

Should interns be paid?

Level: Pre-intermediate upwards

Timing: 90 minutes plus

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

Group size: Any

Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an original article first published in Business Spotlight International Issue 5/2012. In the article, two business professionals discuss the pros and cons of paying interns for the time they spend learning to do a job at a company.

The tasks in the student's notes will encourage the students to learn and use new business vocabulary and functional language, and also to practise useful business skills such as summarizing, coming to an agreement and putting forward their own point of view.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys and extension tasks (for in class or as homework).

Compare and contrast

Before they read the article and two opinions it is important that the students know the difference between these terms.

Key:

intern = a student, or someone who has recently obtained a degree, who works in a job in order to get experience

trainee = someone who is training for a particular profession or job
apprentice = someone who works for a particular person or company, usually for low pay, in order to learn the type of work or trade that they do

office junior = a young person, especially a school-leaver, employed in an office for running errands and doing other minor jobs

The second part of the task asks whether there are any interns, apprentices, trainees or office juniors in the students' places of work. Find out from the students if there was ever a time when one of these titles applied to them in their working life.

Teaching and learning strategy: Personalization to differentiate similar vocabulary

Sets of similar words like these can sometimes be difficult even for native speakers to differentiate. Providing a mental image or connection for learners to grasp will help to make the words more tangible or 'real'. If the learners can find an image or connection by themselves, the chances of them moving the new words into their active vocabulary is far greater than if they remain nebulous.

Therefore, whenever the opportunity arises, as it does in Task 1, encourage the students to apply the words to someone they know, or even better, to a situation that is personal to them. This will immediately make the new vocabulary easier to remember than if it is just read in a text.

Key words

This task is divided into two parts which correspond to the two parts of the article. To make the task slightly easier, the definitions are in the order that the words appear in the article. This task can be divided up amongst the students, some finding the words from Article A and the others finding the words from Article B. They should then share and talk about their answers.

Key:

Article A: 1. debt; 2. placement; 3. recruiters; 4. tribunals; 5. minimum wage; 6. graduates;

Article B: 7. exploitative; 8. favour; 9. crutch; 10. welfare; 11. undermines; 12. self-sufficiency

The main arguments

Ask the students to read through the article and underline the arguments that the two men put forward.

The students should summarize these, using as few words as possible, and write them into the table. After they have done so they should decide which points they agree with and put a tick next to these, and put a cross next to the points they disagree with. If they neither agree nor disagree they should put neither a cross nor a tick. The students should then compare what they have written, and ticked and crossed, with another student or in small groups.

Should interns be paid?

Key:

Should interns be paid?
Yes!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unpaid interns get into debt an internship in London is only possible if you live there and your parents support you financially people who cannot afford an internship are less likely to be recruited the amount of interns is limited (as only those who can afford it can do one) companies who don't pay interns risk their reputation it's illegal not to pay a worker companies take on interns without any intention of employing them interns do not realize they have a legal right to get paid one internship is often not enough increased university fees already make it hard for young people
No!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> young people are not forced to do an internship - they are free to decide internships make more work for companies, not less paid internships will decrease motivation - they'll only be there for the money a paid internship would send the wrong message about life - that it is easy a paid internship is no longer an internship but an office junior job an internship should introduce young people to the world of work paying an intern would make an internship less special

Multi-word phrases

The students put the words into the correct order to make phrases from the article. The first three are from Article A, the rest are from Article B. After they have checked their answers are correct and discussed what they mean, they should try to talk about the article using the phrases.

Key:

1. across a whole range of ...; 2. the vast majority of ...; 3. found in favour of ...; 4. doing (interns) a favour; 5. strong minded individuals; 6. to succeed in the world; 7. dependent upon welfare; 8. left to their own devices

Discussion questions

These questions aim to encourage discussion of the debate and to bring further personalization elements into the discussions. The final question is the same as the title. Ask the learners to make a decision: yes or no. First they should give their personal opinion, after which you could hold a ballot in which they vote unwaveringly, yes or no. What is the final consensus in the class?

Web task

Ask the students to look at the website of Intern Aware, the organization of which Ben Lyons is co-director. They could do this as homework and then report on what they have found out in the next lesson.

Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

Related topics on onestopenglish

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics go to the following lesson plans in the Business section on onestopenglish:

Business Spotlight: Planning the future

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/planning-the-future/>

Business tasks: Experience

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-tasks/experience/155482.article>

Should interns be paid?

1 Warmer

a. Use a dictionary to find the similarities and differences between the words in the box.

intern	trainee	apprentice	office junior
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b. Are there any of these people at your place of work?

2 Key words

Match the key words from the article with the definitions below. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

Article A

debt	graduates	minimum wage	placement	recruiters	tribunals
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1. a situation in which you owe money to other people / money that you owe

2. a temporary job that gives you work experience _____
3. people who look for others to fill work positions _____
4. special law courts organized to judge a particular type of case _____
5. the smallest amount of money that an employer is legally allowed to pay a worker

6. people who have a degree from a university _____

Article B

crutch	exploitative	favour	self-sufficiency	undermines	welfare
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7. treating people unfairly in order to get some benefit for yourself _____
8. something that you do for someone in order to help them _____
9. something that you depend on for support or help, especially too much

10. money given to people who do not have work or who are in need _____
11. makes something or someone become gradually less effective, confident or successful

12. the ability to provide everything that you need by yourself, without help from other people.

