

Daily English Vocabulary - Lesson 1: Daily Routines and Everyday Life

Level: B1 | Everyday English | Student Worksheet

Vocabulary

Habits, patterns and time management

time-blocking (noun)	A scheduling technique where you divide your day into fixed blocks, each dedicated to a specific task.	"I use time-blocking to ensure I have uninterrupted periods for deep work each morning."
ring-fence (verb)	To protect a period of time so it cannot be used for anything other than its intended purpose.	"I ring-fence the first hour of my morning for exercise — nothing is allowed to interfere."
deep work (noun phrase)	Cognitively demanding work requiring sustained concentration, free from distraction.	"Writing and analysis require deep work; I cannot do them in a noisy open-plan office."
reactive mode (noun phrase)	A way of working where you respond to incoming demands as they arise, rather than working to a plan.	"If you spend all day in reactive mode, you rarely get to your most important tasks."
prioritise (verb)	To decide which tasks are most important and deal with them first.	"You need to prioritise your workload or everything will feel equally urgent."
shutdown ritual (noun phrase)	A set of actions performed at the end of the working day to mentally separate work from personal time.	"My shutdown ritual includes reviewing tomorrow's tasks and closing all work applications."

Work-life balance and wellbeing

burnt out (adjective phrase)	Exhausted and unable to function effectively as a result of excessive and prolonged stress.	"She was completely burnt out after three years without a proper holiday."
wind down (phrasal verb)	To relax and allow stress to reduce gradually, especially at the end of the day.	"I find it difficult to wind down after a stressful day at work."
work-life balance (noun phrase)	The degree to which professional and personal life are in proportion.	"Poor work-life balance is one of the main reasons people leave high-pressure jobs."
sustainable (adjective)	Able to be maintained over time without causing harm or exhaustion.	"Working fifteen hours a day is not sustainable. You will eventually burn out."
output (noun)	The amount of work produced or results achieved over a given period.	"Despite working fewer hours, her output improved significantly."

boundaries (noun)	Limits that define what you are and are not willing to do in a professional or personal context.	<i>"Setting clear boundaries with colleagues is essential for maintaining good mental health."</i>
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Attitude and reflection

come to realise (phrase)	To gradually understand or become aware of something over time.	<i>"I came to realise that being busy is not the same as being effective."</i>
path of least resistance (phrase)	The easiest course of action; the option that requires the least effort.	<i>"If healthy food is easily accessible, it becomes the path of least resistance."</i>
confuse X with Y (phrase)	To mistakenly treat one thing as if it were another.	<i>"Many people confuse activity with progress."</i>
in retrospect (adverb phrase)	Looking back on a past event with the knowledge and understanding you have now.	<i>"In retrospect, I should have set clearer boundaries much earlier in my career."</i>
proactive (adjective)	Taking action to create or control a situation rather than simply responding to it.	<i>"A proactive approach to time management means planning your week before it begins."</i>
deliberate (adjective)	Done consciously and intentionally, with careful thought and purpose.	<i>"Effective routines are built through deliberate choices, not by accident."</i>

Exercise 1: Listening

Listen to the conversation. Then answer the questions. Some questions ask about attitude and implied meaning.

Conversation

Ravi: You seem different lately. Less stressed. Have you changed something?

Tess: Honestly, yes. I realised I was completely burnt out. I was putting in twelve-hour days but my output was actually getting worse, not better.

Ravi: What made you change?

Tess: A friend pointed out I was confusing being busy with being productive. I was constantly in reactive mode rather than prioritising what actually mattered.

Ravi: So what did you do differently?

Tess: I started time-blocking. I ring-fence the first two hours of my day for deep work — no emails, no meetings.

Ravi: Do you not feel guilty about not being immediately available?

Tess: I did at first. But I came to realise that most things are not as urgent as they seem. When you are clear about your boundaries, people respect them.

Ravi: I find it almost impossible to wind down in the evenings. My mind just keeps running.

Tess: I now have a proper shutdown ritual — I write what I will tackle the next day, close my laptop, then do something completely unrelated to work.

Ravi: Do you think anyone can build these habits, or does it require a certain personality?

