



CORPORATE CRIME

“Obviously crime pays, or there'd be no crime.”

G Gordon Liddy (1930 – 2021), American lawyer, FBI agent, and Watergate conspirator

1. Corporate Crime Discussion

1. What is corporate crime? Is it different to 'normal' crime? Why has it been difficult for countries to agree on a definition of corporate crime?
2. What kind of crimes do companies commit? Can you think of any real-life examples? What kind of fraudulent activities do companies engage in?
3. Are white-collar crimes worse than blue-collar crimes? Why or why not? Which one is riskier?
4. Is it even possible for a company to commit a criminal offence? Or should individual employees be held criminally responsible?
5. What is a suitable punishment for a company that commits crimes? Should CEOs always be held legally responsible for crimes committed by their companies? Why or why not?
6. What motivates a company, or people working in a company, to commit crimes?
7. What kind of pressure might exist in the culture of an organisation that results in employees committing crimes?
8. What are some ethically dubious activities that companies engage in that are technically not crimes? Which business practices do you think should be made illegal?

2. Corporate Crime Vocabulary

- **white-collar crime** (noun) – *the umbrella term for a wide range of fraudulent or financial crimes committed by business and government professionals.*
- **to embezzle** (verb), **embezzlement** (noun) – *to steal or misuse funds placed in someone's trust or of the organisation the person works for.*
- **to fix (the) price(s)** (verb), **price fixing** (noun) – *when a group of companies in the same sector of the market make an agreement to sell products or services at a set price.*
- **insider trading** (noun) – *a type of securities fraud where confidential information not available to the public is used to make beneficial trades on the stock market.*
- **corporate manslaughter** (noun) – *in certain jurisdictions, a criminal offence where a company can be accused of causing someone's death.*
- **whistleblower** (noun) – *a person who reveals wrongdoing in a private or public organisation.*

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. According to the FBI, all types of **white-collar crime** are characterised by deceit, concealment, or a violation of trust.
2. Four employees of the First Bank of Chicago were convicted of **embezzlement** when it was discovered they had created anonymous accounts to which they had diverted \$70 million from the bank's customers.
3. JLB Ltd. was convicted of **corporate manslaughter** and its director sentenced to 8 months in prison after an employee died when a roof collapsed on him.
4. Senator Kelly Loeffler was accused of **insider trading** after selling nearly \$3m worth of stocks after attending a closed meeting to discuss the potential economic impact of the coronavirus.
5. Tesco was fined £6.5 for its part in a **price fixing** scandal in which a number of supermarkets, including Asda and Sainsbury's, had attempted to **fix the price** of milk and other dairy products.
6. While **whistleblowers** in private companies are much more common, those who reveal wrongdoing in public organisations receive much more publicity.

Corporate Crime vocabulary comprehension questions

1. How widespread is white-collar crime in your country? What should be done about it?
2. Can you think of any cases of embezzlement in companies?
3. How do cartels of companies fix prices? Can you think of some examples?
4. Why is insider trading illegal? Shouldn't people be allowed to use whatever information is available to them to decide when to buy or sell stocks?
5. Do you agree with corporate manslaughter laws? Or does this allow individuals in companies to evade responsibility for their actions?
6. Can you think of any famous whistleblower cases in either the private or public sectors?

3. Video: The Globalised Corporate Crimewave

You are going to watch a TED Talk by Ring of Fire called "A Globalized Corporate Crime Wave Is on The Rise."

Watch the video here: <https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/business-english-conversation-lesson-plan-corporate-crime/>

Watch the video and after, discuss the following questions:

1. What types of crime do companies commit in foreign countries?
2. Why would a company make deals with terrorist organisations? What might they get in return?
3. When a company is involved in crimes against humanity, are fines sufficient punishment? If not, what would be a more appropriate punishment?
4. How does corporate crime threaten democracy? Can you think of any examples?
5. Do you think companies deliberately invest in corrupt countries with poor records on human rights to commit crimes and human rights abuses? Why or why not?
6. Do the governments of developed countries really care if their companies commit crimes in developing countries? Do they even encourage it?

4. Corporate Crime Conversation Questions

1. Are there certain types of businesses or certain industries that are more likely to engage in corporate crime?
2. Is corporate crime more likely to be found in certain countries or cultures? If so, which ones?
3. Do governments turn a blind eye to corporate crime? If so, why is that?
4. What is the connection between corporate crime and organised crime? What is the connection between corporate crime and corruption? How might governments become involved in corporate crime?
5. What can employees do if they suspect their company is involved in criminal activity? Does your company have a whistleblower policy?
6. Why might a whistleblower go public, instead of keeping their complaints inhouse?
7. How do companies or public organisations usually retaliate against whistleblowers? Is there enough protection for whistleblowers? Are there laws in your country that protect whistleblowers?
8. Is the problem of corporate crime getting better or worse? How will this change in the future?

5. Corporate Crime Writing Task

Find an example of corporate crime, either in your industry or from your country, and write a case study of it. Describe the criminal activities of the company, identify any motivations, and explain under which laws the company was prosecuted.