

Forever Young: when is it time to step down?

Level: Advanced (C1–C2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Business topics: Chief executives, age, generation gap, discrimination

Business language: Useful business vocabulary, phrases and expressions, pronunciation, report writing: bridging the age gap

Activities: Discussing retirement age, key words, understanding the text, business language, discussion, report on bridging generation gaps at work

Groups: Whole class, one-to-one, small groups

Overview: This article discusses how the average age of the chief executive is on the rise, what age and retirement policy trends are, and how competence should be the top criterion when recruiting leaders.

8. *reluctant*
9. *tenure*
10. *pensionable*
11. *risk averse, risk-averse*
12. *oust, ousted*
13. *rigorous*
14. *appraisal*

3. Key words – pronunciation

- a. Ask students to work in pairs to say the words aloud and identify the number of syllables and stressed syllables. This can be done by clapping. Students can also use a dictionary if needed.

Key:

1. *can-di-da-cy*
2. *dis-cri-mi-na-tion*
3. *ar-bi-tra-ri-ly*
4. *a-na-chro-nis-tic*
5. *de-mo-gra-phi-c*
6. *in-ter-ge-ne-ra-tio-nal*
7. *pro-por-tio-nate*
8. *pen-sio-na-ble*
9. *oc-to-ge-na-ri-an*
10. *con-ti-nu-i-ty*
11. *ri-go-rous*
12. *a-pprai-sal*

- b. Students identify the schwa in each word.

Key:

1. *anachronistic*
2. *demographic*
3. *intergenerational*
4. *proportionate*
5. *pensionable*
6. *octogenarian*
7. *rigorous*
8. *appraisal*

4. Understanding the article

- a. Ask students to scan the article individually to complete this activity and compare their answers. Remind them that they don't need to read the whole article each time but that they should rather look over it very quickly to locate the information and then read it carefully.

1. Warmer

- a. Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs or small groups. Elicit the main ideas that arise from the discussion from the whole class.

2. Key words

- a. Have students scan the article, find the key words individually, and compare their answers in pairs. Elicit answers from the whole class.

Key:

1. *breach, breached*
2. *arbitrarily*
3. *anachronistic*
4. *demographic*
5. *bottleneck, bottlenecks*
6. *dominate, dominates/dominated*
7. *waive, waived*

Key:

1. False. Janet Truncala was appointed.
2. True
3. True
4. False. She does not want a 9-to-5 job and prefers a varied and flexible career.
5. True
6. True
7. False. They're 55.6 at the start of it.
8. True
9. False. Only 31 are under 50.
10. False. It decreases.
11. False. They become more risk averse.
12. True.

5. Business language

- a. Ask students to practise their scanning skills again to complete this activity. You could also set it up as a whole-class activity, so students compete against each other to complete the 'reading race'.

Key:

1. (nasty) bushfire
2. step down / hand in their lanyards and badges
3. fall over yourself
4. come to blows
5. creep upwards
6. be living proof
7. overstay your welcome
8. level the playing field
9. ignore noisy signals
10. bed-blocking

- b. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to come up with sentences. This can be done as a speaking or writing activity. The answers given below are simply suggestions. More than one answer is possible.

Key (possible answers):

1. Her latest comment on employees' concerns was a spark that started a bushfire.
2. She has just handed in her lanyard; I heard she got a job as a sales rep.
3. They are practically falling over themselves to please the visiting CEO.
4. Brad and Sam nearly came to blows over the new project in our last meeting.

5. We're planning to invest in our own offices, but property prices are creeping upwards.
6. Charlize is living proof that age is just a number.
7. I am going to head back now. I don't want to overstay my welcome.
8. Many hoped that remote work could level the playing field for women.
9. Our customer complaints are up. Look at the numbers – they are noisy signals we can't ignore.
10. I think accusing older colleagues of 'bed-blocking' is age discrimination.

6. Discussion

- a. Put the students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. When students have covered all the questions, bring the whole class back together so that they can share their answers and any interesting information that arose from their discussions. Make note of good examples of vocabulary and language on the board and incorrect usage that needs to be corrected. Ask the class to identify which is which and help you with corrections.

7. Wider business theme – bridging the age gap

- a. For this activity, you could group students to work with others of different ages if possible. Ask them to look at the chart and discuss the traits of each generation. Have them research more traits and add ideas. Elicit comments from the whole class.

Key (suggested answers):

1. a/b. formal/traditional environment; security
 2. c/d. hierarchy of authority; don't need constant feedback
 3. e/f. efficiency, autonomy
 4. g/h. challenge authority; relaxed work environment
 5. i/j. adapt to technological shifts; authenticity and connection
- b. Have students discuss possible strategies for overcoming generation gaps at work and get them to elaborate on what they think the five strategies provided mean.

Key:

1. *get colleagues to see what they have in common, find similarities in goals/needs/values*
 2. *get colleagues to improve communication by listening to each other, spending more time in a different environment, getting a coach*
 3. *give older people opportunities*
 4. *start a formal or informal mentoring programme, get older and younger colleagues to work together*
 5. *first, discuss individual job roles, then get teams to share these to have transparency and understand each other's value*
- c. Ask students to discuss the generation gaps in their organisation. If they are not currently working, have students choose a situation they are familiar with. Get them to discuss the key issues and solutions in their group.
- d. Go over useful language with the class and elicit any other phrases that might be useful for report writing. Students can brainstorm in pairs, but ask them to complete the writing activity individually. When they are finished, get them to peer edit. You can ask them to focus on the structure and clarity of ideas and use new language from the lesson.