

Is 'working from home' a skive?

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11886404>

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Yeah, I was still in my pyjamas until 11 o'clock this morning," admits Beks Ali. "Then I thought I'd better change in case I had to do a Skype video call with work. Pyjama's are never a good look when you're talking with your boss."

Like perhaps tens of thousand's of people in the UK, Ms Ali is adapting to an unexpected day off. As the heavy snowfall sweeps parts of the nation, she is, she say's, "working from home".

With roads chaotic and much public transport disrupted - staying in the warmth and trying to do your job without leaving the house for a hard icy **slog** to the office is often as necessary as it is tempting. And the closure of thousands of schools also means parents who could get to work are instead forced to stay away to look after their children.

Of course some jobs simply cannot be done on a laptop from the kitchen table. And for many, not getting into work is not a welcome bonus, instead resulting in losing a days pay. But for those who can, theoretically, continue their role away from their usual place of work, will it ever really be productive? Or is "working from home", for many, **tantamount** to being no more than a bit of a skive?

Benefits

A **cursory** glance at provisional daytime television viewing figures might just support the latter. On Tuesday morning, about 1.4m people watched ITV1's Jeremy Kyle Show - compared with 1.2m at the same time the week before. So would it be fair to extrapolate that a couple of hundred thousand people across the UK - unexpectedly freed from the office - were sitting on the sofa with a bowl of Frosties on their laps with one eye on a spreadsheet and the other on a shouty **confrontation** about cheating husbands and paternity tests?

Well, not quite.

Of course many of these extra viewers would probably not have been at work at all. They may be watching television because it was not all that nice, or safe, outside. Or perhaps they had something else to do last week. Or perhaps it was a particularly good episode.

However, while the use of a "snow day" to get away with doing little while claiming to work is something of a cliché, on social networking website Twitter some are quick to **highlight** some new-found benefits of not being chained to the desk.

"Back from cheeky lunchtime sledging trip" says @bealers who is one of those adopting the hashtag #workingfromhome to illustrate their circumstances.

Others boast of a lunchtime beer fresh from the fridge, or over-indulging at lunch with the toaster too close to resist. But for others this is just wishful thinking.

"Another **downside** of unemployment" writes @thesharpsingle. "Missing the joy of bunking off work cos of snow."

Ms Ali, the pyjama-loving digital marketing director of travel firm Contiki, is trying to keep to a regular routine. After a lack of train services meant she could not get to her office in Bromley,

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Kent, she has been accessing her work emails from home. And despite problems using the company servers, she says her laptop and mobile phone have kept her in touch with those who did make it to the office.

"They probably do think I'm taking it easy," she says. "But we are a small team and we know between us that we're all pulling our weight."

'Distractions'

Gauging lost productivity due to events such as adverse weather is tricky.

A YouGov survey suggested that about three quarters of employees were affected by the adverse weather conditions at the start of this year - which it said was **equivalent** to 124 million working hours. It also said that while almost half (48%) of British workers felt under pressure to get into work, 11% worked from home, with another 12% unable to work at all.

Meanwhile, a separate report from onepoll.com in 2009 suggested that 12% of people admitted using the snow as an excuse not to go in to work. For those who regularly work remotely - without a fixed base - this is nothing new. And while conditions like those seen now might force workplace absence, they bring into focus the benefits of choosing to be able to operate away from the office, says Andrew Millard, director of marketing and e-commerce at Citrix Online in the UK. His firm sells products that allow colleagues to talk together online - an office internet chatroom if you like. Another piece of its software gives access to workplace computer systems so that, he says, as long as you have broadband, it is just like being at your desk (possibly without the mouldy coffee cups left by colleagues). Mr Millard **acknowledges** that many still see those working away from the office as taking it easy, but he insists the reality is different.

"You often find they'll work that much harder and are more productive and effective," he says citing the lack of workplace 'distractions'. You might even have Jeremy Kyle on in the background, but that wouldn't stop you getting on with what you need to do."

Mr Millard, as you might expect, believes small and medium sized firms could make big savings if they invested in making their workforce more flexible. And he is hoping for an increase in business as firms and employees focus on how much time is lost in travel and **unexpected** absence, but acknowledges that a decisive shift is some way off.

"After they've started working remotely, people usually say they don't want to go back to how they worked before."

