

News English Workbook

Three-article lesson: freelancing, food prices, and cost of living | Vocabulary, reading, dialogues, speaking tasks, quiz, and answer key

Lesson Overview

This workbook turns three news articles into a classroom handout. Students first learn key vocabulary, read the article, answer comprehension questions, and then practice a short dialogue connected to the topic.

Article	Level	Main topic	Student output
Fast Replies Boost Hiring Rates for Freelancers	Advanced	Freelance work, hiring, response speed	Opinion discussion + client reply role-play
Prices of 2,566 Food Items to Increase in Japan in July	Intermediate	Food prices, inflation, grocery habits	Comprehension quiz + budget discussion
Which EU Country Is the Most Expensive to Live in?	Advanced	Cost of living, housing, education	Comparison discussion + moving decision dialogue

Warm-Up Questions

- When someone messages you for work, how quickly do you usually reply?
- What products have become more expensive where you live?
- Which is more important in business: speed, quality, or politeness? Why?

Article 1 | Vocabulary: Freelancers and Fast Replies

Source topic: Fast Replies Boost Hiring Rates for Freelancers

Word	Part of speech	Meaning	Classroom example
prospective	adj.	likely to become something in the future	A prospective client asked about my design service.
regardless	adv.	without being affected by something else	Regardless of rating, fast replies helped freelancers.
consistently	adv.	in every case or again and again	She consistently replies within one hour.
competent	adj.	having enough skill or knowledge	A quick reply can make a freelancer seem competent.
generic	adj.	not special or specific	A generic message may feel less personal.
attentive	adj.	paying careful attention	Clients like workers who are attentive to their needs.

Vocabulary Practice

No.	Complete the sentence	Answer
1	A _____ client may become a real customer later.	
2	A _____ message sounds the same for every job.	
3	Someone who listens carefully is _____.	
4	A worker who has the right skills is _____.	

Speaking Starter

- Tell your partner about a time when someone replied very quickly or very slowly.
- Use this frame: I felt __ because the person replied __.

Article 1 | Reading: Fast Replies Boost Hiring Rates

Read aloud, then underline the numbers and research findings.

With freelance work, you get to be your own boss. However, it also means finding your own clients — and answering them quickly! A study published in Management Science has found that fast replies can make all the difference for freelancers trying to get work. The study used data from the website Fiverr, where businesses can hire freelance workers for everything from graphic design and writing tasks to music and voiceover work.

The researchers looked at almost 12 million exchanges between freelancers and prospective employers from December 2022 to December 2024.

They tracked exactly how many minutes went by before freelancers answered a potential client's first message, and whether or not the conversation converted into paid work.

A pattern became clear — when freelancers replied within a minute, they were far more likely to get the job. A one-hour delay was linked to a 46% lower chance of being hired. And freelancers were 90% less likely to get the job if their response took a full day.

The researchers wanted to make sure this wasn't unique to Fiverr, so they did three extra experiments with 3,600 participants. First, the participants were asked to imagine emailing caterers or doctors who they were told had different review ratings. Then they were told the service provider would answer either within an hour or a day, and asked how hireable they seemed. Regardless of rating or profession, doctors and caterers who would answer in an hour were consistently considered more hireable.

Next, the researchers compared one-hour waits with two-day waits for an imagined photographer. This time, the one-hour responders were seen as more hireable, as well as warmer and more competent.

Finally, they compared generic freelancer responses with more personal and specific ones to see if reply tone mattered. When participants read more personal message samples, they rated these better — but response speed was still more important.

"Speed is a signal. People see a quick response as a sign that you'll be attentive to their needs in the future, not just right now," said researcher Einav Hart.

Main Idea Check

Question	Student answer
What did the study find about fast replies?	
What website did the researchers use data from?	
What happened when freelancers replied after one full day?	

Article 1 | Discussion and Role Play

Move from reading comprehension to speaking.

Discussion Questions

- What are your thoughts on the study's findings?
- Do you find it surprising that fast responses are so important?
- Have you ever hired or worked with a freelancer?
- What do you think are the biggest challenges of being a freelancer?
- Do you ever reply to work-related emails or messages outside work hours?

Role Play: Freelancer Reply Challenge

Role	Situation	Goal
Client	You need a logo, a voiceover, or help with a report.	Ask about price, timing, and experience.
Freelancer A	You reply in one minute with a specific answer.	Sound warm, competent, and attentive.
Freelancer B	You reply one day later with a generic answer.	Compare how the client reacts.

