

Leisure time: how do you use yours?

Our leisure time is precious. During our free time, we recharge our batteries and engage in enjoyable activities, such as spending time with our friends and family. But what is leisure exactly? Is it just that time we take off work or is it more complicated than that?

For the ancient Greeks and Romans, the happy life was a life of leisure. As the philosopher Aristotle said, 'We work in order to enjoy leisure.' It must be understood that by leisure, he did not mean idleness. Leisure could involve activities requiring even greater effort than work, such as hunting, wrestling, or working on geometrical puzzles. That said, leisure was mainly available to the wealthy, and thus an activity denied to the majority of the people who actually did the work, such as slaves. For this reason, a life of leisure was a sign of status.

Many sociologists believe that a change in our attitude towards leisure developed with the growth of capitalism and the belief that 'Time is money'. Work came to be seen as a virtuous activity and time spent in leisure as a sign of laziness. In many ways, this attitude remains with us to this day. In the 19th century, economists and social scientists became greatly interested in studying the work/leisure divide. They believed that the growth in wealth would lead to a rise in the standard of living and that, as a consequence, there'd be an explosion in leisure time. Due to this, they thought the greatest problem facing the future was how to find productive ways to spend our leisure time. It turned out that, although standards of living in the developed world have improved enormously, there hasn't been such a big increase in leisure time. It's true that the growth in labour-saving devices, such as the washing machine and dishwasher, did provide many women in the '50s and '60s with more leisure time. However, this coincided with the rise of the women's liberation movement and an increase in the number of women who chose to have careers rather than work at home.

This points to another issue concerning how to distinguish between work and leisure. Measuring how long we actually spend in leisure pursuits is not as simple as it might seem. A recent report into leisure in the world's richest nations by the OECD (the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development) defined leisure as time free from work and obligation, in other words, time spent doing activities we enjoy, such as going to the cinema or playing sports. This is not the same as time outside of work, as cleaning the bathroom or doing other domestic chores are not leisure activities but 'unpaid work'. Still, measuring leisure can be difficult as there are plenty of grey areas. Take for example, travel, sleep, or shopping. Commuting to work is often unpleasant, but a holiday trip is clearly a leisure activity. Sleeping isn't normally perceived as recreation, but perhaps taking a quick nap could be. Similarly, shopping, while boring to some, for others is an enjoyable pursuit. In fact, in the UK, shopping is the fourth most popular leisure activity after watching TV, spending time with friends and family, and listening to music. Whether something is perceived as work or leisure therefore seems to depend on our attitude towards it: is it an obligation or is it something we have freely chosen to do? This is perhaps an important point to remember when choosing a career: the less you feel obliged to do it, the less like work it will seem.

One interesting point made by the report was to highlight gender inequalities in leisure time. It would seem that on average in the UK, men spend 32 minutes more each day than women in leisure activities. This leisure advantage for men is slightly higher in France (33 minutes) and the USA (38 minutes), but slightly lower in Germany where men only have 22 minutes more leisure time than women. At the other extreme is Italy where, on average, men have nearly 80 minutes a day more leisure than women. This disparity in leisure time is partly due to the amount of unpaid work women do and is diminished somewhat if women's shopping time and investment in personal care, such as doing their hair, are added to their leisure time count. In which case, in the UK, the gender difference drops to ten minutes. Even so, it serves as an example of how looking more carefully at how we divide up our time can highlight social inequalities which may need to be addressed.

1. Read the text about leisure and choose the correct answer.

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| 1 According to Aristotle, we work in order to
a have a pleasant free time
b learn more
c make money | 4 In the 19th century, it was predicted that leisure time would
a stay the same
b decrease significantly
c increase significantly |
| 2 In ancient Greece and Rome, leisure was
a seen as a time to rest
b not really available to most people
c connected to some specified goal | 5 In the 1950s and 1960s,
a women had less leisure than today
b new technology increased leisure for women
c women began to campaign for more leisure |
| 3 With the growth of capitalism, leisure was considered...
a to be essential for a happy life
b to be a sign of wealth
c to be less important than work | 6 The OECD report defined leisure as
a time spent doing enjoyable activities |

- b time spent outside of work
- c unpaid work
- 7 Shopping ...
 - a must always be considered as unpaid work
 - b is a popular leisure activity
 - c uses up a lot of time
- 8 The difference in leisure time between men and women is greater ...
 - a in the UK than in the USA
 - b in the USA than in the France
 - c in Germany than in the USA
- 9 The difference in leisure time between men and women is reduced if ...
 - a unpaid work is included in working hours
 - b all unpaid work is classed as leisure activity
 - c some shopping and personal care activities are classed as leisure

2. Match the underlined words in the text with the definitions 1-7.

- 1 the state of not working; laziness _____
- 2 activities that you do as a hobby _____
- 3 a short sleep, especially during the day _____
- 4 a difference, especially one connected with unfair treatment _____
- 5 to get back your strength and energy by resting _____
- 6 a task that you do regularly _____
- 7 happened in a particular way _____

3. Complete the second sentence using 1 to 5 words so it is similar in meaning to the first.

- 1 We hardly ever went to expensive restaurants.
Rarely did we go to expensive restaurants.
- 2 I like the atmosphere in this café.
What I like _____ the atmosphere.
- 3 If it hadn't been for her, I'd never have got the job.
Had _____ her, I'd never have got the job.
- 4 They believe the robber has left the country.
The robber is believed _____ the country.
- 5 It appears that he is lying.
He appears _____.
- 6 I'd never seen such a beautiful sight.
Never _____ such a beautiful sight.
- 7 Karen emailed her boss.
What Karen _____ her boss.
- 8 Mark cleaned the flat, he also cooked dinner.
Not only _____, but he also cooked dinner.
- 9 It seemed that she had been crying.
She seemed _____.

4- Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

- 1 Remember _____ (take) out the rubbish before going to bed, please.
- 2 Are you interested in _____ (go) to the exhibition?
- 3 On _____ (arrive) at the hotel, we checked in and got our room key.
- 4 My boss made me _____ (work) late last night.
- 5 I don't remember _____ (get) an email from you yesterday.
- 6 I don't regret _____ (tell) him exactly what I thought – I had to speak my mind!
- 7 He promised _____ (help) me move house.
- 8 I saw Charlie _____ (chat) with Silvia this morning.

Choose the correct phrase in *italics* to complete the sentences.

- 1 My partner loves the countryside and *I do, though / I do, too.*
- 2 We asked Mathew to help, but he *refused to / refused it.*
- 3 'Boris lives in Bradford.' 'I don't think he *is / does.*'
- 4 Her singing was faultless and her piano playing was equally *impeccable / flawed.*
- 5 Jim's less aggressive than he *used to / used to be.*
- 6 Emma doesn't like tennis and *nor do I / so do I.*
- 7 The machinery was pretty antiquated so we invested in some that was more *original / up to date.*
- 8 'She can't have left yet.' 'She *must have / can have.* Her train left an hour ago.'
- 9 Jamie's persuaded Jenny to support his plan, but I'm not *thorough / convinced.*

5- Complete the sentences with the correct form of a verb in the box.

break cheer pin use drive wear wind catch

- 1 Lina never gives you a straight answer. It's really hard to _____ her *down*.
- 2 Unless you start taking better care of yourself, you'll _____ *up* in hospital.
- 3 The constant criticism gradually _____ him *down*.
- 4 He _____ *off* the engagement because he met another woman.
- 5 We've _____ *up* all the milk – can you buy another carton?
- 6 Do you think the fashion for blue glasses will _____ *on*?
- 7 The crowd _____ her *on* as she ran towards the finish line.
- 8 I can't believe it! Someone just hit my car and _____ *off* without stopping!

6- Complete the dialogues with idioms a-h.

- 1
A Let's take it easy this holiday.
B OK, we need to find _____ between relaxing and doing a bit of sightseeing.
 - 2 A I just went on a date with Beyoncé!
B Oh yeah! _____ – like I'd believe that!
 - 3 A My boss has threatened to fire me if my work doesn't improve!
B Your boss doesn't _____, does she?
 - 4 A I just think your views are wrong.
B OK, well, let's just _____. I don't think we'll ever think the same about this.
 - 5 A That movie was terrible!
B Yes, but its' one _____ was the wonderful soundtrack.
 - 6 A Weren't you aware of the problems with the Korean account?
B No, it wasn't _____. I just assumed it was fine.
 - 7 A I'm pleased to see Anna's not getting into so much trouble at school these days.
B Yeah, she's finally decided to _____ and not be so rebellious.
 - 8 A Did I ever tell you that you're terrible at telling jokes?
B _____! Your jokes are just as awful if not worse!'
- a saving grace
b a happy medium
c agree to disagree
d on my radar
e pull the other one
f mince her words
g look who's talking
h toe the line

7- You will hear four different conversations on different topics. Choose the correct answer.

Conversation 1

- 1 What is Natalie's opinion of the new album?
a It's not very original.
b It's good the way she works with other artists.
c The combinations of different music styles is interesting.
- 2 What do Natalie and the man agree on?
a The artist is not a very gifted musician.
b She needs to develop more as a musician.
c She is a very good singer.

Conversation 2

- 3 Jacob decided to give up being a chef because ...
a he didn't have sufficient organizational skills
b he found the hours too stressful
c he couldn't create new dishes

- 4 Jacob didn't think he would be a good writer because ...
a he'd never enjoyed writing in the past
b his first recipe book wasn't published
c he didn't have the foggiest idea about writing

Conversation 3

- 5 Which types of crime does the woman mention?
a Robbing banks, graffiti, and gang violence.
b Smashing shop windows, stealing cars, and robbing houses.
c Vandalism, stealing from shops, and stealing vehicles.
- 6 What do the woman and Andrew disagree on?
a Cooperation between the public and police is useful.
b CCTV cameras cost too much money.
c The crime rate is increasing.

Conversation 4

- 7 What do Kate and Teresa agree about?
a Cosmetic surgery can have terrible consequences.
b Many plastic surgeons are not proper doctors.
c Many famous people have cosmetic surgery due to the demands of the media.
- 8 What point does Kate make about cosmetic surgery?

- a It's impossible to regulate the cosmetic surgery profession.
- b It can be used to help people who experience

- physical injury.
- c Only celebrities benefit from cosmetic surgery.