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## **Americans give up \$34 billion of vacation**

**3rd December, 2011**

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1112/111203-vacation.html>

### **Contents**

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| The Article                | 2  |
| Warm-ups                   | 3  |
| Before Reading / Listening | 4  |
| While Reading / Listening  | 5  |
| Listening Gap Fill         | 6  |
| After Reading / Listening  | 7  |
| Student Survey             | 8  |
| Discussion                 | 9  |
| Language Work              | 10 |
| Writing                    | 11 |
| Homework                   | 12 |
| Answers                    | 13 |

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# THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111203-vacation.html>

U.S. workers are among the worst in the world for not taking all their vacation days. Their bosses might say they are among the best in the world for working their holidays. Either way, Americans will give up \$34.3 billion in paid vacation leave in 2012, which is the equivalent of 226 million days off. These figures come from an annual survey conducted by Harris Interactive for Expedia. They questioned 7,083 employees in 20 countries in North America, Europe, Asia, South America and Australia. The top reason for Americans not using up their holidays was not being able to afford a holiday (34%). This was followed by lack of planning (15%), the statement "work is my life" (15%) and feeling bad about asking the boss for time off.

Workers in other countries don't appear to have a problem taking vacations. French workers get an average 30 vacation days a year and generally use them all. In the UK, employees get 25 days and pretty much take all of them. Asia is the only region where workers receive and take fewer holidays than Americans. The average Japanese worker only gets 11 days a year and takes just five of them. Indians are also reluctant to take all of their vacation. Expedia found that 20 per cent of workers in India did not take all their holidays because they "may be perceived negatively at work". In America, bosses believe it is important that workers use all their vacation so they can come back to work feeling refreshed.

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# WARM-UPS

**1. VACATION DAYS:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about vacation days. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*U.S. workers / vacation days / bosses / equivalent / survey / top reason / feeling bad / other countries / average / reluctant / perceived negatively / feeling refreshed*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. EXCUSES:** What do you think of these excuses for not taking holidays? Complete this table and share it with your partner(s). Change partners and share again.

| Excuse                          | What do you think? | Would you ever use it? |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Can't afford it                 |                    |                        |
| Forgot                          |                    |                        |
| Lack of planning                |                    |                        |
| Keep the boss happy             |                    |                        |
| Work is my life                 |                    |                        |
| Co-workers will think bad of me |                    |                        |

**4. VACATION:** Students A **strongly** believe all workers should have 50 days a year; Students B **strongly** believe not. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

**5. HOLIDAY:** What's best to do with it? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- Sit on a beach
- Stay at home and relax
- Voluntary work
- Go to another country
- Read
- Study
- Watch movies
- Catch up with friends and family

**6. BOSSES:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'bosses'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111203-vacation.html>

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. Americans lose lots of money in holiday pay.                           | T / F |
| b. U.S. bosses believe Americans are the world's best workers.            | T / F |
| c. A researcher asked over 7,000 Americans about their vacation days.     | T / F |
| d. Just over a third of Americans said they could not afford a holiday.   | T / F |
| e. French workers take fewer holidays than American employees.            | T / F |
| f. British workers generally take all of their vacation days.             | T / F |
| g. The average Japanese worker takes less than half of his/her holidays.  | T / F |
| h. Indians are hesitant to take all their days because it could look bad. | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article.

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. bosses     | a. usually   |
| 2. equivalent | b. yearly    |
| 3. figures    | c. hesitant  |
| 4. annual     | d. pay for   |
| 5. afford     | e. energized |
| 6. appear     | f. employers |
| 7. generally  | g. standard  |
| 8. average    | h. equal     |
| 9. reluctant  | i. seem      |
| 10. refreshed | j. stats     |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. among the worst         | a. 226 million days      |
| 2. Either                  | b. feeling refreshed     |
| 3. the equivalent of       | c. afford a holiday      |
| 4. These figures come from | d. much take all of them |
| 5. not being able to       | e. way                   |
| 6. lack of                 | f. to have a problem     |
| 7. don't appear            | g. in the world          |
| 8. ... and pretty          | h. reluctant             |
| 9. Indians are also        | i. planning              |
| 10. come back to work      | j. an annual survey      |

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# WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111203-vacation.html>

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

U.S. workers are (1) \_\_\_\_\_ the worst in the world for not taking all their vacation days. Their bosses might say they are among the best in the world for (2) \_\_\_\_\_ their holidays. Either way, Americans will give up \$34.3 billion in (3) \_\_\_\_\_ vacation leave in 2012, which is the equivalent of 226 million days off. These (4) \_\_\_\_\_ come from an annual survey conducted by Harris Interactive for Expedia. They (5) \_\_\_\_\_ 7,083 employees in 20 countries in North America, Europe, Asia, South America and Australia. The top (6) \_\_\_\_\_ for Americans not using up their holidays was not being able to afford a holiday (34%). This was (7) \_\_\_\_\_ by lack of planning (15%), the statement "work is my life" (15%) and (8) \_\_\_\_\_ bad about asking the boss for time off.

