

EVERYDAY LIFE

GETTING TO WORK

Age: Adult

Level: Pre-intermediate +

Time: 60 minutes

Activity: In this lesson, students will:

1. share their opinions on commuting, and respond to the views of others;
2. learn new vocabulary related to transport and travel;
3. practise reading for gist and detail.

Language focus: Vocabulary for transport and travel

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student

Exercise 1

The questions in Exercise 1 orientate the students to the topic of commuting. They discuss the questions in pairs.

Alternative

1. Students work together to list forms of transport that they know (car, bus, plane, etc.)
2. Display some question structures like this:
 - *Have you ever travelled by hot air balloon?*
 - *Have you ever taken a bus to another city?*
 - *Have you ever travelled to work by bike?*

Students ask each other any questions they wish using the different forms of transport they listed.

Exercise 2

This exercise pre-teaches some of the vocabulary appearing in the reading text. You may wish to prime learners for the vocabulary by pre-teaching it, or you could leave this activity until after the reading tasks.

- a.** Ask learners to match the words/phrases with the correct definition.

Key:

1. a
2. f
3. g
4. d
5. e
6. c
7. h
8. b

- b.** Learners complete the questions using one of the words or phrases from Exercise 2a. Then, they discuss the questions with a partner.

Key:

1. How do people **commute** to work?
2. Is it expensive to take public transport in your town/city, or would you say it's **cost effective**?
3. Are there many **green spaces** in your town/city that are open to the public?
4. Would you prefer to live in the city centre or in **the suburbs**? Why?
5. Is it cheaper to buy an **annual** travel pass, or pay as you go?
6. What could councils do to reduce **fumes** in their cities?
7. Is a long commute to work **worthwhile** if it means you can live in the countryside?
8. Is the way you travel to work **eco-friendly** or could you do more to help the environment?

Exercise 3

- a.** Students read for general understanding of the text. They discuss the questions with a partner.

Key (possible answers):

1. Super-commuting means travelling more than the average time for a journey to work. The average commute in the UK was 59 minutes in 2018.
2. The text mentions three different forms of commuting: by train, by bike and by plane. However, it can be inferred that there are more ways to super-commute/commute beyond those mentioned in the text.
3. Students' own opinions

- b.** Learners summarise key information from the text. Where information is unavailable, learners should be encouraged to think critically about the pros/cons of each mode of transport.

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Key (possible answers):

Type of commute	Pros	Cons
Commuting by train	It is more cost-effective than living in central London.	Annual train fares can cost thousands of pounds.
Flying	Workers can live in areas where their quality of life / lifestyle is better.	(The text does not mention a negative. Encourage students to share their own ideas, such as increased carbon footprint, time spent in airport, etc.).
Cycling	It keeps people fit and healthy. It saves of public transport costs.	Traffic and fumes in central London.

c. Students compare their notes, discussing any of their own views they have added to the table.

Exercise 4

The final paragraph of the text includes a call to action for readers. The author encourages readers to share their views on super-commuting. To make this a more authentic task, as the text would appear online, ask students to write a response to the author.

a. Students write a response to one or both of the questions the author asks. They write this in the 'Share your views' section of the table.

b. Ask students to leave their handout on their desk. They stand up and walk around the classroom, reading the views of others. If they feel there is something worth commenting on, they add this to the 'comments' section below the 'share your views' box.

Exercise 4b is replicating the type of activity somebody might do on an online website or forum (but in writing rather than typing form). You could encourage learners to use features such as @ signs to tag classmates, possibly hashtags if relevant, and also abbreviations. Examples include IMO (In my opinion), IMHO (In my honest opinion), TBH (To be honest).

c. Students return to their seats and read any comments that other students have left on their paper. They then reflect on the comments and discuss which comments they feel were most interesting, or that they agree/disagree with.

Exercise 5

This exercise gives learners further opportunity to share their personal response to the text/topic. There may be some crossover to some areas already discussed, so this task may also give learners a chance to practise sharing their views more succinctly.

a. Ask students to read each statement and grade it from 1–5 depending on how much they agree/disagree. Encourage learners to read each statement carefully – they may fully agree with one half of a statement but only partly agree with the other half, so their grading should reflect this.

b. Organise students into groups and ask them to discuss each statement. Encourage students to use the Useful language box to help them during their discussion. Monitor the discussions and prepare feedback on language use. Bring the class back together and discuss the feedback, ensuring good language use and interesting ideas are also praised.

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EXERCISE 1

Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

1. How do you get to work?
2. Describe the journey. Use these questions to help you.

How long does it take?

Do you travel alone or with someone else?

Do you pass any interesting landmarks?

