

Teacher's notes: Level 2 (Upper Intermediate)

Worksheet A

A. Pre-reading

Get students to list suggestions in pairs or small groups. Then review suggestions with the whole class and note them on the board. When students have read the text, get them to compare their ideas with those in the text.

B. Comprehension

Get students to work individually; then review their answers with the whole class. As part of the review, ask them to identify which parts of the text they used to decide on their answers.

Key:

1. T. 'First, it is safe to assume that, during the recruitment process, potential applicants will be more attracted to an organization that has a reputation for offering a healthy and safe work environment for employees.' [paragraph 1, lines 7-11]
2. F. The writers are recommending that companies carry out personality tests to check whether potential employees are likely to behave safely in the future. They do not mention checking on their past record. ('Second, the maintenance of a healthy and safe workplace can be facilitated in the selection process by choosing applicants with personality traits that decrease the likelihood of an accident.') [paragraph 1, lines 11-15]
3. F. The writers suggest that managers' performance appraisals should incorporate the safety record of the teams they manage, but they don't say that this should be the main basis for assessing them. ('The appraisal of a manager's performance that incorporates the safety record of a department or section can also facilitate health and safety.' [paragraph 1, lines 15-18])
4. F. The writers do not say that the managers should be directly responsible for recording accidents. Instead, they argue that the number of accidents that take place in the departments they manage should be taken into account when appraising them and assessing their performance. They don't say who should do the checking. ('Research suggests that safety management programmes are more effective when the accident rates of their sections are an important criterion of managerial performance.') [paragraph 1, lines 18-21]
5. T. The use of the expression 'ties' (rather than, say 'links' or 'connects') suggests that the writers think that bonuses should depend on a good safety record. ('Safe

work behaviour can be encouraged by a reward system that ties bonus payments to the safety record of a work group or section.' [paragraph 2, lines 1-3]

6. F. They say that training during the early months of a job is 'particularly beneficial', but this doesn't imply that training at other stages of a job isn't essential in some cases. [paragraph 2, line 13]

7. T. 'Reliable estimates of the total cost of occupational ill-health and accidents are incomplete, which is perhaps symptomatic of the low priority given to this area of work.' [paragraph 3, lines 11-14]

8. T. 'In Canada, compensation for victims of workplace accidents exceeds US\$3 billion, this figure excluding the cost to the public health care system resulting from long-term work-related illnesses.' [paragraph 3, lines 22-25]

C. Writing skills: Academic style

Do as much as possible to elicit answers from students before you let them refer back to the text. For example:

- Give them the final letter of the missing word as well as the initial one (e.g. a \_\_\_\_\_e).
- Give them the total number of letters in the missing word (e.g. a \_ \_ \_ \_ e).
- Encourage them to use a learner's dictionary.

Point out to students how some of the expressions are used by the authors to assert that evidence is true: ('it is safe to assume that ...', 'the costs ... are also **clearly** borne by ...'); whereas others are used to 'hedge' assertions (i.e. to acknowledge that they might not always or necessarily be true (e.g. 'The maintenance ... can be facilitated', 'which is **perhaps** symptomatic of ...').

Key:

1. safe [to] assume; 2. can [be] facilitated; 3. indicate;
4. clearly; 5. perhaps symptomatic; 6. admitted;
7. only limited

D. Discussion

If you have time, get students to discuss one or more questions in small groups initially, then review conclusions with the whole class.

These questions would all work as topics for written essays, as well as for discussions.

**Question 1:** Students might question the extent to which health and safety really is an important factor

in deciding which company to work for. They might conclude that this would depend very much on the type of work. For jobs involving obvious danger or health risk (e.g. manufacturing, mining, etc.), it would be a much more important factor than for office work. On the other hand, candidates might definitely be less likely to want to join a company that has had health and safety problems reported in the media.

**Question 2:** Companies might use personality tests specifically designed to assess attitudes to risk, or they may use candidates' answers to questions about attitudes to risk that form part of a more general psychometric test. A possible problem is that if people are too averse to risk, they might not perform well in other aspects of the job.

**Question 3:** This question could lead into a number of interesting areas for discussion about personal, corporate, and governmental responsibility. Encourage students to give specific examples to support their opinions.

Elicit or teach expressions connected with the concept of responsibility, e.g.:

*responsibility / irresponsibility*  
*have / take / assume responsibility for ...*  
*be responsible for ...*  
*total / overall responsibility*  
*partial / limited responsibility*  
*blame someone for ...*  
*accept responsibility for ...*  
*deny responsibility for ...*  
*a legal / moral responsibility for ... etc.*

#### E. Webquest

Get students to present their findings in written form or in presentations to the whole class.

