

## Independent listening task: Working from home

**Level:** ISE II

**Focus:** Independent listening task

**Aims:** To provide practice in identifying gist and specific information from a listening text

**Objectives:** To familiarise students with the type of listening tasks that they will face at ISE II

**Topic:** Working from home

**Language functions:** Highlighting advantages and disadvantages, speculating, and expressing agreement and disagreement

**Lexis:** The world of work

**Materials needed:** A recording of the audio script (if possible), enough photocopies of the audio script for each student

**Timing:** 1 hour

### Preparation

Make sure a recording of the audio script has been made on an MP3 player or equivalent device. If this is not possible the teacher may read out the audio script in open-class.

### In class

1. Tell students they are going to practise a listening task for the ISE II Speaking & Listening exam. In this task they will have to listen to a recording of approximately 400 words, first listening for gist and then making notes of more specific details.
2. Tell them they will begin by discussing the world of work. Ask students to discuss in pairs or groups of three, for two minutes, whether they know anyone who works from home, and whether they like it or not. Ask a few students to report their discussion to the class.
3. Now dictate the following to the students: *'My friend has told me that she has given up going to the office and started working from home. She said it wasn't quite what she had expected.'*
4. Students can check each other's papers to see what they have written and correct them if necessary. Ask students what they think your friend means by this. This should elicit there are disadvantages as well as advantages of working from home.
5. Divide the class into two groups (or even four depending on class size), and ask each group to consider the advantages OR disadvantages of working from home. Ten minutes should be enough time for the students to discuss this.
6. Draw two columns on the board

Advantages	Disadvantages

Ask a student from each group to write their advantages or disadvantages on the board as a series of points. Each group should have come up with at least three or four advantages or disadvantages.

## Preparation activities for ISE II Speaking & Listening

7. Tell the students that they are now going to listen to the audio which talks about the world of work. First they will listen for gist (general understanding) of the script. Ask them if they think the speaker is in favour of working from home or not. The students can make notes on a piece of paper if they want. Tell students that in the exam they don't take notes the first time they listen, but they may take notes the second time they listen.
8. Play the audio script.
9. Ask the students to discuss their answers in pairs and threes. (Answer: Yes he/she was generally in favour of working from home, and maybe the students can tell you why – see 'Answers' on page 52).
10. Tell the students that you are going to play the recording again. This time, ask the students to make bullet points of the advantages and disadvantages of working from home (there are four advantages and three disadvantages). Play the recording a second time.
11. Ask the students to compare their notes in pairs or threes. While the students are doing this, monitor and ask one student to write on the board the answers for the advantages, and another to write up the disadvantages.
12. Confirm the answers (see 'Answers' on page 52). How similar were they to the suggestions they made in stage 6?
13. Give students the audio script, ask the students to read it and underline any expressions the students are not familiar with.
14. Ask students to reflect on the listening activity. Why were some parts difficult? Is it unknown vocabulary or is it the linking of and elision of words – particularly phrasal verbs such as '*check up on you*', '*stick to it*', '*stuck in*'?
15. Give students two to three minutes to speculate, in groups of three, whether or not they would like to work from home. After they have done that you could have a class vote on it.

### Extension activity

Students who finish the activity early can write sentences meaningful to them, using the new vocabulary items that they have seen in the audio script.

### Further support activity

The recording can be played a third time for students finding the activity difficult, following being given the audio script. Students can ask for the recording/reading of the audio script to be stopped when they experience difficulties.

### Homework

Ask students to research other lexical items connected with the world of work which they will have to explain to other members of the class in the next lesson.

### Audio script

Have you ever sat in bumper-to-bumper traffic in the rush hour and wondered how much better it would be to work from home instead of doing the daily commute to the office? It seems that more and more people have been working from home in recent years, but is it really as great as it seems?

Many people have started to work from home but then realised there were a lot of drawbacks that they had not considered. Some workers reported that working from home had proved to be very isolating at times. They had missed the day-to-day contact with their colleagues. For example, it is nice to chat to colleagues in the breaks about things that are happening at work, or even talking about simple things like TV programmes from the night before. Some workers also said that they missed not having an IT department, as they did not have someone to help them if they had a problem with their computer.

Many found that there were even more distractions working from home than there were at the office. It can be extremely tempting to play around on the internet or constantly check social networking sites which can be a terrible distraction now that the boss is not around to check up on you. Some even reported that they had started watching daytime TV.

However, despite these disadvantages, there are of course a lot of great things about working from home. It is possible to fill in the gaps when family members are ill or when children need to be picked up from school. There is much greater flexibility in that people can work at the times you decide. Perhaps you are an early riser and prefer to work from 5am in the morning or perhaps you work better in the afternoons or evenings. Whatever it is, you can fix your own schedule, but it is better to be disciplined, set a timetable and stick to it.

It is also possible to save money working at home. There would be no temptation to go out for lunch with your colleagues, which if done every day can really make a dent in your salary. Cooking lunch at home will keep that money in your pocket. Finally, the best thing about working from home that most people reported, was that they did not have to take that commute into work either on the train, or on the bus, or worst of all in the car, when they were frequently stuck in frustrating rush-hour traffic.

## Preparation activities for ISE II Speaking & Listening

### Answers: A conversation about living in society today

Gist question: Overall the speaker is positive about working from home, especially as he/she does not have to commute to work.

#### Answers to listening task

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Don't have to commute to work</li><li>▶ Can be flexible to attend to family needs such as when someone is ill or children need picking up</li><li>▶ Flexibility to set own timetable of work</li><li>▶ Can save money on food</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Can feel isolated from colleagues</li><li>▶ No one to help you with IT problems</li><li>▶ Distractions of the internet, social networking sites, daytime TV</li></ul>