Model Dialog: Replying to a Prospective Client

Speaker	Line	Speaking focus
Client	Hi, I need a short voiceover for a product video. Are you available this week?	opening request
Freelancer	Hi, thanks for reaching out. Yes, I can help with that this week.	fast reply
Client	Great. How much would it cost for a one-minute script?	price question
Freelancer	For a one-minute voiceover, my usual price is \$80. Could you send the script and deadline?	specific answer
Client	Sure. I need it by Friday afternoon.	deadline
Freelancer	That works. I can send a first version by Thursday evening for your review.	clear timeline
Client	Sounds good. I appreciate the quick reply.	positive response

Useful Reply Template

Hi ___, thanks for reaching out. I can help with ___. Based on your deadline, I suggest ___. Could you send me ___ so I can give you an accurate quote?

Mini task: Rewrite the template for graphic design, writing, or video editing.

Article 2 | Vocabulary: Food Prices in Japan

Source topic: Prices of 2,566 Food Items to Increase in Japan in July

Word	Part of speech	Meaning	Classroom example
ingredient	n.	a food or substance used to make a dish or product	Oil is an important ingredient in many processed foods.
packaging	n.	materials used to cover or protect goods	Packaging costs can affect food prices.
processed	adj.	changed to last longer or taste different	Processed foods will see many price increases.
total	n.	the whole amount of something	A total of 14,902 items may increase by November.
consecutive	adj.	happening one after another	This is the fifth consecutive year above 10,000 items.

Vocabulary Practice

No.	Question	Student answer
1	Name two ingredients used in a simple meal.	
2	What kind of packaging can be recycled?	
3	Give one example of processed food.	
4	Make a sentence with consecutive.	

Article 2 | Reading: Food Prices to Increase in Japan

Read aloud, then circle the numbers in the article.

Many people in Japan have been feeling the effects of higher food prices. And according to a new survey, things are about to get even more expensive.

Research company Teikoku Databank did a survey of 195 food and drinks companies around the country.

It found that these companies plan to increase the prices of 2,566 items in July. That's 22% more products than got price increases in July 2025.

A big reason for this is because of the increase in oil prices as a result of the war in the Middle East. This has made ingredients and even food packaging more expensive.

Processed foods will see the most increases, with 1,084 products getting new prices. Almost as many bread products will also see price increases, with Yamazaki Baking saying it plans to raise the price of its white bread by an average of 6.6%.

Teikoku Databank has some information for later in the year as well. Including everything it knows about so far, it says that by November a total of 14,902 items will have increased in price this year. That will make 2026 the fifth consecutive year that the number has gone above 10,000 items.

And price information is still coming in, with Teikoku Databank saying there could be price increases for over 20,000 items before the year is over.

Article Questions

No.	Question	A	B
1	How many food and drinks companies did Teikoku Databank survey?	195	255
2	What type of food will see the most increases?	Processed foods	Produce
3	How many items could see price increases by the end of the year?	20,000	12,000

Number Notes

Number	What it means
2,566	Food items planned for price increases in July.
22%	How much higher July 2026 is compared with July 2025.
1,084	Processed food products getting new prices.
14,902	Items expected to have increased by November.
20,000+	Possible number of items by the end of the year.

Article 2 | Discussion and Everyday English

Connect the article to students' shopping and food habits.

Discussion Questions

- What are your thoughts on Teikoku Databank's findings?
- Do you find it surprising that prices could keep rising throughout the year?
- Have rising food and drink prices changed the way you shop?
- Do you have a budget for groceries? Is it easy to stick to?
- What are some quick and cheap meals you like?

Pair Task: Grocery Budget Talk

Student A: shopper	Student B: friend
I want to save money on groceries this week.	What do you usually buy?
I spend too much on snacks and drinks.	Maybe you can buy fewer processed foods.
What cheap meals do you recommend?	You could make rice bowls, noodles, or soup.
That sounds good. What ingredients do I need?	You need eggs, vegetables, rice, and sauce.

Model Dialog: Changing Grocery Habits

Speaker	Line	Speaking focus
A	Food prices keep going up. I need to change how I shop.	state problem
B	What do you usually buy?	ask for details
A	I buy a lot of snacks, drinks, and ready-made meals.	explain habit
B	Maybe you can cook more simple meals at home.	give advice
A	That's a good idea. What cheap meals do you recommend?	ask for suggestions
B	Rice bowls, noodles, soup, and eggs are usually affordable.	recommend
A	I'll try meal planning this week and compare the total.	make plan

Writing Task

Write 4-5 sentences: Food prices are rising, so I will change my shopping habits by ___. I can save money by ___. However, I still want to buy ___ because ___.

Article 3 | Vocabulary: Cost of Living in the EU

Source topic: Which EU Country Is the Most Expensive to Live in?

Word	Part of speech	Meaning	Classroom example
vary	v.	to be different from something else of the same type	Living costs vary a lot from country to country.
household	n.	a home and the people who live in it	A household may spend a lot on housing and food.
expenditure	n.	an amount of money spent	Housing is a major area of expenditure.
category	n.	a group of things with features in common	Food and housing are two spending categories.
dramatic	adj.	sudden, noticeable, or impressive	There were dramatic differences in education costs.
subsidize	v.	to pay part of the cost of something	Some governments subsidize education.

