

## 3

## Employee relations

## STARTER

Here are some word partnerships that apply to employee relations. Some of the letters are missing. Complete the words and then match them with the definitions on the right.

s□□ dis□□□ m□□□□ t□□□ n<sup>1</sup>

con□□□□ ct of em□□□□□ m□□□□ t<sup>2</sup>

□□ qu□□□ pay<sup>3</sup>

pa□□□ n□□□□□ l□□□□ ve<sup>4</sup>

workp□□□□□ inj□□□□□ es<sup>5</sup>

s□□ ort-t□□ m□□ w□□ rk□□□□ g<sup>6</sup>

disc□□ pl□□□□□ y and gr□□□□□ van□□□□ e procedure<sup>7</sup>

w□□□ k-re□□□□□ ted st□□□□ ess<sup>8</sup>

- a reduced working hours, usually when a company has a decrease in production
- b accidents that happen at work
- c to treat someone of either sex unfairly
- d the right for parents to take time off work to look after a child
- e the same salary for men and women
- f stress caused by negative factors in the job
- g procedure when an employee breaks the rules and what the employee can do if unhappy with a decision
- h written details given to an employee to confirm terms and conditions

Now match the headlines below with some of the word partnerships above.

**A** 6,000,000 hours lost in one year

**B** 80% of males don't take daddy time off

**C** Woman refused job on oil rig

**D** Secretary falls over pen – company must pay

**E** Waiters paid more than waitresses



**1** A recruitment officer, June Stewart, and a team leader, Chiara Rossi, are discussing terms and conditions with Marion Pelletier, who has just been offered a position with Business Systems Ltd at their Manchester office. Listen to the conversation and decide whether the following statements are true  or false .

- 1 Marion will be working flexitime in her new job.
- 2 She will be paid for the first 12 weeks if she is ill.
- 3 Her holiday entitlement is 20 days from the date she starts with Business Systems.
- 4 She sent in copies of her references with her application.
- 5 She hasn't told her employer in Marseille she's leaving yet.
- 6 She will receive the offer letter in two weeks.



**Complete the sentences giving information about employment terms and conditions, by matching the two halves of the sentences.**

- 1 I'm afraid we don't
  - 2 We'd like to tell you something
  - 3 I'm sure that won't be a problem
  - 4 By the way, we're currently looking
  - 5 So let's start with
  - 6 If you are ill, we expect you
- a as it's only a week.
  - b about conditions of employment.
  - c to phone in as early as possible ...
  - d your hours.
  - e at more flexible working arrangements ...
  - f operate flexitime yet.



**Listen to the extract again and fill in the missing words in each sentence (the first letter and a clue at the end are given).**

- 1 We currently o\_\_\_\_\_ a 40-hour week (plus lunches). (to do something in a particular way)
- 2 ... there may be o\_\_\_\_\_ during busy periods. (working longer hours than normal)
- 3 This is either paid or given as t\_\_\_\_\_ o\_\_\_\_\_ in lieu. (when you are not working)
- 4 Your paid a\_\_\_\_\_ holiday is 20 days. (per year)
- 5 We'll be t\_\_\_\_\_ up references with your previous and present employer. (to apply for)
- 6 We'll make the offer of employment 's\_\_\_\_\_ to satisfactory reference'. (conditional on)

#### DID YOU KNOW?

The practice whereby employees can choose exactly what time they start and finish work is called *flexible working*, *flexible hours*, *flexitime* (U.S.), and *flexitime* (U.K.).



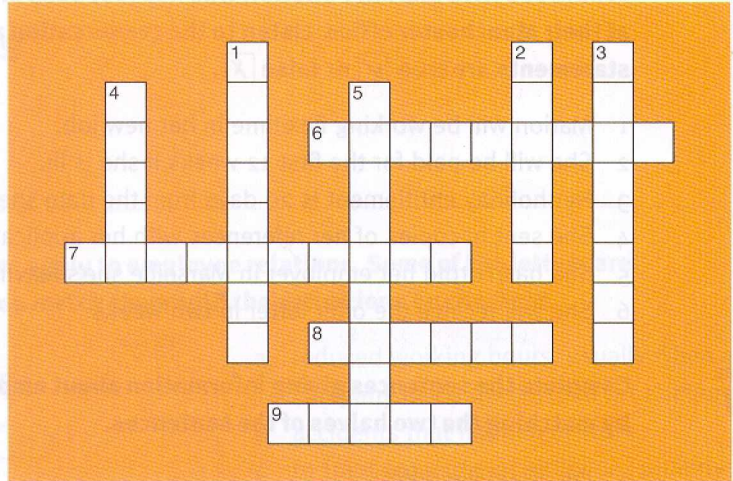
**2 Complete the puzzle with words from the listening exercise.**