Tess: I think it is about designing your environment so that the right behaviour becomes the path of least resistance.

Circle the correct answer.

1. What does Tess say happened to her output when she was working twelve-hour days?

a) It improved significantly. b) It stayed the same. c) It actually got worse. d) It was inconsistent.

2. What mistake was she making about her work?

a) Taking on too many projects. b) Confusing being busy with being productive. c) Spending too much time in meetings. d) Not communicating clearly.

3. What does reactive mode mean in this context?

a) Being proactive and planning ahead. b) Responding to whatever demands arise rather than following a plan. c) Reacting badly to feedback. d) Feeling anxious about deadlines.

4. How does Tess feel about not being immediately available during deep work hours?

a) She still feels very guilty. b) She felt guilty at first but no longer does. c) She never felt guilty. d) She worries colleagues are frustrated.

5. What is the main purpose of Tess's shutdown ritual?

a) To plan the following week. b) To mentally separate work from the rest of her evening. c) To review her performance. d) To avoid forgetting tasks.

6. What is Tess's view on whether discipline is a fixed personality trait?

a) Some people are naturally disciplined and others are not. b) Discipline can be learned but takes a very long time. c) It is more about designing your environment than personality. d) Personality is the most important factor.

Exercise 2: Multiple Choice

Circle the correct answer. Options may be close in meaning - read carefully.

1. She has started to be more ____ — planning her week in advance rather than reacting to whatever comes up.

a) sustainable b) burnt out c) deliberate d) reactive

2. I try to ____ at least an hour each morning for focused writing. Nothing is allowed to interrupt that time.

a) wind down b) ring-fence c) come to realise d) prioritise

3. Working at this pace is not _____. You will be exhausted within a few months if you carry on.

a) sustainable b) proactive c) burnt out d) deliberate

4. He ____ that his late-night working habits were affecting his relationships, but it took him a long time to act.

a) ring-fenced b) wound down c) prioritised d) came to realise

5. Many people struggle to ____ in the evening because they cannot stop thinking about work.

a) ring-fence b) prioritise c) wind down d) confuse

6. Her ____ improved once she started working fewer but more focused hours each day.

a) boundaries b) output c) shutdown ritual d) deep work

7. Setting clear ____ at work means being explicit about when you are and are not available.
a) boundaries b) output c) deep work d) time-blocking
8. The key to effective time management is learning to ____ — not everything that feels urgent actually is.
a) wind down b) burn out c) come to realise d) prioritise

Exercise 3: Matching

Match each word or phrase (A) to its definition (B). Write the correct number on the line.

A - Word / Phrase	B - Meaning
1. time-blocking ____	3. To protect a period of time so it cannot be used for anything else
2. burnt out ____	2. Exhausted and unable to function effectively due to prolonged stress
3. ring-fence ____	6. The easiest course of action; the option requiring the least effort
4. reactive mode ____	8. Able to be maintained over time without causing exhaustion or harm
5. shutdown ritual ____	5. A set routine performed at the end of the working day to mentally separate from work
6. path of least resistance ____	7. Taking deliberate action to shape a situation rather than simply responding to it
7. proactive ____	4. A way of working where you respond to demands as they arise rather than following a plan
8. sustainable ____	1. A method of scheduling where each part of the day is assigned to a specific task

Exercise 4: Gap Fill

Choose the correct word or phrase from the box to complete each sentence.

Word Bank: proactively | burnt out | deep work | In retrospect | confuse | time-blocking | sustainable | output

- I try to approach each week ____ — I plan my priorities on Sunday evening before the week begins.
- She was so ____ that she took three months off work to recover.
- The most important thing is to identify ____ tasks and protect time for them each day.
- ____, I should have set better boundaries much earlier in my career.
- Many managers ____ activity with progress, assuming a full calendar means productive work.
- I protect my mornings using ____ — each slot is assigned to a specific task before the day begins.
- The current pace of work is not ____ . People are leaving because of exhaustion.

8. She found that her ____ per hour actually increased once she started working fewer, more focused hours.

Exercise 5: Sentence Transformation

Rewrite each sentence using the word given. Do not change the meaning.

