

Upper Intermediate – Consider the positive and negative aspects of taking risks

Aim: To help students assess the positive/negative aspects of taking risks and if a risk is worth taking

Lead-in: Elicit from students some extreme sports write them on the board (base jumping, bodysurfing, bungee jumping, free running, rock climbing, skateboarding, skydiving, etc.). Encourage various students to share their opinions on extreme sports. Ask, *Which extreme sports appeal to you? Which extreme sports would really terrify you? Why (not)?*

Put students in pairs and get them to think of the risks involved in extreme sports versus the positive feelings you might get from doing these sports.

Explain to students that it doesn't matter if the sports don't attract them, they should just think about how people who actually do these sports might feel. Ask students to call out their ideas and add them to the list of sports on the board.

Discuss with students the reasons why people take up risky extreme sports (*enjoy danger, thrill seeking, want to try new things, want to push themselves to their limits*).

Point out to students that in extreme sports people choose to take physical risks. However, in everyday life we are forced to take various big and small risks all the time both because we can't avoid them and because we want to improve our lives. Get students to brainstorm in pairs the kinds of risks they take on a daily basis. Write the following on the board to start students off and get them to tell you what the risks are and why we might take those risks:

Crossing the road (we have to get where we are going), travelling by car (it makes life easier and faster), failing to study for an exam (don't want to make the effort and spend time studying), going home late at night (we sometimes have to).

Finish up the lead-in by discussing with students which of the suggestions they made could be categorised as positive risks (such as crossing the road or travelling by car) and which are negative risks (failing to study, going home late, etc).

Choose A Scenario: Ask students to work in pairs to choose one of the three scenarios, A–C. Explain to students that they should identify the risk involved in the situation described. In their pairs they should examine the advantages and disadvantages of taking the risk, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of not taking the risk. Ask students to write short notes.

Finally, students should decide definitively whether or not to take the risk and explain why and how they came to their decision.

Encourage students to refer to the Reflection point while they are working.

Reflection Point: Write the following on the board: *a calculated risk*. Explain to students that this is an expression used in business and other situations where we have to take risks. Ask students to guess what the expression might mean. (*A calculated risk is a risk you think is worth taking because the result, if successful, is so good.*) Point out to students that this can sometimes be true in life and explain to students that they should try to understand which risks are good to take and which just aren't worth it.

Class discussion: Put each pair with another pair that chose the same scenario and ask them to compare their decisions.

Ask: *Did you all choose the same path of action? Why? (not)?* Where their decisions were different, encourage students to explain the reason behind their choices. Dictate the following questions for students to think about in pairs for a few minutes. Ask individual students to share their opinions and encourage a class discussion.

- *Why are some people risk takers and others not?*
- *Are you a risk taker? How do you know?*
- *In what kinds of situations might you have to take a calculated risk?*
- *Are there occasions when you shouldn't ever take risks?*

- *When should you take risks in your daily school activities and why? (Give examples but don't dictate: volunteer to perform in a play or concert or leave your homework to the last minute.)*
- *Have you ever decided not to take a risk and then regretted it? Or have you done the opposite?*
- *Can you learn to be better at taking risks? How?*

Work alone: Now ask students to choose a second scenario from A–C and approach the scenario individually, following the same steps as in section 2.

Go around checking students' progress and encouraging them. When students have finished, invite some of them to present their decisions and their reasons.

Extension: Put students in pairs and ask them to think carefully about something they would really like to do but haven't done yet because they're scared, can't be bothered or don't think they'll be able to do it well (*join a sports team, a club, speak to someone important, try something new*).

Then get students to list what they will lose by not doing the thing they desire, versus what they will gain by doing it. Encourage students to think about the 'worst case scenario' of doing it and decide if it's that bad.

Ask students to choose one positive risk they are going to take and see how it affects their lives.