**Across**

- 6 the opposite of temporary
- 7 ways of doing things
- 8 instead (of sth else)
- 9 to get official permission:  
to ... sth with sb

**Down**

- 1 people who supply the information  
in 5 down
- 2 to agree to sth, to keep a promise
- 3 an official written agreement
- 4 letter containing all terms and  
conditions: ... letter
- 5 information about how well you  
worked in your previous job(s)



**3 Complete the table with words and phrases from the box.**

Working time	Employment status	Absence	Ending employment
<i>shift work</i>	<i>trial period</i>	<i>annual leave</i>	

- ~~shift work~~ • notice period • ~~annual leave~~ • part-time employment • ~~trial period~~ •
- core time • sick leave • public holiday • resignation • vacation • dismissal •
- fixed-term contract • six-day week • redundancy • temporary employment • flexitime
- probationary period • holiday entitlement

**Compare your table with a partner's and try to add words to each category.**

**4 Word families: Complete the following sentences with words related to the key word flex. (You might need to add prefixes or suffixes and change the form.)**

- 1 We have a very \_\_\_\_\_ system in the company for our staff who need time off work for childcare.
- 2 We've been operating \_\_\_\_\_ in the company since the early 90s.
- 3 There is little or no \_\_\_\_\_ for our staff in terms of hours of work as they have to be around when our customers need them.
- 4 Unfortunately, our managing director is very \_\_\_\_\_ when it comes to deadlines.



**5 Look at the list of points that should be mentioned in a contract of employment in the U.K. Match them to the extracts from some model contracts (a–j).**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 date the employment begins                      | 6 location of workplace                       |
| 2 rate of pay and when/how paid                   | 7 notice period                               |
| 3 normal hours of work/overtime/shift patterns    | 8 sick pay provision                          |
| 4 holiday entitlement (including public holidays) | 9 pension scheme terms                        |
| 5 job title (or a brief description of the job)   | 10 disciplinary rules and grievance procedure |

a The amount of notice you are required to give or be given by your employer in the first four years is four weeks.

b A copy of the company's disciplinary procedure is attached to this contract and employees are asked to read it carefully.

c Your basic salary will be £35,000 per annum, payable monthly in arrears by credit transfer to your bank or building society.

d Your normal place of work will be the above address. From time to time the company may require you to work at other sites on a temporary basis.

e Your employment begins on 1 January 20...

f The company does not offer a pension scheme but provides access to a stakeholder pension. Details can be obtained from the personnel department.

g You may be required to work on a public holiday. If so, you are entitled to time off in lieu.

h Normal hours of work are 37½ per week, 9 am to 5.30 pm Monday to Friday, with one unpaid hour for lunch each day.

i You must inform the office by 10 am on the first day of absence. Failure to do so may render you subject to disciplinary action and may also bar you from sick pay.

j Your current job title and responsibilities are detailed in Schedule 1 and may be amended from time to time. Any changes will be discussed with you fully and notified to you in writing.

**How are contracts similar or different in your country? What points must be mentioned?**



**USEFUL LANGUAGE**

**The language of contracts**

The language used in contracts of employment is highly formal and includes fixed phrases, formal vocabulary, the passive, and the *will* future. Some examples are given below.

**Fixed phrases**

*will be notified in writing*  
*payable monthly in arrears*  
*failure to do so*  
*subject to disciplinary action*

**Use of formal vocabulary**

<i>to render</i>		<i>to make</i>
<i>to amend</i>	instead of	<i>to change</i>
<i>to be entitled to</i>		<i>to have the right to</i>
<i>to notify</i>		<i>to tell</i>

**Use of passive**

*employees are asked ...*  
*you may be required ...*  
*details can be obtained ...*  
*more information can be found in ...*  
*employees are expected ...*

**Use of future**

*your place of work will be ...*  
*any changes will be discussed ...*

**6 Complete these sentences with words and phrases from the box.**

can be found • notified in writing • are expected • may be required •  
 notify • payable monthly in arrears • will be discussed • are asked •  
 subject to disciplinary action • are entitled to

- 1 Full details of the sick pay scheme \_\_\_\_\_ in the staff handbook.
- 2 You \_\_\_\_\_ to work in another office of the company from time to time.
- 3 Employees \_\_\_\_\_ to work overtime as and when needed.
- 4 Changes to your contract \_\_\_\_\_ and you will be \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 You \_\_\_\_\_ four weeks' holiday per annum after completion of six months' probation.
- 6 Your salary is \_\_\_\_\_ on the last day of each month.
- 7 Employees \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ the company of any absence by 10 a.m. on the first day.
- 8 You may be \_\_\_\_\_ if you fail to do this.