*questioned*

*followed*

*paid*

*feeling*

*among*

*figures*

*reason*

*working*

Workers in other countries don't (9) \_\_\_\_\_ to have a problem taking vacations. French workers get an (10) \_\_\_\_\_ 30 vacation days a year and (11) \_\_\_\_\_ use them all. In the UK, employees get 25 days and (12) \_\_\_\_\_ much take all of them. Asia is the only region where workers receive and take (13) \_\_\_\_\_ holidays than Americans. The average Japanese worker only gets 11 days a year and takes just five of them. Indians are also (14) \_\_\_\_\_ to take all of their vacation. Expedia found that 20 per cent of workers in India did not take all their holidays because they "may be perceived (15) \_\_\_\_\_ at work". In America, bosses believe it is important that workers use all their vacation so they can come back to work feeling (16) \_\_\_\_\_.

*reluctant*

*average*

*refreshed*

*pretty*

*appear*

*negatively*

*fewer*

*generally*

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## LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111203-vacation.html>

U.S. workers \_\_\_\_\_ in the world for not taking all their vacation days. Their bosses might say they are among the best in the world for working their holidays. Either way, Americans will give up \$34.3 billion in paid vacation leave in 2012, which \_\_\_\_\_ 226 million days off. These figures come from an \_\_\_\_\_ by Harris Interactive for Expedia. They questioned 7,083 employees in 20 countries in North America, Europe, Asia, South America and Australia. The top reason for Americans \_\_\_\_\_ holidays was \_\_\_\_\_ a holiday (34%). This was followed by lack of planning (15%), the statement "work is my life" (15%) and feeling bad about asking \_\_\_\_\_.

Workers in other countries \_\_\_\_\_ a problem taking vacations. French workers get an average 30 vacation days a year and generally use them all. In the UK, employees get 25 days \_\_\_\_\_ of them. Asia is the only region where workers \_\_\_\_\_ holidays than Americans. The average Japanese worker only gets 11 days a year and takes just five of them. Indians are also \_\_\_\_\_ of their vacation. Expedia found that 20 per cent of workers in India did not take all their holidays because they "may be \_\_\_\_\_ at work". In America, bosses believe it is important that workers use all their vacation so they can come back \_\_\_\_\_.

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# AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111203-vacation.html>

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'vacation' and 'holiday'.

| <b>vacation</b> | <b>holiday</b> |
|-----------------|----------------|
|                 |                |

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• bosses</li><li>• paid</li><li>• 226</li><li>• 20</li><li>• top</li><li>• lack</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• appear</li><li>• 25</li><li>• pretty</li><li>• 11</li><li>• India</li><li>• refreshed</li></ul> |
|---|---|

# STUDENT VACATION DAYS SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111203-vacation.html>

Write five GOOD questions about vacation days in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

|      | STUDENT 1<br>_____ | STUDENT 2<br>_____ | STUDENT 3<br>_____ |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Q.1. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.2. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.3. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.4. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.5. |                    |                    |                    |

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.



# VACATION DAYS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'vacation'?
- c) What do you think about what you read?
- d) Would / do you ever not take all your vacation?
- e) Are you surprised U.S. workers don't take all their vacation?
- f) What are the differences between the words 'vacation' and 'holiday'?
- g) Should workers get the money for untaken holidays?
- h) Is 'not being able to afford a holiday' a good reason not to take the days off?
- i) What did you do on your last vacation?
- j) What do you think of the statement, "work is my life"?

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# VACATION DAYS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Should all workers get the same number of days holiday?
- c) Should we all give up holidays in this poor economy, when times are hard?
- d) Should Japanese workers get more holiday?
- e) How important are holidays?
- f) How much do you look forward to vacations?
- g) Are vacations for traveling?
- h) Should every day be like a vacation?
- i) Where is the world's best vacation destination?
- j) What questions would you like to ask someone who doesn't take all his/her holidays?

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# LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1112/111203-vacation.html>

U.S. workers are among the worst in the world (1) \_\_\_\_ not taking all their vacation days. Their bosses might say they are among the best in the world for working their holidays. (2) \_\_\_\_ way, Americans will give up \$34.3 billion in paid vacation leave in 2012, which is the (3) \_\_\_\_ of 226 million days off. These figures come from an annual survey (4) \_\_\_\_ by Harris Interactive for Expedia. They questioned 7,083 employees in 20 countries in North America, Europe, Asia, South America and Australia. The top reason for Americans not using (5) \_\_\_\_ their holidays was not being able to afford a holiday (34%). This was followed by lack of planning (15%), the statement "work is my life" (15%) and feeling bad about asking the boss for time (6) \_\_\_\_.