The newspaper reports that students find should help to recycle and extend the vocabulary presented in these lessons.

The Health and Safety Executive is available at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk). Other occupational health and safety organizations include Safe Work Australia <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/SWA> and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health [www.occuphealth.fi](http://www.occuphealth.fi).

### Worksheet B

#### A. Pre-listening

1. Get students to list their suggestions in pairs or small groups. Then review suggestions with the whole class and note them on the board.
2. List suggestions as they are made, then reorganise them into two lists: Work-related factors and Personal factors. A final list might look like this:

#### Work-related factors

Too much work  
Time pressure  
Problems with managers  
Problems / conflict with colleagues  
Communication problems  
Change of jobs  
Unclear work role  
Lack of promotion  
Violence  
Harassment / bullying

#### Personal factors

Family problems (partner, children, dependent parents)  
Pregnancy  
Death of partner or relative  
Financial problems

3. Play the conversation. Then get students to compare their ideas with the ones mentioned during the conversation.

#### B. Comprehension

1. Get students to listen to the complete conversation and note down their answers. Then tell them to compare their answers with a partner.
2. Ask them to listen again and answer any questions they weren't able to answer the first time round, or that they disagreed about. Then review answers with the whole class.
3. When reviewing answers, if there is any disagreement or confusion, get students to refer to the transcript and identify which specific parts of the text enabled them to decide who said what.

Teacher's notes: Level 2 (Upper Intermediate)

If you think that weaker students have not fully understood the content of the conversation, go through the comprehension questions in Level 1 with them before (or instead of) doing this activity.

**Key:**

1. T. "I was very surprised. He always seemed so happy when I spoke to him. He didn't look especially tired or seem tense or anxious." [paragraph 5, lines 1-2]

2. T. "But another reason I was surprised to hear about George is that I don't think his job was particularly difficult or high-pressure." [paragraph 7, lines 1-2]

3. L. "There have been some studies in the US that show that the most stressful jobs are manual work and lower-level office jobs like secretaries or routine jobs, like the one George does." [paragraph 8, lines 2-4]

4. L. "In fact, the chances of suffering a first heart attack are 2.5 times higher among manual and clerical workers than they are among executives and senior managers." [paragraph 8, lines 4-5]

5. L. "... maybe George is depressed because of the way his job is designed. It's quite common for that to happen, you know, especially in a job like George's." [paragraph 10, lines 2-3]

6. T. "My phone is ringing all day long, [...] That's what causes me stress! And I'm sure I'm not the only person to hate constant interruptions." [paragraph 13, lines 2, 4-5]

7. X. Laura's stress had nothing to do with the fact that she was promoted. She felt stressed because she was reporting to two different people and wasn't sure what she was supposed to be doing. [paragraph 14, lines 1-3]

8. L. "But I'm not saying that all workplace stress is caused by work. There are often personal factors as well." [paragraph 22, line 1]

9. X. Laura's examples of family problems refer to women, but she never states that it is mainly women whose stress is caused by personal problems. [paragraph 26, lines 1-3]

**C. Vocabulary**

1. Ask students to work individually. See how many gaps they can fill in from memory or using background

knowledge and deduction. Then get them to compare their answers with a partner.

2. Play the conversation and get them to review their answers. Do a final check on answers with the whole class.

3. After that, answer any queries about the vocabulary used in the conversation. In particular, check that students have properly understood the meaning of the gapped words by eliciting synonyms, e.g. 'routine': *repetitive, boring*; 'high-pressure': *demanding, stressful*, etc. All the gapped words are useful for talking about jobs and stress, so encourage students to record them in their vocabulary notebooks.

**Key:**

1. tell; 2. symptoms ('signs' would also be correct, but isn't actually used in the conversation); 3. high-pressure; 4. burnout; 5. reporting; 6. studies (the missing word couldn't be the singular noun 'research' because of the plural verb in 'There have been ...'); 7. routine; 8. chances (the missing word couldn't be the singular nouns 'possibility', 'probability' or 'risk' because of the plural verb 'are'); 9. clerical; 10. executives

**D. Discussion**

1. With the whole class, elicit suggestions and write them on the board. Then add suggestions of your own. The list might end up looking like this:

Symptoms of workplace stress

anxiety / tension  
finding it hard to relax  
sleep problems  
digestive problems  
absenteeism  
forgetfulness  
worrying / panicking  
boredom  
irritability  
lack of cooperation  
more accidents

Allow students to express these ideas in other ways, but correct any mistakes. A number of the suggestions in the list above involve nouns derived from adjectives, e.g. 'absenteeism', 'forgetfulness', 'boredom', 'irritability'. Try to elicit these. Get students to suggest which of the symptoms are most serious / are in most need of

Teacher's notes: Level 2 (Upper Intermediate)

urgent attention. You could even get them to rank them in order of seriousness.

