

IELTS Vocabulary Topics

Work Word List

Word/phrase	Meaning	Example
Profession	A type of work that needs specialized qualifications and knowledge.	To enter the medical profession requires many years of study.
Career progression	The ability to advance your career.	Freelance employees find it difficult to progress their careers because they work for many companies.
Workforce	The employees working for a company.	The total workforce of our company exceeds 100 employees.
Workplace	The location where people work.	You should get some experience in the workplace.
Salary	A fixed amount of money paid to employees every year.	Her annual salary was agreed at \$40,000
Wages	Money paid to workers based on the number of hours worked.	My wages are paid, usually in cash, at the end of each week and the amount depends on how many hours I worked.
Multitasking	Employees doing several tasks at the same time.	The company expects employees to multitask and not focus on single tasks.
Redundancy	When a worker loses their job because of changes in the company.	50% of the workforce suffered redundancy when the company re-structured.
Steady job	A reliable job that continues for a long time with regular pay.	Being a government employee is a steady job with a decent monthly salary.
Unemployed	Not having a job.	After months being unemployed, I finally managed to find a steady job with the local council.
Sick leave	Taking time off work because of illness.	After her operation, she had to take sick leave to recover.
Perks	Rewards from employers which are not financial.	Our company perks include free meals and a company car.
Incentive	Rewards offered to employees to motivate them to work harder.	She was offered an incentive of an all expenses paid holiday if she met the sales target.
Bonus	Money given on top of a salary usually for achieving targets.	The company offers production bonuses to those who meet their targets.
Downsize	To make the company smaller with less employees.	The firm had to downsize because of the financial crisis.
Commission	A payment to employees based on how much they sell.	He gets 10% commission for very client who registers on the pension scheme.

Blue-collar work	Employees who do work, usually in industry, that requires physical strength.	My father was proud to be a blue-collar worker and worked in the auto industry for 20 years.
White-collar work	Employees who do work, usually in an office, that requires mental ability	The company plans to hire 50 new white-collar workers for their new office complex.
Work/life balance	To work hard and have time for social and family life.	Employees are working long hours now and it's difficult to have a positive work/life balance.
Zero-hours contract	A job where the employer does not have to offer a fixed number of hours to their employee.	Zero-hours contracts are very popular now in my country.
Internship	A period of training spent in the workplace to finish one's qualification.	To qualify as a doctor, trainees must complete a six-month internship at a registered hospital.
Performance review	To assess an employee's contribution to the company.	After a positive performance review, she was offered a full-time contract.
Restructure	To re-organize a company or department to make it more efficient.	The company restructured the department after disappointing sales figures.
Outsource	To send work outside the company, usually to save money.	Many companies outsource work to countries where productivity is the same, but costs are lower.
Shift work	Work hours that have a beginning and end, usually 8 hours.	The employees at the factory work morning and evening shifts.
Manual labor	Usually unskilled work that requires physical strength.	Manual labor in the construction industry is usually low paid.
Promotion	To raise an employee to a more important position in the company.	He was promoted to Sales Manager after achieving all the department's sales targets.
Job seeker	Someone looking for employment.	Job seekers in my country do not receive any assistance from the government.
Automation	The use of machines and computers instead of human employees.	Automation in the car manufacturing industry has resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs.
Workaholic	Someone who works compulsively and does not have much time anything else.	One of the signs that you are a workaholic is that you work so much that it has a negative effect on your health.

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Work Idioms

Work your fingers to the bone

Meaning: To work incredibly hard.

Example: He *worked his fingers to the bone*, 12 hours a day, to meet the deadline.

Think outside the box

Meaning: To have original and creative ideas.

Example: To meet our client's demands, we will need to *think outside the box* and come up with something original.

Have your work cut out

Meaning: To have a difficult task that requires hard work to achieve.

Example: You will *have your work cut out* to finish all this today. Leave it until tomorrow.

Slack off

Meaning: To do something with very little effort and enthusiasm.

Example: He used to meet every deadline but recently he's been *slacking off* and has been late with all his assignments.

Glass ceiling

Meaning: An unofficial barrier preventing promotion

Example: She broke the *glass ceiling* when she became the first female company director.

Have a lot on your plate

Meaning: To have a lot of work to do.

Example: We can't take on any new projects this year. We already *have a lot on our plate*.

Work for peanuts

Meaning: To work for a very low salary.

Example: College students often take jobs where they *work for peanuts* to pay their tuition fees and living costs.

Donkey work

Meaning: To do hard, boring, and repetitive work.

Example: I'm tired of doing all the *donkey work* while my colleagues have creative and fun tasks.

Get the sack

Meaning: To be dismissed suddenly from a job.

Example: She *got the sack* last Friday when it was discovered that she had been lying about her expense account.

A mover and shaker

Meaning: A powerful person who has influence and gets things done.

Example: He's the most famous *mover and shaker* in the financial world. He's made millions for his clients this year.

Pull your socks up

Meaning: To make an effort to improve your work performance.

Example: You need to *pull your socks up* and complete these reports on time. The Board of Directors are waiting for them.