Among those he needs to convince are Ms Ali - who says she prefers the office environment that she is more used to.

"It's a nicer atmosphere to have that daily **interaction**. And if you get to talk through ideas face-to-face you can be more creative," she says. "It's also much easier to point out a problem rather than trying to explain it over the phone."

Even if it does **involve** changing out of those pyjamas.

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A. Read the text and answer the questions.

1. Why did Beks Ali change out of her pyjamas?
 - a. She was getting cold
 - b. In case she got a video call
 - c. She wanted to go sledging
 - d. She started working

2. According to the article what perk of 'working at home' was not mentioned on Twitter?
 - a. A sledging trip
 - b. A lunchtime beer
 - c. Watching daytime television
 - d. Eating toast at lunchtime

3. What is the main reason that Mr Millard thinks work might be more productive at home?
 - a. No travelling time
 - b. Because they have Broadband
 - c. The lack of workplace distractions
 - d. It is more relaxing

4. Which of these is **not** a reason given by Ms Ali for continuing to travel to an office?
 - a. She likes daily interaction
 - b. A problem is less easy to solve on the 'phone
 - c. Face to face communication can lead to more creative ideas
 - d. She enjoys the daily commute

5. Which of the following statements is true according to the article?
 - a. The viewing figures for Jeremy Kyle increased.
 - b. The amount of Frosties eaten increased?
 - c. People were creating spreadsheets
 - d. Everybody was wearing pyjamas

6. According to YouGov how many employees were affected by the snow?
 - a. 48%
 - b. 12%
 - c. $\frac{3}{4}$
 - d. 11%

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B. There are 12 words in bold in the text. Each of them could be replaced by two of the words or phrases on the right without dramatically changing the meaning. Match each word to the alternatives

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| a. slog | drawback |
| | passing |
| b. tantamount | contact |
| | concedes |
| c. cursory | unforeseen |
| | difficulty |
| d. confrontation | equal |
| | comparable |
| e. highlight | fleeting |
| | communication |
| f. downside | trudge |
| | out of the blue |
| g. gauging | as good as |
| | recognises |
| h. equivalent | plod |
| | underline |
| i. acknowledges | entail |
| | altercation |
| j. unexpected | emphasise |
| | mean |
| k. interaction | estimating |
| | practically the same as |
| l. involve | disagreement |
| | measuring |

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- C. There are 5 misused or missing apostrophes in the text. Underline them and then write them below in the correct form. They are all in the first 4 paragraphs.

- D. Listed below are anagrams of different types words found in the text. Solve the anagrams. All the words start and end with the same letter.

Anagram	Type of word	Answer
hot thug	(past tense verb, noun)	
oat inn	(noun)	
hit coca	(adjective)	
part snort	(noun)	
lochs so	(noun)	
a mutant ton	(adjective)	
relax teapot	(verb)	
i see pod	(noun)	
rule rag	(adjective)	
mid emu	(adjective)	

Name _____ Date _____



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E.

What are your views on the article? Should people make the effort to go to work in bad weather? Should employees lose a day's pay, through no fault of their own? Use the space below to write your views.

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Answers

- A. 1. b
2. c
3. c
4. d
5. a
6. c

- B.
- a. log - plod and trudge
 - b. tantamount – practically the same as and as good as
 - c. cursory – passing and fleeting
 - d. confrontation – disagreement and altercation
 - e. highlight – emphasise and underline
 - f. downside – difficulty and drawback
 - g. gauging – estimating and measuring
 - h. equivalent – equal and comparable
 - i. acknowledges - recognises and concedes
 - j. unexpected – out of the blue and unforeseen
 - k. interaction – communication and contact
 - l. involve – mean and entails

- C.
- | | | |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Id | should be | I'd |
| Pyjama's | should be | Pyjamas |
| thousand's | should be | thousands |
| say's | should be | says |
| days pay | should be | day's pay |

- D.
- | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------|
| hot thug | (past tense verb) | thought |
| oat inn | (noun) | nation |
| hit coca | (adjective) | chaotic |
| part snort | (noun) | transport |
| lochs so | (noun) | school |
| a mutant ton | (adjective) | tantamount |
| relax teapot | (verb) | extrapolate |
| i see pod | (noun) | episode |
| rule rag | (adjective) | regular |
| mid emu | (adjective) | medium |