The Four-Day Workweek

A new way to work

SPEAK FIRST | Talk in pairs. There are no right or wrong opinions.

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1. Which days do you work or study? When do you have free time?
2. What do you usually do on a free day?
3. Choose: four workdays or five shorter workdays. Why?

1 WORD POWER

Match the six useful expressions to their meanings. Then use two of them in your own sentences.

1. workweek _____
2. day off _____
3. pay _____
4. meeting _____
5. customer _____
6. schedule _____

A. a time when people talk about work together

B. a person who buys something or uses a service

C. a plan that shows days and times

D. the days you usually work in one week

E. a day when you do not work

F. money you get for your work

2 READ THE STORY

A new way to work

Many people work from Monday to Friday. They go to work five days a week and have two days off. But what about working four days and having three days free?

Some companies are trying this idea. Workers have fewer hours, but they get the same pay. A four-day week does not always mean four very long days. Companies often have fewer meetings and plan work in a new way.

In 2022, 61 companies in the UK tried a shorter working week for six months. After the test, 56 companies wanted to continue. Many workers said they felt better.

A shorter week can give people more time for family, friends, hobbies and rest. One person might go cycling on Friday. Another person might spend the day with their children.

But it is not easy for every job. A hospital must help patients every day. A shop needs people when customers arrive. These places can stay open, but workers may need different days off.

Now imagine your school or workplace wants to try four days. Would you like Friday free? Or would another day be better? How could everyone get the help they need?

3 DID YOU CATCH THAT?

Answer in your own words. Then compare with a partner and find evidence in the text.

1. How many days do people usually work in the text?
2. What happened after the UK test?
3. Why might a hospital need a different plan?
4. What does a four-day week sometimes include?

4 LET'S TALK

Choose the questions that interest your group. Give reasons, ask follow-up questions and respond to different opinions.

1. What would you do with one extra day off?
2. Which day would you like free: Monday, Friday or another day? Why?
3. Would you rather finish work early each day or have a whole free day?
4. Would you spend a free day at home or outside?
5. Would you like to see friends, rest or learn something new on your day off?
6. Can you think of someone who works at the weekend?
7. How can a shop stay open five days if each worker works four?
8. Is a four-day school week a good idea? What could be difficult?
9. Would your family enjoy the same free day or different days?

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Try one or two of these expressions when you respond.

- I would prefer ... because ...
- I usually ... on Fridays.
- We can ...
- What about ...?

5 MAKE A CHOICE

In a group of three, your small shop must stay open Monday to Friday. Each worker can work four days. Make a timetable and explain it.

ONE LAST THING

What is one opinion you heard today that made you think? Can you explain it fairly, even if you disagree?

ANSWERS & EXAMPLES

OPTIONAL FINAL PAGE | Leave this page out when printing for class. Use it to check any exercises you finish later.

WORD POWER · ANSWER KEY

1. workweek — D. the days you usually work in one week
2. day off — E. a day when you do not work
3. pay — F. money you get for your work
4. meeting — A. a time when people talk about work together
5. customer — B. a person who buys something or uses a service
6. schedule — C. a plan that shows days and times

DID YOU CATCH THAT? · SUGGESTED ANSWERS

These are examples. Your answer can use different words if it matches the reading.

1. How many days do people usually work in the text?

Five. The opening says many people work Monday to Friday.

2. What happened after the UK test?

56 companies wanted to continue. The reading reports that 56 of the 61 companies wanted to continue.

3. Why might a hospital need a different plan?

Patients need help every day. The hospital must continue caring for patients.

4. What does a four-day week sometimes include?

Fewer hours for the same pay. In the reported trial, working hours were reduced without reducing pay.

EXAMPLE SPEAKING RESPONSES

Discussion questions don't have a single correct opinion. Here are two ways to approach the topic and respond to another view.

I want a four-day week because I like free time. But I don't want very long days.

Some people want more money, not more free time.

Try: state your view → give a reason → add an example → consider another opinion.