3. Do you know anyone who has a long journey to work?

EXERCISE 2

a. Match each word or phrase (1–8) with the correct meaning (a–h).

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 1. commute | a. travel regularly to and from work |
| 2. cost effective | b. harmful smoke or gas |
| 3. annual | c. good enough to spend your time or money on |
| 4. green spaces | d. areas of grass, such as parks, gardens, forests, etc. |
| 5. eco-friendly | e. designed to cause as little harm to the environment as possible |
| 6. worthwhile | f. getting the most profit or advantage from the money spent |
| 7. the suburbs | g. calculated or considered over a period of one year |
| 8. fumes | h. an area near a large city but away from its centre, where there are many houses |

b. Complete the questions using a word or phrase from Exercise a.

1. How do people _____ to work?
2. Is it expensive to take public transport in your town/city, or is it _____ ?
3. Are there many _____ in your town/city that are open to the public?
4. Would you prefer to live in a city centre or in _____ ? Why?
5. Is it cheaper to buy an _____ travel pass, or pay as you go?
6. What could councils do to reduce _____ in their cities?
7. Is a long commute to work _____ if it means you can live in the countryside?
8. Is the way you travel to work _____ or could you do more to help the environment?

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EXERCISE 3

a. Read the article. Discuss the questions with a partner.

1. What is super-commuting?
2. How do people super-commute?
3. What do you think of super-commuting?

The rise of super-commuting



The morning commute is something that bonds, for better or worse, many workers in large cities and metropolitan areas. According to a survey conducted by the Trade Union Congress¹, UK workers spent on average 59 minutes per day travelling to and from work in 2018. However, not everyone has an average commute. Meet the ‘super commuters’ – those who spend far longer, or travel far further than the UK average.

Few people would say the morning commute is the highlight of their day, so why are people choosing to make such long journeys every day? The main reason is house prices. Take London for example. The cost of living or renting a property in London continues to rise. For many workers, it is more cost-effective to live outside the city centre and commute in every day. Despite annual train fares to and from the city costing thousands of pounds, this is still better value for commuters than living in the city.

For some, it is less about the cost of living and more about the quality of life. Living outside the city allows for greater access to green spaces and fresh air. Some people take this to the extreme, commuting to London from abroad. Cheap flights to the capital from Europe mean some commuters can afford to live in countries such as Spain or France, where the lifestyle makes the long commute worthwhile.

Some super-commuters opt for more eco-friendly means of transportation. The relative ease of cycling around London has encouraged many people to commute from the suburbs, initially by train and then completing their journey by bike. This may increase journey times, but it also helps commuters stay fit and healthy, while also doing their bit for the environment. Cycling among the traffic and fumes of central London may not appeal to everyone, but it is one way to avoid the cost of public transport.

Whatever the reason for the rise in super-commuting, it has become some people’s reality. Do you think this is a trend that is set to continue? How would you feel about spending more than two hours on your daily commute? Do you feel super-commuting is a problem, or just a lifestyle choice? Share your comments below.

¹<https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/annual-commuting-time-21-hours-compared-decade-ago-finds-tuc>

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b. Complete the table using information from the text and your own ideas.

Type of commute	Pros	Cons
Commuting by train		
Flying		
Cycling		

c. Work in pairs. Compare your notes from Exercise 3b. Do you agree?

EXERCISE 4

a. Read the final paragraph of the text again. Share your response to the questions the author asked in the *Share your views* box below. When you finish, read and respond to your classmates' comments.

Share your views:
Comment:
Comment:
Comment:

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- b. Read some of the views your classmates have written. Add your own comments.
 c. Reflect on the responses to your views. Do you agree with your classmates?

EXERCISE 5

a. Read each statement. Give each statement a score from 1–5 based on your opinion (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

1. Super-commuting should be encouraged because it leads to growth in areas surrounding big cities.
2. Companies based in cities with a high cost of living should pay for their staff to commute. It is not the workers' fault that the city is so expensive.
3. Commuting to London from abroad on a regular basis is unethical. I mean, think about your carbon footprint!
4. I really don't care about how people commute to work. It's up to them.
5. I'd never take a job with a two-hour commute. It's all about work-life balance for me.

b. Work in groups. Compare your opinions and explain your views.

Useful language

Giving an opinion	Acknowledging someone's viewpoint	Agreeing	Disagreeing
In my opinion ...	I see your point.	I (totally/ completely) agree.	I'm not sure about that.
Personally, I think ...	I see where you're coming from.	I couldn't agree more.	I disagree.
I'd say that ...	That's a good point.	I'm with you on that.	I don't know about that...
I feel that ...	Fair point.	I'd say the same.	
For me, ...	Yeah, fair enough.		