



Working holidays

Getting started

Work in pairs and discuss the following questions.

- 1 How many public holidays are there in your country? Can you name them all?
- 2 Imagine you could create an extra public holiday in your country. What day do you think it should be and why?

Half holidays

Listening



- 1 ①²² You will hear a conversation between two colleagues about holiday time. Listen and answer the following questions.

- 1 According to the woman, what are the problems with taking a complete break from work?
- 2 What does she mean by 'half holidays'? What advantages do they have?
- 3 Do you agree with her ideas?

- 2 ①²² Listen to the conversation again and write the missing words in sentences (1–7).

- 1 It was much better in the past when people didn't have BlackBerries.
- 2 The last two or three days before you go are normal.
- 3 Coming back to work is
- 4 Organising three weeks away is a staying in the office.
- 5 I actually think that's
- 6 It certainly makes your last day
- 7 The half holidays could be the holidays people take now.

Grammar workshop 1

Comparatives

- 1 Answer the questions below on how to form comparatives. Use the sentences you have just completed to help you.

- 1 How do one syllable adjectives like *long* form the comparative?
They add *-er* at the end: *longer*
- 2 How do adjectives of three or more syllables like *relaxing* form the comparative?
.....
- 3 What happens to the spelling with two syllable adjectives ending in *-y* like *busy*?
- 4 What happens to the spelling of one syllable adjectives ending in one vowel and one consonant like *big*?
.....
- 5 In comparatives, what word is used for the opposite of *more*?
- 6 What word is used after a comparative to introduce the second thing in the comparison?
- 7 What words can we put before comparatives to mean *very*?
.....
- 8 What are the comparative forms of *good* and *bad*?

- 2 Write the comparative forms of the following adjectives.

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1 cheap | <u>cheaper</u> |
| 2 tidy | |
| 3 expensive | |
| 4 large | |
| 5 hot | |
| 6 important | |
| 7 far | |

- 3 Look at the holiday entitlements offered by two different companies and complete sentences (1–7) using the comparative forms of the adjectives in the box.

COMPANY A

Staff are entitled to 20 days annual paid leave. A maximum of 12 can be taken in a block.

Requests for leave must be made at least three months in advance.

Only six members of staff can take leave at New Year or during the month of August.

COMPANY B

Staff are entitled to 25 days annual paid leave, which can be taken at different times or in a block.

In addition staff can buy or sell up to five of these 25 days.

Requests for leave must be made 10 weeks in advance.

Only 10 members of staff can take their leave in the summer (July and August).

easy far flexible generous good long small

- 1 Company B is more generous with its holiday entitlements.
- 2 In company B, you can take a period of time on leave.
- 3 In company A, a number of staff can take their holiday in August.
- 4 Company B is in its holiday arrangements.
- 5 In company A, you have to book your holiday in advance.
- 6 I think staff-management relationships are probably in company A/B (you choose).
- 7 Personally, I would find it to arrange my holidays in company A/B (you choose).

Netflix

Reading

- 1 You are going to read an article about Netflix, a company which has an unusual policy on staff holidays. Skim the article quickly to find out what the policy is.



CHANGING HOLIDAY POLICIES: NETFLIX

Netflix is a US company that offers movies and TV shows to subscribers over the Internet or on DVDs. When it first began, the company had a traditional policy for holidays. Staff had a certain number of days a year and they either took them or were paid for the ones they didn't take.

But soon some employees realised that this arrangement didn't fit in with how they really did their jobs. After all, they were answering emails at weekends and solving problems online at home at night. The company didn't track how many hours they did each day or each week. Logically, the employees argued, this meant that tracking how many holidays people took was just as old fashioned as asking them to work a strict nine-to-five day.

The management agreed. Now at Netflix, employees can take as much time off as they like, at any time they like. No one monitors annual leave at all. It may sound like complete chaos, but in fact it hasn't harmed the company in any way. They have continued to grow rapidly and have now expanded into a number of other countries.

The fact is that in many workplaces today, monitoring the time people spend at work is not as important as it was in the past. If someone worked on an assembly line, then there was a clear connection between the time they worked and the amount they produced. By contrast, in a great many workplaces today, the important things are innovation and problem solving. This means that the link between the time you spend and the results you produce is not so clear. If people produce good results, why is it important to know exactly how long it took to achieve them?

- 2 Find words and phrases in the article with the following meanings:

- 1 people who pay money for a service subscribers
- 2 record and carefully watch (two verbs)
..... /
- 3 a system for producing things where each worker makes a different component
- 4 the process of introducing new ideas and methods
.....

3 The following statements are false. Look at the article again and correct them.

- Netflix never had a traditional policy on staff holidays.
They had a traditional policy on staff holidays when they first started.
- Employees at Netflix don't work at home.
- Now at Netflix, employees track their own annual leave.
- Netflix only operates in the US.
- Monitoring the time employees spend at work has become more important.

4 Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- Do you agree with the writer of the article that monitoring time at work is less important nowadays?
- If you are working, do you think a policy of 'no policy' on staff holidays could be a success in your place of work?