1. She gradually understood that long hours do not always produce better results.

Key word: CAME TO REALISE

2. I protect two hours every morning so that nothing can interrupt my writing.

Key word: RING-FENCE

3. He cannot relax in the evenings because his mind keeps going over work problems.

Key word: WIND DOWN

4. Many people treat being busy and being effective as if they were the same thing.

Key word: CONFUSE

5. You will exhaust yourself if you keep working at this pace.

Key word: SUSTAINABLE

6. She decided to complete the most important tasks first rather than dealing with emails.

Key word: PRIORITISE

Exercise 6: Error Identification

Each sentence contains one error, or no error at all. Underline the error if there is one and write a correction or "No error" on the line.

1. She was completely burnt out after working twelve-hour days for three years without a break.

Correction / No error: _____

2. I ring-fence the first hour of my day to deep work — no emails or interruptions.

Correction / No error: _____

3. His output improved significantly once he started working in a more deliberate way.

Correction / No error: _____

4. She found it hard to switch off in the evenings and often checked her emails before bed.

Correction / No error: _____

5. Many people confuse busyness for productivity, assuming a full schedule means effective work.

Correction / No error: _____

6. The key to building sustainable habits is designing your environment thoughtfully.

Correction / No error: _____

7. Working reactively means spending your day responding to other people's priorities instead of your own.

Correction / No error: _____

8. A shutdown ritual helps you create a clear boundary between work and the rest of your day.

Correction / No error: _____

Exercise 7: Paragraph Gap Fill

Read the extract and write the correct word or phrase in each gap. Choose from the options given below each gap.

If you have ever found yourself feeling completely (1) ____ despite working long hours, you are not alone.

Gap 1 options: burnt out / wound down / prioritised / proactive

Most people spend the majority of their working day in (2) ____, dealing with whatever demands are most pressing.

Gap 2 options: reactive mode / deep work / time-blocking / a shutdown ritual

As a result, they never find time to (3) ____ the work that actually matters.

Gap 3 options: prioritise / ring-fence / confuse / wind down

Techniques such as (4) ____ — dividing your day into focused, protected slots — can dramatically improve both the quality of your output and your sense of control.

Gap 4 options: time-blocking / output / boundaries / a shutdown ritual

The key is to build habits that are (5) ____: ones you can maintain over weeks and months without burning yourself out.

Gap 5 options: sustainable / deliberate / proactive / burnt out

A shutdown ritual makes rest and recovery the (6) ____, rather than something you have to consciously choose.

Gap 6 options: path of least resistance / deep work / shutdown ritual / reactive mode

TEACHER ANSWER KEY

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Exercise 1: Listening

1. What does Tess say happened to her output when she was working twelve-hour days?

Answer: It actually got worse.

2. What mistake was she making about her work?

Answer: Confusing being busy with being productive.

3. What does reactive mode mean in this context?

Answer: Responding to whatever demands arise rather than following a plan.

4. How does Tess feel about not being immediately available during deep work hours?

Answer: She felt guilty at first but no longer does.

5. What is the main purpose of Tess's shutdown ritual?

Answer: To mentally separate work from the rest of her evening.

6. What is Tess's view on whether discipline is a fixed personality trait?

Answer: It is more about designing your environment than personality.

Exercise 2: Multiple Choice

1. She has started to be more ____ — planning her week in advance rather than reacting to whatever comes up.

Answer: deliberate

2. I try to ____ at least an hour each morning for focused writing. Nothing is allowed to interrupt that time.

Answer: ring-fence

3. Working at this pace is not _____. You will be exhausted within a few months if you carry on.

Answer: sustainable

4. He ____ that his late-night working habits were affecting his relationships, but it took him a long time to act.

Answer: came to realise

5. Many people struggle to ____ in the evening because they cannot stop thinking about work.

Answer: wind down

6. Her ____ improved once she started working fewer but more focused hours each day.

Answer: output

7. Setting clear ____ at work means being explicit about when you are and are not available.

Answer: boundaries

8. The key to effective time management is learning to ____ — not everything that feels urgent actually is.

Answer: prioritise

Exercise 3: Matching

1. time-blocking -> 1

A method of scheduling where each part of the day is assigned to a specific task

2. burnt out -> 2

Exhausted and unable to function effectively due to prolonged stress

3. ring-fence -> 3

To protect a period of time so it cannot be used for anything else

4. reactive mode -> 4

A way of working where you respond to demands as they arise rather than following a plan