Workers in other countries don't appear to have a problem taking vacations. French workers get an average 30 vacation days a year and (7) \_\_\_\_ use them all. In the UK, employees get 25 days and pretty (8) \_\_\_\_ take all of them. Asia is the only region where workers receive and take (9) \_\_\_\_ holidays than Americans. The average Japanese worker only gets 11 days a year and takes just five of them. Indians are also (10) \_\_\_\_ to take all of their vacation. Expedia found that 20 per cent of workers in India did not take all their holidays because they "may be perceived (11) \_\_\_\_ at work". In America, bosses believe it is important that workers use all their vacation so they can come back to work feeling (12) \_\_\_\_.

**Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.**

- |     |                |                 |                  |                |
|-----|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1.  | (a) for        | (b) with        | (c) so           | (d) as         |
| 2.  | (a) Even       | (b) Either      | (c) Every        | (d) Ever       |
| 3.  | (a) prevalent  | (b) malevolent  | (c) equivalent   | (d) insolent   |
| 4.  | (a) conduction | (b) conducting  | (c) conductor    | (d) conducted  |
| 5.  | (a) from       | (b) off         | (c) away         | (d) up         |
| 6.  | (a) up         | (b) it          | (c) off          | (d) now        |
| 7.  | (a) generally  | (b) genially    | (c) genuinely    | (d) generously |
| 8.  | (a) most       | (b) much        | (c) many         | (d) some       |
| 9.  | (a) little     | (b) smaller     | (c) fewer        | (d) lesser     |
| 10. | (a) reluctant  | (b) reluctantly | (c) reluctance   | (d) reliance   |
| 11. | (a) positively | (b) normally    | (c) abnormally   | (d) negatively |
| 12. | (a) refresher  | (b) refreshed   | (c) refreshingly | (d) refreshing |

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# HOMework

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out more about vacation days. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. VACATION DAYS:** Make a poster about vacation days. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. HOLIDAYS:** Write a magazine article about holidays that people do not take. Include imaginary interviews with people take all their holidays and people who don't.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to a company boss. Ask him/her three questions about vacation days. Give him/her three of your opinions on them. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

# ANSWERS

## TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. F      c. F      d. T      e. F      f. T      g. T      h. T

## SYNONYM MATCH:

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. bosses     | a. employers |
| 2. equivalent | b. equal     |
| 3. figures    | c. stats     |
| 4. annual     | d. yearly    |
| 5. afford     | e. pay for   |
| 6. appear     | f. seem      |
| 7. generally  | g. usually   |
| 8. average    | h. standard  |
| 9. reluctant  | i. hesitant  |
| 10. refreshed | j. energized |

## PHRASE MATCH:

- |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. among the worst         | a. in the world          |
| 2. Either                  | b. way                   |
| 3. the equivalent of       | c. 226 million days      |
| 4. These figures come from | d. an annual survey      |
| 5. not being able to       | e. afford a holiday      |
| 6. lack of                 | f. planning              |
| 7. don't appear            | g. to have a problem     |
| 8. ... and pretty          | h. much take all of them |
| 9. Indians are also        | i. reluctant             |
| 10. come back to work      | j. feeling refreshed     |

## GAP FILL:

### Americans give up \$34 billion of vacation

U.S. workers are (1) **among** the worst in the world for not taking all their vacation days. Their bosses might say they are among the best in the world for (2) **working** their holidays. Either way, Americans will give up \$34.3 billion in (3) **paid** vacation leave in 2012, which is the equivalent of 226 million days off. These (4) **figures** come from an annual survey conducted by Harris Interactive for Expedia. They (5) **questioned** 7,083 employees in 20 countries in North America, Europe, Asia, South America and Australia. The top (6) **reason** for Americans not using up their holidays was not being able to afford a holiday (34%). This was (7) **followed** by lack of planning (15%), the statement "work is my life" (15%) and (8) **feeling** bad about asking the boss for time off.

Workers in other countries don't (9) **appear** to have a problem taking vacations. French workers get an (10) **average** 30 vacation days a year and (11) **generally** use them all. In the UK, employees get 25 days and (12) **pretty** much take all of them. Asia is the only region where workers receive and take (13) **fewer** holidays than Americans. The average Japanese worker only gets 11 days a year and takes just five of them. Indians are also (14) **reluctant** to take all of their vacation. Expedia found that 20 per cent of workers in India did not take all their holidays because they "may be perceived (15) **negatively** at work". In America, bosses believe it is important that workers use all their vacation so they can come back to work feeling (16) **refreshed**.

## LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a    2 - b    3 - c    4 - d    5 - d    6 - c    7 - a    8 - b    9 - c    10 - a    11 - d    12 - b

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