Vocabulary Practice

No.	Prompt	Student answer
1	Make a sentence with vary.	
2	What is one major expenditure for your household?	
3	Name three categories of monthly spending.	
4	What does the government subsidize in your country?	

Article 3 | Reading: Which EU Country Is Most Expensive?

Read aloud, then circle the countries and percentages.

The European Union (EU) may share a currency with the euro, but the cost of living and the price of everyday items can vary a lot by country.

European statistics office Eurostat has released its report on household final consumption expenditure (HFCE) for 2025. HFCE is how much money households pay for all goods and services they use.

The Eurostat report compares how much money a country's households spend with an EU average based on the standard prices of over 2,000 goods and services.

It found that the households spending the most money on goods and services in the EU were in Denmark, where HFCE was 140% of the EU average in 2025. Ireland was next at 136%, followed by Luxembourg, at 132%.

The country with the lowest HFCE was Bulgaria, at only 63% of the EU average. Romania was next at 65%, with Poland with the third lowest spending at 73%.

HFCE includes housing itself, which is what people spend more money on than anything else, and there were huge differences for this by country too.

Ireland's spending just on housing was 190% higher than the EU average. Bulgaria's spending was only 41% of the EU average.

The second biggest category was food and nonalcoholic drinks, but the variations were less dramatic here. The highest price levels were in Luxembourg at 122% of the EU average, and the lowest was 80% in Romania.

Education had the biggest differences in spending though, despite being the smallest area of expenditure at an EU level. This is perhaps because even up to university level, education is state-subsidized in most countries.

However, households in Luxembourg spent 334% of the EU average on education in 2025, while Romania spent just 42%.

The report only looked at spending and prices though, not how wages compare to it. So if a country has high average wages, a higher HFCE doesn't mean it's not affordable for residents.

Reading Check

No.	Question	Student answer
1	Which country had the highest HFCE in 2025?	
2	Which country had the lowest HFCE?	
3	Which category had the biggest spending differences?	

Key Number Notes

Number	Meaning
140%	Denmark's HFCE compared with the EU average.
63%	Bulgaria's HFCE compared with the EU average.
190%	Ireland's housing spending compared with the EU average.
334%	Luxembourg's education spending compared with the EU average.

Article 3 | Discussion and Speaking Practice

Compare places, costs, and quality of life.

Discussion Questions

- What are your thoughts on Eurostat's findings?
- What European countries could you see yourself living in?
- Have you visited any European countries? Which were the most expensive?
- Is your country an expensive place to live compared to its neighbors?
- Would you ever consider moving somewhere more affordable?

Model Dialog: Choosing Where to Live

Speaker	Line	Speaking focus
A	I read that Denmark had very high household spending.	article reference
B	Yes, but high spending does not always mean life is unaffordable.	contrast
A	Right. Wages may also be higher there.	add reason
B	If you moved to Europe, what category would you worry about most?	ask opinion
A	Housing. Rent can take a huge part of a household budget.	answer
B	I would worry about education and healthcare too.	add category
A	So we should compare both prices and wages before deciding.	summarize

Speaking Task: Compare Two Places

Choose two countries or cities. Compare housing, food, transportation, education, and quality of life. Use: In __, __ is more expensive than __. However, __ may be better because __.

Final Review | Quiz and Answer Key

Use this page for homework, review, or a short classroom quiz.

Part A: Mixed Quiz

No.	Question	Student answer
1	What does prospective mean?	
2	Which was more important in the freelancer study: reply speed or reply tone?	
3	What does packaging mean?	
4	Why are ingredients and packaging becoming more expensive?	
5	Write one sentence using attentive.	
6	Write one sentence using processed food.	
7	What does household mean?	
8	Which EU country had the highest HFCE in 2025?	
9	Why might a higher HFCE not always mean a place is unaffordable?	

Part B: Answer Key

No.	Suggested answer
1	Likely to become something in the future, such as a prospective client.
2	Reply speed was still more important, though personal messages were rated better.
3	Materials used to cover or protect goods.
4	Oil prices increased because of the war in the Middle East.
5	Example: A good freelancer is attentive to the client's needs.
6	Example: I try not to eat too much processed food.
7	A home and the people who live in it.
8	Denmark.
9	Because wages may also be higher in that country.
Article 1 Q1	Fast replies made freelancers more likely to be hired.
Article 1 Q2	Fiverr.
Article 1 Q3	They were 90% less likely to get the job.
Article 2 Q1	A: 195.
Article 2 Q2	A: Processed foods.
Article 2 Q3	A: 20,000.
Article 3 Q1	Denmark.
Article 3 Q2	Bulgaria.
Article 3 Q3	Education.

Teacher note: For discussion and writing tasks, accept answers that are clear, relevant, and supported by reasons.