5. shutdown ritual -> 5

A set routine performed at the end of the working day to mentally separate from work

6. path of least resistance -> 6

The easiest course of action; the option requiring the least effort

7. proactive -> 7

Taking deliberate action to shape a situation rather than simply responding to it

8. sustainable -> 8

Able to be maintained over time without causing exhaustion or harm

Exercise 4: Gap Fill

1. I try to approach each week ____ — I plan my priorities on Sunday evening before the week begins.

Answer: proactively

2. She was so ____ that she took three months off work to recover.

Answer: burnt out

3. The most important thing is to identify ____ tasks and protect time for them each day.

Answer: deep work

4. ____, I should have set better boundaries much earlier in my career.

Answer: In retrospect

5. Many managers ____ activity with progress, assuming a full calendar means productive work.

Answer: confuse

6. I protect my mornings using ____ — each slot is assigned to a specific task before the day begins.

Answer: time-blocking

7. The current pace of work is not ____ . People are leaving because of exhaustion.

Answer: sustainable

8. She found that her ____ per hour actually increased once she started working fewer, more focused hours.

Answer: output

Exercise 5: Sentence Transformation

Accept any answer preserving the meaning and using the key word correctly. Suggested answers below.

1. She gradually understood that long hours do not always produce better results.

Key word: CAME TO REALISE

Suggested: She came to realise that long hours do not always produce better results.

Also accept: She came to realise that working long hours does not always produce better results.

2. I protect two hours every morning so that nothing can interrupt my writing.

Key word: RING-FENCE

Suggested: I ring-fence two hours every morning for my writing.

Also accept: I ring-fence two hours every morning so that nothing can interrupt my writing.

3. He cannot relax in the evenings because his mind keeps going over work problems.

Key word: WIND DOWN

Suggested: He finds it difficult to wind down in the evenings.

Also accept: He cannot wind down in the evenings because his mind keeps going over work problems.

4. Many people treat being busy and being effective as if they were the same thing.

Key word: CONFUSE

Suggested: Many people confuse being busy with being effective.

Also accept: Many people confuse busyness with effectiveness.

5. You will exhaust yourself if you keep working at this pace.

Key word: SUSTAINABLE

Suggested: Working at this pace is not sustainable.

Also accept: This pace of work is not sustainable.

6. She decided to complete the most important tasks first rather than dealing with emails.

Key word: PRIORITISE

Suggested: She decided to prioritise the most important tasks rather than dealing with emails.

Also accept: She prioritised the most important tasks rather than dealing with emails.

Exercise 6: Error Identification

1. She was completely burnt out after working twelve-hour days for three years without a break.

Answer: No error.

2. I ring-fence the first hour of my day to deep work — no emails or interruptions.

Error: "to" -> "for" | Preposition error — ring-fence is followed by for, not to, when indicating purpose.

3. His output improved significantly once he started working in a more deliberate way.

Answer: No error.

4. She found it hard to switch off in the evenings and often checked her emails before bed.

Error: "switch" -> "wind" | Wrong phrasal verb — the correct expression for relaxing after work is wind down, not switch off in this personal context.

5. Many people confuse busyness for productivity, assuming a full schedule means effective work.

Error: "for" -> "with" | Preposition error — the correct collocation is confuse X with Y, not confuse X for Y.

6. The key to building sustainable habits is designing your environment thoughtfully.

Answer: No error.

7. Working reactively means spending your day responding to other people's priorities instead of your own.

Answer: No error.

8. A shutdown ritual helps you create a clear boundary between work and the rest of your day.

Answer: No error.

Exercise 7: Paragraph Gap Fill

Gap 1: burnt out

Gap 2: reactive mode

Gap 3: prioritise

Gap 4: time-blocking

Gap 5: sustainable

Gap 6: path of least resistance