**7 An offer letter and a rejection letter have been mixed up. Look at the paragraphs a–j on the opposite page, sort them, and put them into the correct order.**

Offer letter

d - c -

Rejection letter

g - b -

- a We would like you to start on 1 November 2007, if possible. During your first week you will participate in an induction seminar to familiarize you fully with the company. Full details of this will be sent to you nearer the time.
- b Thank you for attending the interview for the above position. It was very nice meeting you.
- c Further to your recent interviews, we have pleasure in offering you the position of International Marketing Assistant in the U.K. Marketing Department, based at this address, at a commencing salary of £29,000 per annum. This offer is conditional on receiving satisfactory references from your present and last employers and to the satisfactory completion of a three-month probationary period on either side.
- d Dear Ms Pelletier
- e We appreciate your interest and would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success in your future career.
- f Please let us know as soon as possible if you would like to accept by signing and returning one copy of the contract. We will then take up references. We hope you will join us and very much look forward to hearing from you.
- g Dear Mr Chevalier
- h We have now fully considered your application and regret we are unable to offer you a second interview on this occasion.
- i Basic hours of work are normally 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, including an hour for lunch. It will be necessary for you to work overtime as and when required. Holiday entitlement is 20 days per annum, rising to 25 after two years' service. Normally holiday cannot be taken during the probationary period. All terms, conditions, and benefits are detailed in the handbook and contract enclosed.
- j We will hold your details pending and let you know if a suitable opening occurs in the future.

**8** Look at these words and phrases from the letters above, and match the words in italics with similar words on the right (a–h).

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 a <i>commencing</i> salary of ...                | a enclosed                          |
| 2 the offer is <i>conditional on</i> receiving ... | b learn about                       |
| 3 <i>probationary</i> period                       | c starting                          |
| 4 <i>accompanying</i> details                      | d year                              |
| 5 <i>per annum</i>                                 | e subject to                        |
| 6 are <i>detailed</i> in ...                       | f set out                           |
| 7 to <i>familiarize</i>                            | g until we have something available |
| 8 We will hold your details <i>pending</i> ...     | h trial                             |



**9 Work with a partner to role-play a discussion about terms and conditions of employment. Partner A is the personnel officer and Partner B is the interviewee. Use some of the Useful Language below.**

**PARTNER FILES**

Partner A File 03, p. 60  
Partner B File 03, p. 62

**USEFUL LANGUAGE**

**Giving information**

I'd like to tell you something about ...  
Please ask about anything you are not sure of.  
I'm sure that's not a problem ...  
I'm afraid we don't ...

**Requesting information**

Could you tell me ... ?  
Will you honour this?  
Would it be possible to ... ?  
Could you please let us know ... ?

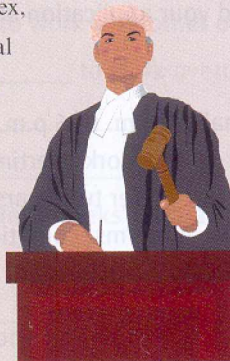
**10 Read this article from an HR trade magazine and complete the gaps with words from the list.**

behaviour • breaking • conditions • disciplinary • entitled •  
entitlement • occur • policy • representative • safety

## Dealing with grievances

Problems can \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> in the best run companies for many reasons, such as over terms and \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup>, management decisions, discrimination (on grounds of race, sex, disability, and religion), sexual harassment, bullying, health, and \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> issues.

Within two months of starting a job, employees are \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> to a written statement setting down the main conditions of their employment. As well as information on pay, hours, holiday \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup>, and notice periods, the statement must also cover what the company will do if they have to discipline an employee for \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup> the rules (the warning procedure) and who the employee can apply to if they



are dissatisfied with a \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup> decision. All employees have the right to be accompanied by another employee or a union \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup> (if applicable) at any disciplinary interview.

