NEWS LESSON

# Can You Really Make Money While You Sleep?



## BEFORE YOU READ

### 1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What makes an online money-making promise sound believable?
2. Would you rather earn extra money from a hobby or keep it just for fun?
3. What would you ask someone who claimed their business ran itself?

### 2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **influencer** | ☐ | A | money that you get from work or other sources |
| 2 | **income** | ☐ | B | to believe that someone is honest and good |
| 3 | **attractive** | ☐ | C | teaching one student or a small group |
| 4 | **customers** | ☐ | D | interesting and nice to look at |
| 5 | **tutoring** | ☐ | E | people who buy things from a shop or business |
| 6 | **promise** | ☐ | F | to say that something will definitely happen |
| 7 | **digital** | ☐ | G | stored and used on a computer or phone |
| 8 | **trust** | ☐ | H | a person with many followers online who recommends things |

## 3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

### A laptop and a few spare hours sound like enough. The first customer may be much harder to find.

1 Imagine a video that begins like this: an influencer makes breakfast, looks at her phone and smiles. Another payment has arrived from a business she says almost runs itself. There is no boss, no journey to work, and money arrives while she sleeps. It is easy to see why such a video is attractive when rent and food are getting more expensive. But the camera shows the payment, not the hours spent designing, advertising and searching for the first customer.

2 A side hustle is work you do alongside your job or studies. It might involve tutoring, walking dogs, selling second-hand clothes or running a small online shop. These can be useful ways to earn extra cash.

3 The problem begins when people suggest that making money takes almost no effort. Some talk about passive income, which means money that keeps arriving after the first work is finished. But somebody still has to make the product, answer customers and find new buyers. Setting up a shop is one thing; finding customers is another. Yet many people are trying because they want more control over their money and working lives.

4 The figures tell a less exciting story. In a 2026 Save the Student survey, 29% of students said they had a business or side hustle. Of those, 79% had earned less than £500 in the previous year. Some gained useful skills or enough money to cover small expenses. But those earnings are far below the thousands promised in some videos.

5 Take digital products, such as planners or invitations sold online. You don't need to store boxes or post parcels, but you still need good designs and customers willing to pay for them. There are already thousands of similar products available. Software, advertising and selling fees can also reduce your profits, particularly when you are just starting out. And good reviews rarely appear overnight when nobody knows you.

6 Affiliate marketing is another popular option. People earn a small payment when someone buys a product using their special link. This can work if followers trust their recommendations. However, sharing a link doesn't mean people will buy anything. Some influencers make their own money by selling expensive courses that promise to teach others how to succeed.

7 None of this means side hustles are a bad idea. They can build confidence, teach business skills and sometimes turn into full-time work. Before starting, ask yourself: Who will buy what I'm selling? How much will it cost? What will I actually earn after expenses? Making money online is possible. Doing it without working hard is much less likely.

Sources: The Guardian. Picture: AI illustration.

## 4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. About three in ten students said they had a business or side hustle. T F NG
2. A side hustle can eventually become a full-time job. T F NG
3. Selling digital products means you must store boxes at home. T F NG
4. Most students start a side hustle while still at school. T F NG
5. Most students with a side hustle earned thousands of pounds. T F NG

## 5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

| borrowed | cheap | earned | expenses | expensive | reviews | survey |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. Food and rent are getting more _____ every year, so many students want extra money.
2. A _____ asked hundreds of students whether they had a side hustle.
3. She _____ about £200 last year by selling her old clothes online.
4. Before you start, write down all your _____ , such as software and postage.
5. Good _____ help new customers to trust a small shop.

## 6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. An influencer _____ breakfast, looks at her phone and smiles. (MAKE)
2. The camera shows the payment, not the hours _____ on designing. (SPEND)
3. In a 2026 survey, 29% of students said they _____ a side hustle. (HAVE)
4. Last month she _____ twenty planners, but she still lost money. (SELL)
5. Making money online is possible, but _____ it without hard work is unlikely. (DO)

## 7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A phrasal verb is a verb plus a small word, like up or out. The small word is already in the sentence. Choose the verb.

| carry | find | give | hand | pay | sign | start |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. Before you buy a course, _____ out who else is selling the same thing.
2. Many beginners _____ up after a month because nobody buys their products.
3. She hopes to _____ off her laptop in six months.
4. You can _____ up for a free account on most selling websites.
5. Most people _____ out with a small idea and a laptop.

SPEAK

## 8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Which part of an online success story would you most want to see?
2. When does useful advice become a sales pitch?
3. Could turning a hobby into a business change how you feel about it?

## 9 Role-play: should we buy the course?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

**Student A · the excited friend**

You've seen an online course that costs £300 and promises money while you sleep. You want your friend to join you. Explain why it looks like a good chance and answer your friend's worries.

**Student B · the cautious friend**

You're not sure the course is worth £300. Ask at least two questions about the costs, the customers and who is really making money. Suggest a cheaper way to test the idea.

**Useful phrases**

I've just seen a course that teaches you to earn money online.

That's a lot of money for something we can't try first.

Who's actually making money from it?

I'd feel better if we checked the reviews together.

What would you do if it didn't work?

Let's find a compromise.

**Afterwards, tell the class: did you buy the course, and what made you decide?**

ANSWER KEY

**2 Key words**

1 H · 2 A · 3 D · 4 E · 5 C · 6 F · 7 G · 8 B

**4 True, false or not given**

1 T · 2 T · 3 F · 4 NG · 5 F

**5 Vocabulary**

1 expensive · 2 survey · 3 earned · 4 expenses · 5 reviews

**6 Verb forms**

1 makes · 2 spent · 3 had · 4 sold · 5 doing

**7 Language focus**

1 find · 2 give · 3 pay · 4 sign · 5 start

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