

### A degree in slavery

In today's world is an internship simply a degree in slavery? That's the question Britain's *Daily Mail* discussed recently. It said it is the employment scandal of our age. Highly educated graduates working for nothing as interns in supposedly glamorous jobs. The paper names the people who are exploiting them – Britain's MPs, celebrities, publishers and even charities. Certainly, it is an interesting question whether or not an internship is a degree in slavery? The paper says the graduates of the cream of a generation are now skivvies. It mentions tales of bullying, humiliation and says abuse abounds. It makes you ask why do people work for nothing, when at the end of the day they probably won't get a job out of it. Certainly, employers are still taking full advantage of employing interns for free. Graduates though are desperate for experience and want something good to put on their CVs in order to secure possible future work.

British MPs are keen to hire interns, as it costs them nothing for someone to work in their office for free. In the last 20 years or so Britain has created itself a system whereby these days there are more graduates graduating than jobs available, so any useful experience, like having done an internship, is good for the CV. Yet, how can employers get away with this? The paper says there are 450 people, mostly graduates, who work around parliament in London doing about 18,000 hours of unpaid work. Each intern is doing on average a 40 hour week for free! This is glorified work experience, which could be beneficial for those degree-holders embarking on their careers and those offering them placements. In truth, this is nothing less than exploitation. Middle class parents might describe it as slave labour. Statistics reveal between April and October 2010 25% of employers in Britain hired interns. This figure is up from the 13% in 2009.

It appears interns are made a lot of false promises. The paper notes that once upon a time interns were an American phenomenon associated with the glamour of Washington. Then the recession began to bite and companies and organisations in Britain saw the system as an easy way of reducing costs. Paid jobs that would have gone to graduates were scrapped

**Category: Education / Interns / Students**

**Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate**

This ESL lesson is the copyright of [www.newsflashenglish.com](http://www.newsflashenglish.com)

and went to interns who cost employers nothing! No one complains, as they need a good reference.

One in five graduates is now unemployed. 80,000 or 18.5% of graduates who left university in the last two years are still on the dole. There are now 70 job applicants for every job in Britain. Hence a growth in employment agencies now offering companies an intern for 500 quid each! This is far cheaper than salaries, bonuses, payroll taxes etc... there are now intern auctions where interns at various firms are sold to the highest bidder!

Charities in Britain soon jumped on the bandwagon. This includes the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) who recently hired Christies the auction house for just such an event. A month long internship at the NSPCC went for £4,500! Another culprit is the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), which was offering a voluntary internship (no salary, in plain English) at its London office. What's more it only accepts online applications, stating if applicants don't hear anything then hard luck they haven't got the job. The paper stated that this ad was posted on *Interns Anonymous* next to the following comment: 'This really takes the p\*\*\*. Unbelievable. What about paying your \*\*\*\*\* staff?' Would anyone really disagree with that blunt assessment?

It does appear that interns are treated like dogsbodies. Companies in Britain even threaten ex interns who speak out about their time with them. Many interns have terrible stories to tell. Many work long hours and are treated like \*\*\*\*. Step out of line and months of work go out the back door, as interns can't put anything on their CV if they don't get a reference. One graduate sums the system up well: "I was unpaid and exploited. Slave labour should have ended in the 1800s. Unfortunately it didn't." A view shared by many interns.

Note: Probably the most famous intern in America must be Monika Lewinsky!

*This article has discussed the scandal of internships in Britain. It does beg the question how do internships work in other countries today and in your country especially?*

## EXERCISES

**1. Internships:** What is an internship? Think of three other things you know about internships? Go round the room swapping details.

**2. Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

**3. Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

**4. Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

**5. The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

**6. Let's think!** Think of five advantages for companies to hire an internee. Then add five possible employers/organisations/charities in your country for graduates to apply to. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Advantages for employers/ organisations/charities	Possible employers/organisations/charities offering internships in your country
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

**7. Let's debate:** In pairs. Students A think internships are good. Students B think otherwise. Explain why.

**8. An internee:** In pairs think of ten things an internee might be asked to do.

1	6
2	7
3	8
4	9
5	10

**The teacher will choose some pairs to turn their ten things into a story about a typical day as an intern in front of the class**

A degree in slavery – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2011

9. **Let's think!** Think of five ways advantages of doing an internship. Then add five disadvantages. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these. What conclusion do you come to?

Advantages	Disadvantages
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

**The teacher** will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

10. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **Interns**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

11. **Let's talk! Radio Graduate:** *In pairs/groups*. You are in the Radio Graduate studio. One of you is the presenter; the other student(s) is/are one the people listed below. Today's interview is: **A degree in slavery**. Try to get a balanced interview. *5 minutes*.

