

## READING

Read the text. Why is it important to encourage lifelong learning in employees?

**Learning All Along**

Companies benefit when their workforce continues to develop. Even if a company's employees are very well qualified and competent, the world around them is changing rapidly. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead to success today may not necessarily lead to success in 5 or 10 years' time. That's why many businesses try to encourage their staff to see lifelong learning as an important part of their careers. In general, employees agree that it's necessary. According to the Pew Research Center, a US organization that aims to provide the public with statistics on world trends, 54% of American workers think it's essential to continue to develop their workplace skills to keep up with changes, while a further 33% say it is important. In order to continue to be successful, companies need to know how they can help their employees meet this need for lifelong learning.



One important thing to remember is that effective lifelong learning builds on a person's interests. Companies need to find ways to allow each employee to make meaningful choices about exactly what—and how—they learn. While one person might want to develop his or her sales techniques, another might think that a deeper understanding of marketing would be of benefit. And while one person may learn best by being in a group led by an expert, another may prefer to study on his or her own. This doesn't necessarily mean that a company should commit to paying for any course that every single employee wants to explore. That would be an expensive and wasteful way of doing things. Companies need to keep some control of what areas they need their employees to learn about and also some control of the overall costs involved. One effective approach would be to offer a range of training options, carefully chosen to match the company's needs, and to allow members of staff to make a choice between those options. Another possibility is to give each employee an annual budget to spend on professional development. Of course, companies will still expect to approve any training courses that an employee chooses, but the employee will feel involved in the decision and so will feel more motivated to learn.

A company must also be prepared to properly recognize and reward lifelong learning. There are two aspects to this. First, it's important to cover the costs of any approved courses and to pay employees back for any expenses involved in attending the course, such as travel expenses or extra childcare costs. All the effort of this kind of professional development can be wasted, however, if it doesn't result in clear benefits to a worker's career. This could take the form of an increased salary, but that's not the only way to recognize achievements. Managers might present employees who successfully complete a course with a certificate in front of the whole department. They might also create an "achievement wall" where employees can share their successes.

The attitude the company takes toward lifelong learning also has a large role to play. When professional development is a formal requirement that is measured and included in annual reviews, it can have a negative effect on employees' motivation. It's far better to look for opportunities to encourage lifelong learning in an informal way. Managers should casually ask employees how their learning is going in an informal situation, perhaps over lunch, rather than in a formal meeting. Another idea is to organize an informal book club. This could be something that happens once a month, where each employee gets the chance to suggest a book connected to their work for the club to read. The members can then get together for a short time after work to informally discuss what they've learned.

**VOCABULARY**

Choose the correct option.

- 1 You join the ... when you leave education and get your first job.  
a workforce                      b employment                      c career
- 2 If you are good at your job, you are ...  
a comparative.                      b committed.                      c competent.
- 3 If you are ..., you succeed in your aim.  
a affected                      b effective                      c reflective
- 4 Your ... is the total amount of money you have available to spend.  
a budget                      b cost                      c expense
- 5 When you ... someone, you give them money, etc., for an achievement.  
a reward                      b motivate                      c benefit

**COMPREHENSION**

Choose *True* or *False*.

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| 1 Workers who are not very good at their jobs are the ones who need lifelong learning. | True / False |
| 2 Most people understand the need for professional development.                        | True / False |
| 3 People should be allowed to choose whatever training course they like.               | True / False |
| 4 Companies should always pay people more if they complete a training course.          | True / False |
| 5 People learn better when they know that training is a formal requirement.            | True / False |



## READING

Read the text. How can improving literacy improve lives?

### Being Illiterate in the Modern World

Most of us take the ability to read for granted. It's easy to forget how dependent we are on that skill to function in the modern world. We read posts and interact with others through social media. We read newspapers, magazines, and websites that keep us up to date with what's happening in the world. We order things online, we apply for loans, and we pay bills and deal with other official communication. All of that is much more difficult or maybe even impossible when you are unable to read and write. Adult illiteracy is an issue that affects people's lives in many different ways, and it's vital that we find ways of addressing the problem.



Being illiterate doesn't necessarily mean that you literally cannot read or write a single word in your native language. The OECD defines six levels of literacy. At the lowest levels, a person is only capable of reading brief texts on familiar topics and finding specific pieces of information by understanding basic vocabulary. A useful idea is that of "functional illiteracy." Someone who is functionally illiterate may be able to read and write in a very simple way, but lacks the skills necessary to function effectively in the modern world. Although globally the numbers are falling, it's a problem that still affects a lot of people. According to a 2017 report from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, around 14% of the global population are illiterate, adding up to around 750 million people—with approximately two-thirds of the total being female.

The highest rates of illiteracy occur in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. In some countries, the education system may be underdeveloped or underfunded, and there may be pressure on people to leave education as soon as possible in order to start earning money that their families need to survive. However, even in developed countries with good education systems, functional illiteracy affects people's lives. According to data from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, 43 million people in the USA have low literacy skills. One of the causes seems to be parents who have little education and don't have books at home. Children from those homes may not be taught the importance of reading and may leave school early. They then grow up into adults who struggle with reading and writing. Other causes include poverty, dropping out of school, and learning disabilities.

In the developing world, the solution to high levels of illiteracy may involve investing in a better education system and encouraging girls, in particular, to stay in education for as long as possible. These young women will then grow up to be adults who understand the importance of education and who can support their own children's learning by helping them to read and by reading books with them. The figures for youth literacy, again from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, are encouraging. While globally 83% of adult females are literate, the figure for those aged 15 and under is 90%.