A disciplinary procedure would normally be used when an employee does not follow company \_\_\_\_\_<sup>9</sup>, breaks rules, or displays inappropriate workplace behaviour. Employees must be fully informed of their inappropriate \_\_\_\_\_<sup>10</sup> and given an opportunity to explain themselves. The procedure should be handled in a private and respectful manner and the employee's previous record should be taken into account.



Now discuss the article and the following questions.

- 1 What should employees in your company do if they have a grievance? What role, if any, does the trade union play?
- 2 What are some of the problems that can lead to disciplinary procedures?
- 3 How do you discipline staff if they do something wrong?

**11** Below are some headlines from articles on HR issues. In pairs decide what you think they refer to and then discuss your answers with the whole group.

1 **Absence levels rising ...**

2 **Is there a doctor  
in the house?**

3 **Women sue over sex discrimination**

4 **Deaths from overwork  
(Karoshi) increase in Japan**

5 **Staff quit over Internet  
use and abuse**

6 **Wellness management –  
a growing necessity?**

7 **U.S. ban on smoking in the  
workplace reduces heart attacks**

8 **Consultation on workplace noise rules**

Have any of these issues arisen in your company? How did you deal with them?

**12** Number the following workplace stress factors in order of importance (1 most stressful, 10 least stressful). Compare your results with a partner's.

- interpersonal relationships at work (problems with co-workers)
- tight deadlines (pressure to get work done in time)
- intimidation from supervisors
- work environment/equipment (unsatisfactory working conditions)
- workload
- job security (fear of losing one's job)
- working hours
- low autonomy (working under constant supervision)
- repetitive work
- work/life balance (finding time for responsibilities at home)

What health and safety measures is your company taking to reduce stress levels in staff?



**13** Which of the health and safety measures below do you think are typical of a) factories, b) offices or shops, or c) any environment? Work with a partner to add items to the list.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 carry out fire drills <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>         | 6 remove dangerous obstacles <input type="checkbox"/>                 |
| 2 make sure furniture is properly adjusted <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 provide safety equipment (hard hats, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 prevent exposure to harmful substances <input type="checkbox"/>   | 8 do risk assessments <input type="checkbox"/>                        |
| 4 provide eye tests <input type="checkbox"/>                        | 9 train first aiders <input type="checkbox"/>                         |
| 5 post safety signs <input type="checkbox"/>                        | 10 wear protective clothing <input type="checkbox"/>                  |

**Which measures have been introduced at your workplace?**

**OUTPUT**

**What do the figures represent in the following article about workplace injuries? Read the article to find out, then discuss the questions which follow.**

- a 7.5 million      b 249      c 127,000      d 563,000

## Workplace injuries

- A factory worker had his right leg amputated below the knee when he was run over by a fork lift truck.
- A team manager tripped on some carpeting and fell down the stairs at work, breaking her ankle. She was unable to walk for several months and is still in pain and using a stick almost a year later. She has been unable to return to work since.
- A nurse has been off work for six months with severe back pain resulting from lifting patients. She is unable to drive or sit down for long periods and is awaiting an operation.

According to a 2003 report by the Health and Safety Executive, a British government agency responsible for health and safety issues at work, over 7.5 million working days are lost each year in the U.K. due to accidents at the workplace. The report went on to say that the amount of time and money lost because of employee injury is probably actually much higher, as the law requires that only fatal (i.e. those resulting in death) and serious injuries are reported.

Figures for 2001 and 2002 indicate that while only 249 people died in accidents at work (a decrease of 15% from previous years), there were 27,477 non-fatal major injuries, including amputations, eye injuries, and broken arms and legs, and over 127,000 injuries which were less serious but still kept the employees out of work for over three days. Two of the main causes of non-fatal injuries are slipping and tripping up (37% of the total).

While there is a growing awareness among employers about the prevention of serious accidents at work, the greatest workplace health problem today is back pain and strain to the neck, arm, and hands. Lifting loads that are too heavy, sitting incorrectly, and doing repetitive work for long periods of time are typical causes of such injuries. Finally, a rapidly growing area of ill health relates to mental health problems such as stress and anxiety, of which there were 563,000 sufferers in the U.K. last year. In fact, work-related stress has doubled over the past ten years and is becoming one of the major problems facing companies and HR professionals today.

**OVER TO YOU**

How do you think these figures relate to statistics from your country?

What procedure do you have in your company for reporting workplace accidents and injuries?

What training or assistance do you offer employees to prevent back pain in their daily work?