1	A graduate	3	Yourself
2	A journalist	4	A former intern

**The teacher** will choose some people to roleplay the interview in front of the class.

12. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

**Student A**

- 1) Name the newspaper.
- 2) What percentage of employers in Britain from April to October 2010 hired interns?
- 3) The newspaper mentions tales of what?
- 4) Where did this phenomenon start?
- 5) What has happened over the last 20 years in Britain?

**Student B**

- 1) How many graduates are now unemployed?
- 2) Who have jumped on the bandwagon?
- 3) Name the charities.
- 4) What is a dogsbody?
- 5) How did one graduate sum up the situation?

13. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **A degree in slavery**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

14. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) A degree in slavery \_\_\_\_\_
- b) An intern \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Graduates \_\_\_\_\_

## DISCUSSION

### Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) What do you think of Monika Lewinsky?
- 3) Do you think Bill Clinton did the right thing taking on an intern?
- 4) Were you or would you like to be an intern?
- 5) Is being an intern a degree in slavery?
- 6) If you were an employer would you hire an intern?
- 7) Does your country offer internships? If yes, explain.
- 8) What percentage of graduates are unemployed in your country?
- 9) Are internships a waste of time? For whom?
- 10) Do you know any horror stories from people who have been interns?

### Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Do you know any famous internees?
- 3) Do you think it is right that people are expected to work for free in this day and age?
- 4) Do you work for free doing your current job?
- 5) What do you think about slavery?
- 6) What's the difference between slavery and an intern?
- 7) Is the only way to get a good job in your country to take a degree? Explain.
- 8) Isn't it who you know rather than what you know?
- 9) How long did it take you to get a job after you left school/university?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

## SPEAKING

### Let's debate! Internships

*Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1*

Doing an internship: Why? Where? When? How long for? Exploitation? Benefits? Advantages? Disadvantages? Slavery? Did you get a job at the end of it? Waste of time? Bullying? Humiliation? Being a skivvy? A success? Fun? Friendship? A job at the end of it?

#### **Add your own thoughts**

The teacher can moderate the session.

## GAP FILL: READING:

*Put the words into the gaps in the text.*

### A degree in slavery

In today's world is an (1)\_\_\_\_\_ simply a degree in slavery? That's the question Britain's *Daily Mail* discussed recently. It said it is the employment (2)\_\_\_\_\_ of our age. Highly educated graduates working for nothing as interns in supposedly glamorous jobs. The paper names the people who are exploiting them – Britains MPs, celebrities, publishers and even (3)\_\_\_\_\_. Certainly, it is an interesting question whether or not an internship is a degree in (4)\_\_\_\_\_? The paper says the graduates of the cream of a generation are now skivvies. It mentions tales of (5)\_\_\_\_\_, humiliation and says abuse abounds. It makes you ask why do people work for nothing, when at the end of the day they probably won't get a (6)\_\_\_\_\_ out of it. Certainly, employers are still taking full advantage of employing interns for free. Graduates though are (7)\_\_\_\_\_ for experience and want something good to put on their (8)\_\_\_\_\_ in order to secure possible future work.

British MPs are keen to (1)\_\_\_\_\_ interns, as it costs them nothing for someone to work in their office for (2)\_\_\_\_\_. In the last 20 years or so Britain has created itself a system whereby these days there are more graduates graduating than jobs available, so any useful experience, like having done an internship, is good for the CV. Yet, how can employers get away with this? The paper says there are 450 people, mostly graduates, who work around parliament in London doing about 18,000 hours of (3)\_\_\_\_\_ work. Each intern is doing on average a 40 hour week for free! This is (4)\_\_\_\_\_ work experience, which could be (5)\_\_\_\_\_ for those degree-holders embarking on their careers and those offering them placements. In truth, this is nothing less than (6)\_\_\_\_\_. Middle class parents might describe it as (7)\_\_\_\_\_ labour. Statistics reveal between April and October 2010 25% of employers in Britain hired interns. This (8)\_\_\_\_\_ is up from the 13% in 2009.