2. Get students to make lists of specific suggestions and review them with the whole class. Or you can elicit and write down suggestions from the whole class from the outset.

List suggestions as they are made, then reorganize them into two lists: Individual remedies and Company remedies. With weaker students, you may need to add extra suggestions of your own. A final list might look like this:

Individual remedies

- Taking exercise/doing sport
- Doing meditation
- Taking up hobbies
- Participating in group discussions
- Doing an assertiveness training course

Company remedies

- Holding meetings with employees
- Carrying out workplace surveys
- Improving job descriptions and departmental organization
- Improving communication
- Training managers to identify causes and symptoms of stress

These questions would all work as topics for written essays, as well as for discussions.

**E. Webquest**

This is a deliberately general task. You can get students to refine their search by looking for items relating to their own country or to their own field of work.

Get students to present their findings in written form or in presentations to the whole class. If your class all come from the same country, do the research yourself and find some interesting examples.

The items that students find should help to recycle and extend the vocabulary presented in these lessons.

You could also get them to focus on specific websites, e.g. the UK Health and Safety Executive

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk), the UK Trade Union Council [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk) and publications for HR professionals, e.g. Canadian HR Reporter [www.hrreporter.com](http://www.hrreporter.com). In each case, they would need to do a site-specific search.

**A** Pre-reading

How important do you think health and safety is for companies? How can HR departments encourage a healthy and safe work environment? Discuss, then compare your ideas with those in the reading text.

## Health and wellness and human resource management

The employer has a legal duty to maintain a healthy and safe workplace. Health and safety considerations can have an impact on key Human Resource Management (HRM) activities such as selection, appraisal, rewards and learning, and development. Health and safety considerations and policy can affect the selection process in two ways. First, it is safe to assume that during the recruitment process, potential applicants will be more attracted to an organization that has a reputation for offering a healthy and safe work environment for employees. Second, the maintenance of a healthy and safe workplace can be facilitated in the selection process by choosing applicants with personality traits that decrease the likelihood of an accident. The appraisal of a manager's performance that incorporates the safety record of a department or section can also facilitate health and safety. Research suggests that safety management programmes are more effective when the accident rates of their sections are an important criterion of managerial performance.

Safe work behaviour can be encouraged by a reward system that ties bonus payments to the safety record of a work group or section. Some organizations also provide prizes to their employees for safe work behaviour, a good safety record or suggestions for improving health and safety. Training and human resources (HR) development play a critical role in promoting health and safety awareness among employees, and indeed the Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA) 1974 requires employers to provide instruction and training to ensure the health and

safety of their employees. Studies indicate that safety training for new employees is particularly beneficial because accidents are highest during the early months of a new job.

On the question of the importance of occupational health and safety, although economic cost and HR considerations will always be predominant for the organization, the costs of ill-health and work-related accidents are not only borne by the victims, the families and their employers; the costs of occupational ill-health and accidents are also clearly borne by the taxpayer and public sector services. The health care sector, for example, bears the costs of workplace ill-health and accidents. Reliable estimates of the total cost of occupational ill-health and accidents are incomplete, which is perhaps symptomatic of the low priority given to this area of work. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has admitted that although occupational diseases kill more people in the UK each year than industrial accidents, there is only limited information on the former. An official survey in 1993 put the cost to society for deaths and accidents (excluding occupational disease) in British workplaces at £10-15 billion, or 1.75-2.75 per cent of the gross domestic product. In Canada, compensation for victims of workplace accidents exceeds US\$3 billion, this figure excluding the cost to the public health care system resulting from long-term work-related illnesses.

Adapted from *Human Resources Management*, Bratton & Gold, ©John Bratton and Jeff Gold, 1994-2007, pp. 481-2.

Worksheet A: Level 2 (Upper Intermediate)

**B** Comprehension

Do these statements match the information in the text? Mark each statement as true (T) or false (F).

