



WORKPLACE ETHICS

“In looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And, if they don't have the first, the other two will kill you.”

Warren Buffett, American investor

1. Workplace Ethics Discussion

1. What are ethics? What are workplace ethics?
2. What are your values? What are your values at work?
3. What kind of unethical behaviour can you think of that people do in the workplace?
4. Have you witnessed any verbal abuse or harassment in the workplace? Why does this happen?
5. Is honesty always important in a business? Can you think of any situations when honesty might not be the best policy?
6. What are the risks of acting in an unethical way?
7. Are some jobs more ethical than others? Which professions would you say are very ethical? Which are considered unethical?
8. How ethical are the following professions: accountants, teachers, investment bankers, lawyers, nurses, police officers, taxi drivers or sales executives?

2. Workplace Ethics Vocabulary

- **nepotism** (noun) – *the exercise of power in order to benefit family or friends.*
- **(to) praise** (verb, noun) – *to give a positive expression of approval.*
- **to claim expenses** (verb) – *to request money back from a company that you spent doing something for that company.*
- **to call/ring in sick** (verb) – *to inform your employer that you cannot attend work due to illness.*
- **to exaggerate** (verb) – *to distort the truth to make something appear disproportionate to the reality.*
- **punctual** (adjective) – *describes something that happens or arrives at the time it was arranged or agreed.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun)

1. _____ is a big problem in our company; the CEO appointed his son as head of operations but he's absolutely useless!
2. Steve is never _____; he seems to miss the bus every single day.
3. I can't believe Tony; I did all the work and he accepted all the _____!
4. I shouldn't have drunk all those beers last night! I think I'm going to have to _____.
5. The accountant at Total Solutions greatly _____ the company's profits at the annual shareholders meeting; the truth is they actually made a loss.
6. While it is acceptable for Members of Parliament to _____ for their second homes, it is not acceptable to _____ for a duck pond.

Workplace Ethics vocabulary comprehension questions

1. Is it ever ok to use your position in a company to help relatives get a job or is this always nepotism? When would this be ok? When would it be unacceptable?
2. Have you ever rung in work sick when probably you could have come in? Do you suspect anyone you've worked with has done this?
3. If you went on a business trip and had to claim expenses, what would be acceptable to claim back? What would not be acceptable to claim back?
4. Has anyone ever accepted praise for your work? Is this ever acceptable?
5. Have you ever exaggerated on your CV or resume? Aren't people supposed to make themselves look good? When does this go too far?
6. Are you always punctual? Do you think it's unethical to not arrive on time?

3. Video: Why We Cheat

You are going to watch a TED Talk by Dan Ariely called "Why we think it's OK to cheat and steal (sometimes)".

Watch the video here: <https://youenglishpal.com/blog/business-english-conversation-lesson-plan-workplace-ethics/>

Watch the video and after, discuss the following questions

1. What causes people to act unethically at work or in general?
2. What do you think about people using work facilities for personal matters, for example, using the work phone to make private calls or using the work computer to browse social media sites?
3. Is it ever ok to take extended lunch breaks or finish earlier than your contracted hours? If so, under what circumstances?
4. Is it ever ok for a manager or company to ask their staff to work longer hours than stated in their contract for no extra money?
5. Is it ever acceptable to sell a defective product?
6. What kind of lies do people tell in the workplace?

4. Workplace Ethical Dilemmas

1. A man and a woman have applied for a job at your company. Both are capable of doing a good job, but the woman is clearly the better candidate. However, you know that your clients would prefer to deal with a man and if you hire the woman, you will lose a lot of sales. Who do you hire for the job?
2. Your friend and colleague has asked you to cover for him while he leaves work to see his daughter's play at her school. If the boss asks where he is, your friend told you to tell him that he was meeting a client. Your boss has just asked where your friend is, what do you tell him?
3. Your company is going through a restructuring project meaning the workforce is to be reduced by 20%. Everyone is understandably worried about their job. You overhear your boss telling someone that Sandra, your friend and colleague, will be one of the workers let go. Do you tell Sandra?
4. You check the money in the cash register at the end of the shift and realise \$20 is missing. The only person who had access to the cash register except yourself is your friend and colleague Martin. How do you explain the missing \$20 to your boss?
5. You are responsible for recruiting a new junior executive for your company and have prepared all the interview questions. Your nephew wants to apply for the job and for you to help him prepare for the interview by practising the interview questions. Do you help your nephew?
6. Daniel is a very popular member of the sales team and is great for the team's morale; however, he has the lowest sales of the team. Macy is not very popular with the other team members but has high sales figures. Your boss has told you the company needs to let one of them go due to budget constraints, which one do you choose?

5. Workplace Ethics Writing Task

Write a memo for new members of your team explaining the company's code of ethics when dealing with business clients, customers and other colleagues.