*job*

*bullying*

*desperate*

*slavery*

*CVs*

*scandal*

*charities*

*internship*

*glorified*

*free*

*slave*

*unpaid*

*figure*

*hire*

*beneficial*

*exploitation*

## GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

### A degree in slavery

In today's world is an internship simply a degree in slavery? That's the question Britain's *Daily Mail* discussed recently. It said it is the employment scandal of (1)\_\_\_ age. Highly educated graduates working for nothing as interns in supposedly glamorous jobs. The paper names the people (2)\_\_\_ are exploiting them – Britains MPs, celebrities, publishers (3)\_\_\_ even charities. Certainly, it is an interesting question whether or not an internship is a degree in slavery? The paper says (4)\_\_\_ graduates of the cream of a generation are now skivvies. It mentions tales of bullying, humiliation and says abuse abounds. It makes (5)\_\_\_ ask (6)\_\_\_ do people work for nothing, when at the end of the day they probably won't get a job out of it. Certainly, employers are still taking full advantage of employing interns (7)\_\_\_ free. Graduates though are desperate for experience and want something good to put (8)\_\_\_ their CVs in order to secure possible future work.

**on**

**you**

**why**

**the**

**who**

**our**

**for**

**and**

British MPs are keen to hire interns, as it costs (1)\_\_\_ nothing for someone to work in their office for free. In the last 20 years or so Britain has created itself a system whereby (2)\_\_\_ days there are (3)\_\_\_ graduates graduating (4)\_\_\_ jobs available, so any useful experience, like having done an internship, is good for the CV. Yet, how can employers get away with this? The paper says (5)\_\_\_ are 450 people, mostly graduates, who work around parliament in London doing about 18,000 hours of unpaid work. Each intern is doing on average a 40 hour week for free! This is glorified work experience, which could be beneficial for (6)\_\_\_ degree-holders embarking on (7)\_\_\_ careers and those offering them placements. In truth, this is nothing less than exploitation. Middle class parents (8)\_\_\_ describe it as slave labour. Statistics reveal between April and October 2010 25% of employers in Britain hired interns. This figure is up from the 13% in 2009.

**those**

**than**

**might**

**more**

**them**

**there**

**these**

**their**

## SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	auctions	11	dole
2	bandwagon	12	hence
3	culprit	13	recession
4	applications	14	organisations
5	anonymous	15	humiliation
6	assessment	16	simply
7	graduates	17	celebrities
8	statistics	18	charities
9	unfortunately	19	glorified
10	quid	20	phenomenon

### LINKS

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1360821/A-degree-slavery-The-highly-educated-graduates-forced-work-nothing.html>  
<http://www.spartandaily.com/the-return-of-slavery-unpaid-internships-1.2013723>  
<http://news2.onlinenigeria.com/index.php/world/77159-degree-slavery-The-highly-educated-graduates-forced-work-for-nothing.html?print>  
<http://www.internmatch.com/internships/2258/free-the-slaves-%28fts%29/communications-intern-needed-at-an-anti-slavery-ngo>  
[http://community.livejournal.com/poor\\_skills/3412487.html](http://community.livejournal.com/poor_skills/3412487.html)

### ANSWERS

**GAP FILL:** A degree in slavery: In today's world is an **internship** simply a degree in slavery? That's the question Britain's *Daily Mail* discussed recently. It said it is the employment **scandal** of our age. Highly educated graduates working for nothing as interns in supposedly glamorous jobs. The paper names the people who are exploiting them – Britains MPs, celebrities, publishers and even **charities**. Certainly, it is an interesting question whether or not an internship is a degree in **slavery**? The paper says the graduates of the cream of a generation are now skivvies. It mentions tales of **bullying**, humiliation and says abuse abounds. It makes you ask why do people work for nothing, when at the end of the day they probably won't get a **job** out of it. Certainly, employers are still taking full advantage of employing interns for free. Graduates though are **desperate** for experience and want something good to put on their **CVs** in order to secure possible future work.

British MPs are keen to **hire** interns, as it costs them nothing for someone to work in their office for **free**. In the last 20 years or so Britain has created itself a system whereby these days there are more graduates graduating than jobs available, so any useful experience, like having done an internship, is good for the CV. Yet, how can employers get away with this? The paper says there are 450 people, mostly graduates, who work around parliament in London doing about 18,000 hours of **unpaid** work. Each intern is doing on average a 40 hour week for free! This is **glorified** work experience, which could be **beneficial** for those degree-holders embarking on their careers and those offering them placements. In truth, this is nothing less than **exploitation**. Middle class parents might describe it as **slave** labour. Statistics reveal between April and October 2010 25% of employers in Britain hired interns. This **figure** is up from the 13% in 2009. **(V2)**

[www.newsflashenglish.com](http://www.newsflashenglish.com)

Created by **David Robinson**. This ESL lesson is the copyright of [www.newsflashenglish.com](http://www.newsflashenglish.com)