Should interns be paid?

Article A

Should interns be paid?

by Julian Earwaker



YES!

“The vast majority of interns are workers in a legal sense”

BEN LYONS

have the right to a minimum wage. We need that to be enforced — especially by our political leaders. A few cases have already gone to employment tribunals and in all these cases, the courts found in favour of interns.

There is a growing risk to the reputation of companies who don't pay interns. It is illegal to have someone who is a worker and, simply by giving them the name “intern”, not to pay them.

Some companies have a rolling internship scheme, whereby they use interns without any possibility of the job later becoming permanent. That's not right. The vast majority of people in Britain think that interns should be properly paid. The problem is that too few employers and young people understand that interns have a legal right to a minimum wage.

Where internships are paid properly, it's of real benefit to companies because they get motivated people who could be good employees.

Hard-working graduates are great for business – young people bring fresh ideas and energy. Internships have become so important that, often, one isn't enough to get a job.

Never in the past were people expected to work without pay for the chance of getting a job. On top of increased university fees, it makes it extremely hard to be a young person in Britain today.

BEN LYONS is co-director of Intern Aware (www.internaware.org), which he started in January 2010 to campaign for fair internships.

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- 1 There has been a big increase in the number of unpaid internships. Before, these were mostly found in politics, fashion and the media. Now, we see them across a whole range of functions and businesses.
- 2 It's extremely hard to get into many sectors unless you can afford to work for free. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) estimates that over 100,000 British internships are unpaid; that's more than a third. In America, about half of all internships are unpaid.
- 3 Taking an unpaid internship means getting into a lot of debt. The only people who can take up a placement in London are those who live there and those with parents supporting them. We have more than a million unemployed young people, and unpaid internships are not helping the matter.
- 4 If recruiters are demanding several months' experience or relevant skills before they will give someone a job interview, this makes it impossible for people who cannot afford to do an internship. It's bad for business, too, because it limits the number of available interns.
- 5 The vast majority of interns are workers in a legal sense. If you work regular hours and contribute value to an employer, you are a worker under employment law and

6

7

8

9

10

Should interns be paid?

Article B

Should interns be paid?

by Julian Earwaker



NO!

“People are free to decide whether to do an internship or not”
BRENDAN O'NEILL

1 There has been a massive overreaction to the whole idea of unpaid internships. It presents businesses as exploitative and young people – particularly young middle-class graduates – as victims. The idea that voluntarily working for a company could be slave labour is completely bizarre. Young people are free to decide whether to do an internship or not, and to leave an internship if they feel it's not right for them. No one is being forced to do anything.

2 Internships make work for the organizations offering them. You need to train an intern, introduce them to everyone and help them to make sure they get things right. Most organizations and businesses feel that they are doing interns a favour by offering an internship. Very few businesses use interns to do work that could be done by a paid member of staff. Interns should therefore not be paid as long as it's clear that they are doing an internship for training and experience and not working for a long period of time.

3 Student debt is a growing problem, but paying an intern isn't a solution to this. The good thing about internships in the past was that you didn't have to motivate an intern with money. Internships should be for strong minded individuals who want to succeed in the world. If you offer payment, then you replace individual motivation with the crutch of a low wage. It teaches young people that life should be easy when, as we all know, it is not.

4 A government-sponsored graduate internship scheme carries the same risks: making young people dependent upon welfare. Paying interns undermines their self-sufficiency. It tells them that the state will look after them instead of leaving them to look for internships, jobs and opportunities themselves. Left to their own devices, young people learn how to become an adult.

5 Payment changes the whole meaning of being an intern: it turns the position into that of an office junior. If people want that – and to receive the minimum wage for it – that's fine. But an unpaid internship should be a way of introducing someone to the world of work. If you start paying people for it, then you remove what's special about it by turning it into a low-wage form of everyday labour.

BRENDAN O'NEILL is the editor of the online magazine *spiked*. A political and social commentator, he blogs for the *Daily Telegraph* and is a columnist for *The Big Issue* and *The Australian*.

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Should interns be paid?

3 The main arguments

a. Find the arguments given by Ben Lyons and Brendan O'Neil and write them in note form into the table below.

Should interns be paid?	
Yes!	No!

b. Put a tick next to the points you agree with and a cross next to those you do not. Compare your answers and opinions.

4 Multi-word phrases

Put these words into the correct order to make multi-word phrases from the article. Use them in sentences to talk about the article.

1. a whole across of range
2. majority vast the of
3. of found favour in
4. a favour doing (interns)
5. minded individuals strong
6. the world to succeed in
7. welfare upon dependent
8. devices left to own their

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5 Discussion questions

Discuss the questions below in small groups.

- Are there any interns in your company? If yes, what do they do and how did they get their internship? If no, why not, and do you think there may be internships there in the future?
- Does your company run any other schemes that train young people or offer them work experience?
- Have you ever done an unpaid internship or any other kind of unpaid work? If yes, did this help your career?
- Would you encourage any young people that you know to do an unpaid internship?
- Are unpaid internships a luxury that only graduates from families with money can afford?
- Should interns be paid?

6 Web task

Go to www.internaware.org and find out who the website is for, who is behind it and what it aims to achieve.

Should interns be paid?

Vocabulary record: Should interns be paid?

verb	noun	adjective (+ opposite)	adverb (+ opposite)
support			
	risk		
		minimum	
			increasingly

Vocabulary record