1. Having a good health and safety record can definitely help companies attract candidates.
2. Employers can keep a workplace healthy and safe by choosing employees who have a proven record of preventing and avoiding accidents.
3. Managers' performance should be assessed mainly on the basis of the safety record of the teams they manage.
4. All managers should be responsible for recording the number of accidents that take place in the departments or teams that they manage.
5. Bonus payments for groups or teams of workers should depend on those teams having a good safety record.
6. Safety training is only essential during the early months of a new job, because that is when most accidents tend to happen.
7. Estimates of the total cost of work-related ill-health and accidents are incomplete, probably because the authorities do not see them as being sufficiently important.
8. The figure of US\$3 billion for compensation of accident victims in Canada does not represent the true cost for the Canadian government.

**C** Writing skills: Academic style

The text contains several expressions that are useful for an academic (or formal) style of writing.

Without looking back at the text, think of – or try to remember – expressions used in the text that have a similar meaning to the ones below. Then fill in the missing words. The first one is done for you. (The expressions in the list are in the same order that they appear in the text.)

Then look back at the text and check your answers.

1. It is definitely true that ... potential applicants will be more attracted to an organization that ...  
'It is safe to assume that ...'
2. It's possible to make the task of keeping a workplace healthy and safe easier by choosing applicants with personality traits that ...  
'The maintenance of a healthy and safe workplace c\_\_\_\_\_ be f\_\_\_\_\_ ... by choosing ...'
3. Studies show that safety training for new employees is particularly beneficial ...  
'Studies i\_\_\_\_\_ that ...'
4. It is obvious that the costs of occupational ill-health and accidents are also borne by the taxpayer and public sector services.  
'... the costs of occupational ill-health and accidents are also c\_\_\_\_\_ borne by ...'
5. ... which is probably a sign of the problem of the low priority given to this area of work  
'... which is p\_\_\_\_\_ s\_\_\_\_\_ of ...'
6. The HSE has (unwillingly) accepted the fact that ...  
'The HSE has a\_\_\_\_\_ that ...'
7. We don't have a lot of information about the former.  
'There is o\_\_\_\_\_ l\_\_\_\_\_ information on the former.'

Worksheet A: Level 2 (Upper Intermediate)

**D Discussion**

Discuss one or more of these questions.

1. *It is safe to assume that during the recruitment process, potential applicants will be more attracted to an organization that has a reputation for offering a healthy and safe work environment for employees. Is this true?*
2. *The maintenance of a healthy and safe workplace can be facilitated in the selection process by choosing applicants with personality traits that decrease the likelihood of an accident. How could a company do this? Do you think it would work?*
3. How should the responsibility for maintaining health and safety in the workplace be divided between individuals, companies and the government?

**E Webquest**

The text refers to the UK institution responsible for overseeing workplace safety, the The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), and one of the main laws dealing with workplace safety, the Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA).

Find out the equivalent institutions and laws in your own country. Then find examples from online newspapers of cases where those institutions or laws have become involved in problems regarding health and safety in specific companies.

Worksheet B: Level 2 (Upper Intermediate)

**A Pre-listening**

What do you think are the main causes of workplace stress? Discuss this question and make notes.

You are going to hear a conversation between Laura, a new employee, and Tom, who has been working at the same company for a long time. Listen and compare your ideas with the ones mentioned in the conversation.

**B Comprehension**

Look at the statements below. During the conversation, four of the statements on the list were expressed (in different words) by Laura, three by Tom, and two were not expressed at all.

Listen and mark each statement with the person who made them: L (Laura), T (Tom) or X (neither). Then listen again and check your answers.

1. George showed no visible signs of stress.
2. George's stress was surprising because he doesn't have a high-pressure job.
3. Research shows that people in routine, low-level jobs suffer more from stress than people in more senior jobs.
4. Over twice as many manual workers suffer a first heart attack than senior managers do.
5. The way in which a job has been designed can make the person doing it feel stressed.
6. Being constantly interrupted at work can contribute to stress.
7. Being promoted to a new job is a source of stress.
8. People's jobs aren't the only reason for workplace stress: things that are happening in people's lives can also be the cause.
9. It is mainly women who experience stress caused by personal or family problems.

**C Vocabulary**

Fill in the gaps in the conversation. Try doing this before you listen again. Then listen and / or look at the transcript to check your answers.

**Laura:** Well, you can't always \_\_\_\_\_ (1) that somebody is suffering from stress just from talking to them. Sometimes the \_\_\_\_\_ (2) aren't obvious.

**Tom:** Yes, that's fair enough. But another reason I was surprised to hear about George is that I didn't think his job was particularly difficult or \_\_\_\_\_ (3). I mean, you read a lot about 'executive \_\_\_\_\_ (4)', but George isn't even a manager. In fact, I don't think he has anybody \_\_\_\_\_ (5) to him. All he has to do is check people's expenses claims.

