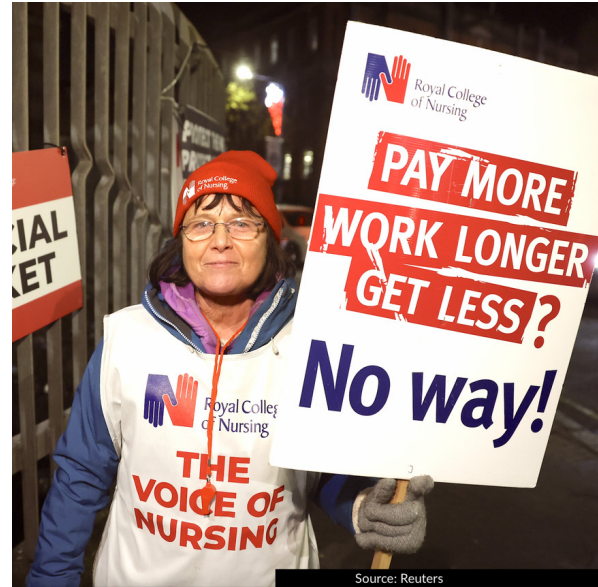




INDUSTRIAL ACTION



Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:
1A5P-F1L8-ANJR

1

Warm up

Discuss the questions in pairs or small groups.

1. Are there any strikes happening in your country at the moment?
2. Do you think that workers should be legally protected when they take industrial action?
3. Are there any situations in which it would be wrong for workers to go on strike?

2

Pre-listening task: vocabulary focus

Part A: Match the words with the correct definitions.

burnt out (adj.) contingency (n) disrupted (v) lagged behind (phr. verb) agony (n)
compromised (adj.) goosebumps (n) languish (v) unions (n) vacant posts (n)

1. _____ small raised areas that appear on the skin because of cold, fear, or excitement
2. _____ ill or very tired from working too hard
3. _____ prevented something from continuing as usual or as expected
4. _____ extreme physical or mental pain or suffering
5. _____ to exist in an unpleasant or unwanted situation, often for a long time
6. _____ jobs that no one is doing at the moment
7. _____ moved more slowly than something else so that it is behind it
8. _____ organisations that represent people who do a particular job
9. _____ unable to function as well as it could
10. _____ a provision for a possible event or circumstance



Part B: Complete the sentences with the missing words from Part A. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. The workers going on strike meant that safety became _____.
2. I was so surprised by what my boss said to me, I had _____.
3. There are many _____ that we hope to fill by the end of the week.
4. The angry workers _____ production in the factory by damaging the machines.
5. I worked for 12 hours without a break; I was _____ by the end of the day.
6. After he was arrested, he _____ in jail for six months.
7. The _____ used to be much stronger, so bosses had to listen to their demands.
8. He suffered an injury, so he _____ the other workers.
9. I was in _____ for weeks following the accident.
10. The strike was unsuccessful because the boss had prepared a _____ plan.

3**Listening for specific information**

Listen to the report about nurses going on strike in the UK. Write what the items below relate to.



- a. two or three years → _____
- b. 47,000 → _____
- c. 9 billion → _____
- d. 17 per cent → _____





4 Listening comprehension

Listen to the report again. Mark the statements as true (T), false (F), or not given (NG).

1. Steffy is exhausted, but she agrees with the government. → _____
2. The strike will not affect every area of nursing. → _____
3. Pat Cullen believes the strike will help patients. → _____
4. The nurses' union was set up ten years ago. → _____
5. There were 47,000 nurses working in the UK in June. → _____
6. The government is not prepared for the strike. → _____
7. The nurses' union want to negotiate with the government. → _____

5 Reading: general vocabulary

Part A: Match the words and phrases in bold with the correct definitions.

1. There was a **walkout** because of the terrible conditions in the factory.
2. The **dispute** was mainly about pay, although there were other problems.
3. By refusing to work, the employees are **holding** the hospital **to ransom**.
4. They made them pay a large **penalty**, but they continued the strike anyway.
5. They had a **ballot**, and most of them voted to continue working.
6. After he lost his jobs, he was entitled to a small **redundancy payment**.

- a. _____ a punishment for doing something that is against the law
- b. _____ the act of leaving a place of work to start a strike
- c. _____ a system or occasion of secret voting
- d. _____ an argument or disagreement, especially an official one between workers and employers
- e. _____ money that a company pays to workers who have lost their jobs
- f. _____ force someone to do something by putting that person in a situation where they have no choice



Part B: You are going to read a fictional conversation between two colleagues who are thinking about going on strike. Complete the text with the correct words from Part A. You may need to change the form of the words.

Speaker 1: Conditions at the factory are getting worse and worse. There hasn't been a pay increase in five years and we are working six days a week.

Speaker 2: If this continues, do you think we should take industrial action?

Speaker 1: I don't think we have much choice. However, it's very difficult to organise everyone; a lot of people are worried that they will lose their jobs. Also, the owners will say that we are _____ them _____¹.

Speaker 2: In any kind of _____², there will be winners and losers, but if we work together, we can improve the situation. We just need to make sure we do it legally.

Speaker 1: Yes, we need to organise a _____³ so we can see how many people are on our side. Some people actually want to lose their jobs so that they can receive _____⁴.

Speaker 2: It certainly won't be easy to convince some people. The boss has already said he will give workers financial _____⁵ if they refuse to work, even though that's illegal.

Speaker 1: That is one of the reasons we should try to organise a _____⁶. We don't have to accept such terrible conditions.