In the developed world, solving adult illiteracy starts with recognizing learning as a lifelong process. Many illiterate adults feel that they have missed their chance to learn, when in reality it's never too late to develop your skills. Being illiterate also affects confidence, as there are so many areas of life that can be found to be difficult. Literacy programs that are designed to improve adults' reading and writing skills often focus on changing people's attitudes toward education so that they feel that learning is possible. Once they overcome some of the psychological barriers to learning, many people realize that even a small improvement in their literacy skills can have a dramatic effect on their lives.

OECD (n): Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

UNESCO (n): United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

**VOCABULARY**

Match to complete the sentences.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 When you <b>take something for granted</b> , you ... | a find it very hard to do because you lack the right skills. |
| 2 When you <b>deal with</b> something, you ...         | b assume it happens without thinking about it a lot.         |
| 3 When you <b>struggle with</b> something, you ...     | c succeed in spite of, e.g., a problem.                      |
| 4 When you <b>invest in</b> something, you ...         | d take the necessary action (e.g., to solve a problem).      |
| 5 When you <b>overcome</b> something, you ...          | e provide money to make it better.                           |

**COMPREHENSION**

Choose the correct option.

- One problem with being illiterate is that it's hard to ...
  - perform everyday tasks in the same way as others.
  - find sources of news that you can trust.
  - understand why people spend so much time online.
- If you are functionally illiterate, you ...
  - are below the lowest OECD level.
  - can only read a few words.
  - find it hard to live a full life.
- In developed countries, illiteracy may be due to ...
  - illness.
  - a lack of good examples.
  - bad schools.
- According to the writer, when girls are encouraged to stay in education in developing countries, ...
  - they grow up and start earning money sooner.
  - they can become teachers in their local area.
  - it helps the next generation to learn.
- This text is a ...
  - blog entry.
  - website article.
  - business report.



## READING

Read the text. Should school starting times be adjusted by grades?

### What Time Should School Start?

School starting times may vary from country to country, but it's usual for all students to be at their desks from the early morning onward. For example, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in the USA most high schools start at 8:00 a.m., although in some states, such as Louisiana, the average starting time is as early as 7:40 a.m. This can cause problems because it means that students may be traveling to school in the dark, particularly in winter, and it means that students may not get as much sleep as they need. This can be a problem for teenagers especially, and scientists are finding out more and more about teenagers and their body clocks.



All the processes in your body are controlled by biological systems that are linked to the clock. So, you sleep at night and you are awake during the day. Your body produces different hormones depending on factors such as the level of light. The whole process is under the control of a part of the brain known as the hypothalamus. However, not everyone's body clock works in the same way. Some of us are "larks" and we are at our best in the morning, although we might start to run down and feel tired in the evening. Those who are "owls," on the other hand, are slow to get up in the morning and they may be at their best in the afternoon or later. Over the course of your life, you will have very different daily rhythms, ranging from the need for 16 to 20 hours of sleep a day when you are a newborn baby to the need for 7 to 9 hours of sleep a day when you are a grown adult. During your teenage years, your body clock gets pushed forward and teens often find it hard to go to sleep early. According to [startschoollater.net](http://startschoollater.net), most adolescents sleep best between 11:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. Having to get up and be at school early means that they don't get the sleep they need.

Some people argue that schools should start later. That way, teens would get the sleep they need, and they would also be more awake when they are at school. This should lead to students performing better academically. It would also help avoid some of the problems associated with a lack of sleep, such as obesity, depression, and anxiety. Another advantage of later school start times is that it would mean later school finishing times, so teenage students would be more likely to return home around the same time that their parents return from work. This would mean they spend less time alone and are less likely to get involved in unhealthy activities.

However, there are a number of disadvantages to starting school later. It may be complicated to schedule one starting time for some students and another starting time for others. In addition, some teenage students may be responsible for younger siblings, perhaps picking them up from school or looking after them after school. It's hard to see how that would work if students of different ages finished school at very different times. It might also mean that teenage students had fewer opportunities to take part in after-school activities, such as sports or cultural activities. Finally, some teens may be tempted to stay up even later if school started later.

While it may be better in theory for teenagers to start school later each day, it seems unlikely that whole education systems will change the way they are organized to take that into account. Parents and teens themselves should probably do what they can to make sure that they all get enough sleep each night, including restricting the use of electronic devices in the evening and having a regular bedtime routine.

**lark** (n): a bird of the family Alaudidae, one of the first to start singing in the morning; a person who likes to get up early

**owl** (n): a bird of the order Strigiformes, many of which are active and hunt at night; a person who doesn't like to get up early

**VOCABULARY**

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

adolescent   depression   hormone   obesity   sibling

- 1 A/An \_\_\_\_\_ is a chemical in your body that controls a biological process.
- 2 A/An \_\_\_\_\_ is a person who is changing from being a child and is becoming an adult.
- 3 You suffer from \_\_\_\_\_ when you are very overweight and you are unhealthy.
- 4 When you suffer from \_\_\_\_\_, you are very unhappy and don't enjoy your life.
- 5 A/An \_\_\_\_\_ is a brother or sister.

**COMPREHENSION**

Choose the correct option.

- 1 Starting school early can mean a lack of sunlight / very low energy for some people at some times of the year.
- 2 You are awake during the day because your body reacts to the levels of light / the thoughts you have.
- 3 Teenagers can find it more difficult than younger children to fit in with their school's schedule because they have more work to do / their body clock starts to work differently.
- 4 If schools started later, teenagers may be healthier and get better grades / learn to be more responsible for themselves.
- 5 One problem with starting school later for teens is that schools would not be able to have as many clubs / some teens have family responsibilities after school.