**Laura:** That's not very fair! It isn't only people in senior jobs who can suffer from stress, you know. I was reading an article about workplace stress last week. There have been some \_\_\_\_\_ (6) in the US that show that the most stressful jobs are manual work and lower-level office jobs like secretaries or \_\_\_\_\_ (7) jobs like the one George does. In fact, the \_\_\_\_\_ (8) of suffering a first heart attack are 2.5 times higher among manual and \_\_\_\_\_ (9) workers than they are among \_\_\_\_\_ (10) and senior managers.

**D Discussion**

Laura mentions that that you cannot always tell if someone is stressed just from talking to them. What are some common symptoms of workplace stress? How can individuals and companies reduce stress?

**E Webquest**

Enter the terms *workplace stress* and / or *stress at work* into a search engine and report on any interesting links that you find, especially from news stories as well as more academic sources.



Transcript: Level 2 (Upper Intermediate)

Laura, a new employee in the company, is talking to Tom, who has been working at the same company for a long time. They are talking about causes of stress in the workplace.

**Tom:** Did you hear about George in the Accounts department?

**Laura:** No?

**Tom:** He's been diagnosed with work-related stress and has been given a month's leave.

**Laura:** Really? That's terrible.

**Tom:** Yes, I was very surprised. He always seemed so happy when I spoke to him. He didn't look especially tired or seem tense or anxious.

**Laura:** Well you can't always tell that somebody is suffering from stress just from talking to them. Sometimes the symptoms aren't obvious.

**Tom:** Yes, that's fair enough. But another reason I was surprised to hear about George is that I didn't think his job was particularly difficult or high-pressure. I mean, you read a lot about 'executive burnout', but George isn't even a manager. In fact, I don't think he has anybody reporting to him. All he has to do is check people's expenses claims.

**Laura:** That's not very fair! It isn't only people in senior jobs who can suffer from stress, you know. I was reading an article about workplace stress last week. There have been some studies in the US that show that the most stressful jobs are manual work and lower-level office jobs like secretaries or routine jobs like the one George does. In fact, the chances of suffering a first heart attack are 2.5 times higher among manual and clerical workers than they are among executives and senior managers.

**Tom:** Well, I never knew that. But why would someone get so stressed that they need time off work? What causes it?

**Laura:** Well, according to the article I read, there are lots of possible reasons. For example, to go back to what we were just talking about, maybe George is depressed because of the way his job is designed. It's quite common for that to happen, you know, especially in a job like George's.

**Tom:** What do you mean by that?

**Laura:** Well, if you think about it, George's job is to check people's expenses claims. But he never gets to meet the people making the claims, or even talk to them. All he has to do is make sure the figures add up and people are following the company expenses rules. And he never gets to travel anywhere himself!

**Tom:** Yes, I can see why not talking to people would make you stressed. Now I have the opposite problem. My phone is ringing all day long, and I'm always getting lots and lots of emails. So it takes me ages to do all the things I need to do. And sometimes there's a fire alarm test or the computer system breaks down, so I have to stop what I'm doing. That's what causes me stress. And I'm sure I'm not the only person to hate constant interruptions. (pause) So what about you, Laura? Have you ever felt stressed at work?

**Laura:** Yes, I have. The last time I felt really stressed at work was when I was promoted to a new job. I didn't have a job description straight away, and I was working for two different managers. I wasn't really sure what I was expected to do, or whether I was succeeding or failing. That was really stressful.

**Tom:** Yes, it must have been.

**Laura:** And another time I had a big argument with one of my colleagues which lasted for several months. That was stressful, too.

Transcript: Level 2 (Upper Intermediate)

**Tom:** I'm sure it was. Did you manage to solve the problem?

**Laura:** Well, in the end, the problem was solved for me.

**Tom:** How?

**Laura:** She was transferred to another department.

**Tom:** Oh, I see.

**Laura:** But I'm not saying that all workplace stress is caused by work. There are often personal factors as well.

**Tom:** What do you mean by personal factors?

**Laura:** Well, for example, someone could get stressed because they were having financial problems. They might be finding it hard to pay their monthly rent or mortgage.

**Tom:** Yes, that's true.

**Laura:** And a lot of women get stressed because they have to combine work with looking after their family. And there are lots of other reasons. For example, they could be having problems with their marriage or their children.

**Tom:** Fair enough. So, if there are so many reasons for stress, are there things that companies can do to reduce the risk?

**Laura:** Well, yes there are. For example, they can ... (fade)