6 Reading: focus on vocabulary

Match the vocabulary with the correct definition.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. <u>pension</u> (n) | a. an official agreement that finishes an argument |
| 2. <u>civil servant</u> (n) | b. money that is paid regularly by the government or a private company to a person who has stopped working |
| 3. <u>campaign</u> (n) | c. to judge or consider something in a particular way |
| 4. <u>deem</u> (v) | d. a series of organised activities or events intended to achieve a result |
| 5. <u>contempt</u> (n) | e. a large part of something that includes several different things |
| 6. <u>swathe</u> (n) | f. hatred or lack of respect for something |
| 7. <u>scapegoat</u> (n) | g. a person who is blamed for something that someone else has done |
| 8. <u>draconian</u> (adj.) | h. a person employed in the public sector by a government department or agency |
| 9. <u>settlement</u> (n) | i. excessively harsh and severe |

Look at the sentences from the reading. What do you think these idioms mean?

1. This might make some union members think twice before **downing tools**.

2. Once again trade unions are holding the country to ransom by **grinding** crucial public services and businesses **to a halt**.

7 Reading for general understanding

You are going to read a text about coordinated strikes in the UK. Scan the text quickly and match the headings with the correct paragraph.

- A) Putting pressure on the government
- B) Businesses able to replace workers
- C) Unions to discuss coordinated action
- D) Unions to pay more in damages
- E) Civil servants vote to go on strike



Up to one million workers to go on strike

Coordinated strikes expected in the UK as new law is introduced to weaken unions

- Leaders of unions involved in the wave of strikes and ballots breaking out across the UK are to meet to discuss co-ordinating industrial action. The move followed announcements of a fresh strike by train drivers, and the result of a ballot among civil servants which showed support for walkouts. Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), has written to the Government asking for talks over pay, pensions, and jobs before any action among civil servants is decided. Officials from trade unions are to meet next week to discuss co-ordinated action in the disputes including the NHS, railways, Royal Mail, British Telecom, universities, and education.
- They are all involved in taking industrial action or balloting their members for strikes in disputes over pay, jobs, and conditions. The PCS said 100,000 of its members had backed strikes, with 86% being in favour, describing it as the highest vote in its history. Union members voting for action work in areas including government departments, such as the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions, Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency, as well as ports, airports and coastguards. The PCS union will announce a campaign of industrial action on 18th November unless the government gives it assurances on pay, pensions, jobs, and redundancy payments.
- Mr Serwotka said 45,000 PCS members were claiming benefits and 40,000 were using food banks following a decade of below-inflation pay rises. He even claimed there were food banks inside government offices. Mr Serwotka said there was already a huge backlog for driving tests, driving licences and passports, which he warned would get worse if there was a strike. He said the PCS would consider co-ordinating any action among its members at the Department for Transport and Highways Agency, with strikes by railway workers in their long running dispute over pay, jobs and conditions. He added: "It is clear that if we have one million workers on strike, it would put more political pressure on the government. There is a case for coming together in huge numbers, and I think there will be some co-ordinated action. The government must look at the huge vote for strike action across swathes of the civil service and realise it can no longer treat its workers with contempt...Our members have spoken and if the government fails to listen to them, we'll have no option than to launch a prolonged programme of industrial action reaching into every corner of public life."
- The British government recently made changes to the law, making it easier for businesses to use temporary staff, while also drastically increasing financial penalties for strikes deemed unlawful. The ex-Business Secretary who oversaw these legal changes, Kwasi Kwarteng, said: "Once again trade unions are holding the country to ransom by grinding crucial public services and businesses to a halt. The situation we are in is not sustainable. Repealing 1970s-era restrictions will give businesses freedom to access fully skilled staff at speed, all the while allowing people to get on with their lives uninterrupted to help keep the economy ticking."
- There has also been a significant increase in the damages that courts can award against a union when strike action is found to be unlawful. For the biggest unions, this would rise to one million pounds from 250,000 pounds. This might make some union members think twice before downing tools. Rail, Maritime and Transport Union general secretary, Mick Lynch, said the new legal changes will only make it more difficult to reach a negotiated settlement. He stated: "We already have the most draconian and restrictive anti-trade union laws in western Europe. Working people are fed up with the government trying to make them scapegoats for the country's problems."

Source: Reuters, Sky News, Judge-Priestley Legal, The Independent



8 Reading comprehension

Read the article again. Complete the sentences with between ONE to THREE words from the article.

1. Across Britain, a wave of strikes and ballots are _____.
2. Trade union officials will meet in order to talk about _____.
3. The majority of the PCS _____, with over 85% being in favour.
4. Unless the government gives them _____, the PCS will announce a campaign of industrial action on November 18th.
5. Mr. Serwotka claimed there were _____ inside government offices.
6. Railway workers have a _____ over pay, jobs, and conditions.
7. Changes to the law have significantly increased penalties for strikes that are _____.
8. Increased financial penalties might make some union members _____ before they go on strike.



9 Talking point

In pairs or small groups, discuss the following questions.

1. Do you agree with the nurses that they deserve better working conditions?
2. Do you think temporary staff should be allowed to replace the workers involved in industrial action?
3. Why do you think the different unions are planning to coordinate their strikes?
4. Would you consider going on strike if you wanted to improve your situation?

**10 Extended activity/Homework**

Write an opinion essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should agree or disagree with the statement and be at least 250 words long.

Topic 1

Nurses have no right to go on strike because it could have serious consequences for thousands of people.

Topic 2

If the government pays nurses such low salaries they should not be surprised when they take industrial action; it is their right.