, dis-, anti-, in-, or non-? Do we attach the same prefix to the word 'pleased'? You can find further resources and activities regarding opposites and prefixes here:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?docid=154400>

### Writing a questionnaire

Students should prepare and write the questionnaire in this task in pairs. Make sure that the questions they write are grammatically correct and linguistically clear before you move on to the next task. For more advanced students this would be an opportunity to practise forming indirect questions, e.g. *What would you say about ...? Do you think you could possibly ...? Could you imagine yourself ...?*

### Business simulation

It is important that the students now work in new pairs. Each new pair must decide who Student A is and who

Student B is. First of all Student A should play the role of the careers advice officer and Student B should play the role of the job seeker. Remind them to treat this as a business simulation and to go through all the stages they would do when performing this task outside the classroom, e.g. setting the scene by rearranging the furniture, greeting the client when they arrive, introducing themselves, explaining the reason for the questionnaire, thanking the client for coming, etc. Once the simulation has run its course, ask the students to swap roles and repeat it with Student B now playing the role of careers advice officer and using the questionnaire they wrote. This will ensure that the questions and answers are not the same as before.

### Extension tasks

As a follow-up task students could work in yet a different pair and discuss the questions they asked and the answers they were given. The new pair should decide what advice to give to the job seeker. If there is time, and you would like to practise telephoning, the Careers Advice Officer could telephone the job seeker and give them their expert advice.

### More about employment and personal attributes and characteristics

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics go to the following lesson plans in the Business Skills Bank on [www.onestopenglish.com](http://www.onestopenglish.com):

- A lesson plan about writing a CV and personal attributes and characteristics:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?docid=146864>

- A lesson plan that practices job applications:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?docid=147520>

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### Introduction

Are you employed by a company or other organization, or are you self-employed?

What kind of employment contract do you have (if any)?

### 1 Brainstorming

- How many different kinds of employment and employment contracts can you think of?
- How many of these have you had personal experience of?
- Which do you prefer?

### 2 Skimming for information

Skim-read the article to find the answers to these questions.

1. Which members of his family does the author mention?
2. Is the author of the article employed or self-employed?
3. Does the author like to be part of a team?
4. Find three advantages of being employed.
5. Find three advantages of being self-employed.
6. How long do many job seekers spend a week looking for a job?
7. According to the author, what should you develop if you are thinking about becoming self-employed?
8. Who should people starting a business talk to?

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### The case against self-employment

by Marty Nemko

Employed or self-employed: there's something to be said for both options. Marty Nemko explains what the advantages of a contract of employment are.

My wife, Barbara, can't understand why on earth I'd want to be self-employed. She says:

- **Employers take care of a million details:** they lease the workplace, maintain it, buy insurance, and provide health benefits, retirement plans, and so on.
- **Employers provide infrastructure:** computer support, printing services, etc. at no cost to the employees.
- **Employers often provide free training,** frequently on company time.
- **Many people's favorite part of the job is the social aspect:** conversations over coffee, little celebrations, for example. Most self-employed people are one- or two-person businesses. It's hard to do much celebrating by yourself!
- **To be self-employed, you must be very self-motivated** because there's no boss to make you do your work.
- **To be self-employed, you must be able to develop strategies,** implement your plans, troubleshoot, and solve problems – usually quickly, and by yourself. Most people need a team to make all of that happen.
- **You have to be willing and able to market your business.** You must be easily likable, not afraid to ask people for business, and, above all, you must not procrastinate.

Well, I tell my wife, self-employment has advantages. I can be my own boss. I set my own hours, the way I work, and which clients I'll work with. If I want to buy something for my office, I don't need three signatures. I don't have to work on teams – that drives me crazy.

But I have to admit that many of those advantages are more fantasy than reality: for example, the bit about setting your own hours. In fact, most self-employed people work very long hours, and, even when they are away from their work, they continue to worry about it. So, think very carefully before you change your job status from employee to self-employed.

#### Advice I'd give my child

Here's what I'd tell my daughter if she were thinking of starting a business:

If you're intelligent, driven, business-savvy, and dying to be self-employed, develop a business plan and then see if you're still excited. But I believe that most people should forget the "romance" of self-employment and instead look for a job. Do a thorough search, making all your inquiries in just one or two weeks to increase your chances of getting multiple offers so you can choose the best one available. Treat that search like a job – most successful job-seekers spend 20 to 30 hours a week answering advertisements, as well as calling or writing potential employers, even if a job has not been advertised.

Don't forget to talk to everyone in your personal network so that as many people as possible know you are looking for work.

Marty Nemko is one of America's top career coaches. The author of *Cool Careers for Dummies*, he has been advising clients for more than 20 years. He is based in Oakland, California.

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### 3 Language: Opposites

a) Find words or short phrases in the text that have the opposite meaning to those below.

rent out \_\_\_\_\_  
great cost \_\_\_\_\_  
easy \_\_\_\_\_  
do something immediately \_\_\_\_\_  
short hours \_\_\_\_\_  
cursory \_\_\_\_\_  
single \_\_\_\_\_

b) These words or short phrases all appear in the article. Write what you consider to be their opposites.

buy	_____	fantasy	_____
frequently	_____	continue	_____
by yourself	_____	intelligent	_____
solve problems	_____	increase	_____
advantages	_____	available	_____
likable	_____	successful	_____

### 4 Writing a questionnaire

Imagine you are a careers advisor. Write at least 10 questions you would ask a client in order to find out whether they would be better suited to being employed or self-employed.

*Example: Do you prefer to work as part of a team or on your own?*

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### 5 Business simulation

Work in pairs: Student A and Student B.

Student A should use the questionnaire they developed in task 4 to interview a client (Student B). Try to make the situation as realistic as possible, e.g. set up the chairs as you would imagine them to be in an interview situation, greet the client when they arrive, introduce yourself, explain why you need to go through the questionnaire, thank the client for coming and tell them you will get back to them with your advice.

Then swap roles so that Student A is the job seeker and Student B is the careers advice officer.

### Extension task

1. Sit with a different student and compare your notes and the answers to the questions on your questionnaire. Discuss whether you think the student you interviewed would be more suited to being employed or self-employed.
2. Phone the student you interviewed in task 5 and give them your professional advice.



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verb	noun	adjective (+ opposite)	adverb (+ opposite)
to be pleased / to be displeased	pleasure	pleasing / displeasing	pleasingly
employ			
market			
		intelligent	
		driven	
recommend			

Vocabulary record

