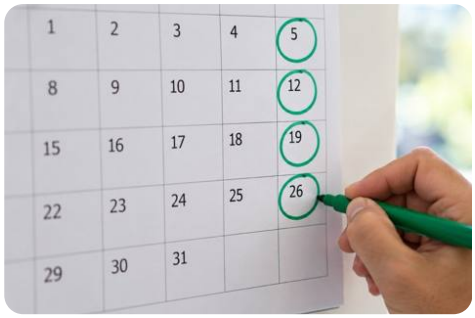
NEWS LESSON

A Shorter Working Week with the Same Pay



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you choose a free Friday or shorter days all week?
2. What task at work takes more time than it deserves?
3. Could a team finish the same work with fewer meetings?

2 Key words

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

1	**trial**	☐	A	pushed into a space that is too small
2	**burnout**	☐	B	feeling very tired and unwell because of too much work
3	**efficiently**	☐	C	plans that say when things happen
4	**participating**	☐	D	really, in a true way
5	**schedules**	☐	E	a test of a new idea to see if it works
6	**genuinely**	☐	F	taking part in something
7	**employers**	☐	G	people or companies that give others jobs
8	**squeezed**	☐	H	without wasting time or effort

3 Read

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

Nearly 3,000 workers in six countries tried a shorter week. They reported better health, but hospitals, shops and public transport still need staff every day.

1 Imagine your boss saying, 'From next month, you can have Fridays off and take home the same pay.' It sounds wonderful. But what would happen to the work that normally gets done on Friday? In 2025, researchers published the results of a large international four-day week trial. It involved 2,896 employees at 141 organisations in six countries, including Ireland and the UK. The participating workplaces tried shorter working weeks without reducing employees' pay. This meant fewer working hours, not the same hours squeezed into four days.

2 Before the trial, companies looked for ways to work more efficiently. They cut down on unnecessary meetings and changed how tasks were organised. After six months, employees reported improvements in job satisfaction, mental health and physical health. The researchers also found less burnout compared with a group of workplaces that did not introduce the same change.

3 A shorter week may give people more time for family, exercise, rest or hobbies. It could also reduce the feeling that life is only about work. But not every job can be organised in the same way. Hospitals, shops and public transport still need enough staff every day.

4 There are other questions too. Can businesses keep serving customers properly? Would people feel pressure to complete five days of work in four? Could some employers afford extra staff? The study gives useful evidence but does not answer every problem.

5 For workers, a free Friday might have many uses. Parents could collect children from school or spend more time with them. Others might take a class, exercise or help an older family member. But not everyone would receive an entirely free day. Shops, clinics and restaurants might need staff on more flexible schedules so that the business stays open.

6 A four-day week does not have to mean the same day off for everybody. Some teams could work different days, while others might close for one extra day. The important point is whether the change genuinely reduces working time without making people rush through every task. If a shorter week simply means four very stressful days, employees might not feel the benefits that supporters promise.

7 The four-day week may be possible for many workplaces, especially when they improve how they operate. It is not a magic plan for every job. Still, the research encourages a bigger question: if we can work differently, why should a five-day week always be the normal choice?

Sources: Nature Human Behaviour. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

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

1. The researchers compared the trial workplaces with a group that kept the same week. (T) (F) (NG)
2. Employees did the same number of hours in four days. (T) (F) (NG)
3. Most employees in the trial spent their free day with family. (T) (F) (NG)
4. In a four-day week, everybody has to take the same day off. (T) (F) (NG)
5. Some businesses might need staff to work different days so they can stay open. (T) (F) (NG)

5 Vocabulary

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

afford	benefits	evidence	pension	pressure	satisfaction	workload

1. Many small shops cannot _____ to pay for extra staff.
2. Some workers feel _____ to finish five days of work in four.
3. The manager wanted clear _____ before she changed the timetable.
4. Many people get great job _____ from helping customers.
5. Free lunch is one of the _____ of working for that company.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Workers in six countries _____ a shorter week for six months. (TRY)
2. Employees _____ less burnout after the change. (REPORT)
3. The company _____ unnecessary meetings to save time. (CUT)
4. Last year my manager _____ me a free day for my birthday. (GIVE)
5. Many workers _____ much better after the trial. (FEEL)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some linking words need a short idea after them, and some join two ideas. Look at the commas and the meaning.

although	because	before	despite	however	if	instead

1. Sara was happy _____ she finished work early.
2. _____ the plan is popular, some bosses still dislike it.
3. _____ you work four days, you may feel less tired.
4. Many workers love the idea. _____ , shops still need staff every day.
5. _____ the meeting started, everyone had a coffee.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

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

1. What would have to change before a shorter week felt genuinely easier?
2. Would you accept longer days in exchange for a three-day weekend?
3. Who might find a four-day week harder to arrange?

9 Role-play: a four-day week for our team

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

Student A · the manager

Your shop is open seven days a week. An employee wants to try a four-day week with the same pay. Ask at least two questions before you decide. You can say yes, no, or yes with a condition.

Student B · the employee

You'd like a four-day week with the same pay. Explain why it would help you and how the work will still get done. Suggest a trial.

Useful phrases

I'd like to ask about a four-day week.
I'd still finish all my tasks.
Who'd look after the customers on that day?
We're open seven days a week, so that's a problem.
Could we try it for three months?
I'm happy to say yes if the results are good.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the manager agree, and was the plan fair for the rest of the team?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

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

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 F · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 afford · 2 pressure · 3 evidence · 4 satisfaction · 5 benefits

6 Verb forms

1 tried · 2 reported · 3 cut · 4 gave · 5 felt

7 Language focus

1 because · 2 Although · 3 If · 4 However · 5 Before

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