

'Sickies'**Level**

Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

Tasks

Discussing 'sickies'

Guessing figures representing the number of sick days taken in the UK annually

Reading extracts from letters about taking unauthorised absences

Deciding which words collocate with 'absenteeism'

Discussing issues arising from the letters

How to use the lesson

1 Check what students understand by the term 'taking a sickie'. Brainstorm typical excuses people give after taking a sickie: e.g. *I had a bad back/a headache/a cold.*

sickie (British English, very informal) a day when you say you are ill because you do not want to go to work

Definition from *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Text © Bloomsbury Publishing Plc 2002.

2 Ask students to guess the figures for sick days taken and money lost by UK companies.

3 Ask students to read extract (b) from a letter written to a personnel magazine to check their answers.

Answers

Number of sick days taken last year in the UK = (c) 176 million

Cost to UK companies of sick days = (c) £11 billion

4 Students then read all the extracts and decide which are written by employees and which are written by managers.

Answers

Employees: (a) (c) (d) (e)

Managers: (b) (f)

You may wish to deal with any new vocabulary at this point, such as: *germs* (extract a), *to cover* (extract b), *unclaimed* (extract d), *morale* (extract e).

5 Ask students to decide which words collocate with the word 'absenteeism'.

Answers

(a) (b) (d) and (e) collocate with 'absenteeism'

6 Ask students to work in groups to discuss their answers to the questions. Monitor the discussion. Ask some students to report their ideas to the class, then hold a class feedback session.

Related websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

http://www.usatoday.com/money/workplace/2003-02-06-absences_x.htm

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/extra/tx/tesco.shtml>

<http://www.cbi.org.uk/ndbs/press.nsf/0363c1f07c6ca12a8025671c00381cc7/adf84b84fc57c8ee80256e77003b1790?OpenDocument>

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