Grammar workshop 2

as ... as structures

1 Look at the following sentences from the article and choose the correct alternatives to answer the grammar questions below.

Tracking how many holidays people took was just as old fashioned as asking them to work a strict nine-to-five day.

Monitoring the time people spend at work is not as important as it was in the past.

- We use *as ... as* if we want to say that two things are
a the same b different
- It is not as important as it was in the past ...*
means that now it is
a more important b less important
- For sentences (1–5), use *not as ... as* to complete the second sentence so it means the same as the first. Use the adjectives in the box to help you.

big early easy expensive fast

- The third conference room is smaller than the others.
The third conference room is not as big as the others.

- The local train is slower than the Express.
The local train the Express.
- Finding a PA is more difficult than I expected.
Finding a PA I expected.
- Their products are cheaper than I thought.
Their products I thought.
- My flight arrives later than yours.
My flight arrive
..... yours.

3 We often use expressions with *as ... as* to talk about possibilities. Study the expressions in the box and then choose one to complete sentences (1–6). More than one answer is often possible.

as soon as	possible
as close as	I/you ... can
as much as	possible
as long as	I/you ... like/can
	I/you ... want/like
as far as	I/you ... can go

- That report is urgent so please type it up
as soon as you can.
- We are not paying for the food so you can eat
.....
- We probably won't finish this before the deadline but we must do
- No one else is using the room today so you can stay in here
- We must make the two parts exactly the same size or
- I can increase the discount to 8 per cent but that's
.....

Offsite meetings

Reading

Sometimes companies decide to take people away from the office for a short period to work on a project or make key decisions. These are often called *away days* or *offsite meetings*.

- Work in pairs and think of three advantages of working away from the office.
- Working with a partner, look at the title of the article opposite and discuss what you think it means. Then scan the article and answer the following questions.
 - Where did they spend the four days?
 - What did they do when they got there?

An invitation to attend the annual summer meeting of Geopost, a France-based transport company, was sent to the top 40 executives along with some extra advice: bring a warm jumper.

Claude Béglé, then Geopost's chief executive, was already starting to spread rumours that Copenhagen was not the real location. Nobody, however, suspected the truth: that the 40 managers would find themselves aboard a small boat in the Arctic Circle in almost continual daylight and with no methods of contacting the outside world apart from the ship's radio. It sounds like a completely crazy way of running a company but Mr Béglé believed it was the right thing to do. At the time, Geopost needed to make some key decisions about the group's structure and bring together what was a diverse group of companies.

Geopost was created in 1999 by La Poste, the French postal service. It grew rapidly by acquiring other companies and now covers over 40 countries throughout the world. At the time of the Arctic trip, it was made up of companies from France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK, all operating under their own brand names. But why were the managers taking key decisions in the Arctic Ocean instead of at the smart Hyatt Hotel in Copenhagen?

The answer is that Mr Béglé wanted to be sure that the decisions they made were based on the interests of Geopost as a whole and not on office politics. The Arctic Ocean is one of the few places in the world where

you cannot get a mobile phone signal. The managers were forced to work on their relationships with one another, rather than keeping in touch with their company headquarters back home. As Mr Béglé said, 'You cannot sleep because it is always light and you cannot get out of the boat. So what happens? You fight, you make friends again, you argue again, you discuss business. Four days later we had a structure. I've never seen it in the management books but it worked.'

It is certainly not in the management books. Usually when a company is acquired by another company, it is not allowed to keep its own brands. Geopost took a different approach. Acquired companies could keep their own brands and identities and could also make many of their own decisions about things such as which technology to use. To balance this local autonomy, Geopost needed a strong common culture, which is why it decided to spend a lot of time on team building activities on the trip. As Mr Béglé said, for the company to stay together, it needed to do something crazy.



3 Read the following statements (1–7) about the information in the text. If the text agrees, circle A. If it disagrees, circle B. If the information is not given in the text, circle C for doesn't say.

- 1 Claude Béglé made an original booking in Copenhagen.
A right B wrong **C** doesn't say
- 2 Managers could not call their branch of the company from the boat.
A right B wrong C doesn't say
- 3 At the time of the trip, Geopost was the largest parcel company in Europe.
A right B wrong C doesn't say
- 4 Companies acquired by Geopost were not allowed to keep their own brands.
A right B wrong C doesn't say
- 5 Claude Béglé got the idea of the Arctic trip from a management book.
A right B wrong C doesn't say
- 6 Companies acquired by Geopost did not have to use the same technology.
A right B wrong C doesn't say
- 7 Claude Béglé believes that Geopost's management style should be adopted by other companies.
A right B wrong C doesn't say

Making decisions

Speaking

Work with a partner. Imagine you need to make some key decisions about something (e.g. your studies, or your future career). Which of the following do you think would be the best way to come to a decision about it? Why?

- Go away to a different place (even if not the Arctic Circle!) to think about it alone.
- Go away to a different place with one or two friends to talk about it.
- Stay in the same place and ask as many friends and family members as possible about it.
- Not think about it and hope the answer will come to you when you are not expecting it.