

Remote Work and Team Communication

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this worksheet, you will be able to:

1. Identify the main causes and effects of remote work on team communication in a factual text.
2. Explain how managers and employees respond to the challenges of working from home.
3. Use at least three target words from this reading correctly in your own sentences.

READING SKILL - Previewing and Predicting

Self-Assessment

These words appear frequently in academic texts. Learning them will help you in your university studies. Think about how well you know each target word, and check the appropriate column.

TARGET WORDS (Academic Word List)	I don't know this word	I have seen this word but I'm not sure of the meaning	I know this word and understand the meaning	I can use this word correctly in speaking or writing
adjust				
appropriate				
challenge				
colleague				
communicate				
coordinate				
ensure				
flexible				
interact				
involve				
schedule				
technology				

Before You Read

Read these questions. Discuss your answers with a partner or in a small group.

1. Have you ever worked or studied from home? What was good or difficult about it?
2. How do you usually communicate with friends or classmates when you are not in the same place?
3. What problems do you think a team might have if all its members work in different locations?

LEARN

Previewing and predicting means looking at a text quickly before you read it carefully. You use the title, subheadings, and key words to guess what the text is about and what information it might contain. This skill is useful because it helps you prepare your mind for new information. When you already have some ideas about the topic, you understand new information more easily and read more efficiently.

To preview a text:

- Read the title and ask yourself: What do I already know about this topic?
- Read the subheadings and predict what each section will discuss.
- Look for words that are repeated or appear in bold, and think about why they might be important.
- Write down one or two questions you expect the text to answer.

At university, you will often need to read long and complex texts quickly, so previewing and predicting will save you time and help you focus on the most important ideas.

APPLY

Before you read the article, look at the five words and phrases below. Predict what the text will say about each one. Write your prediction in the middle column. After you read, tick Accurate? to show whether your prediction was correct.

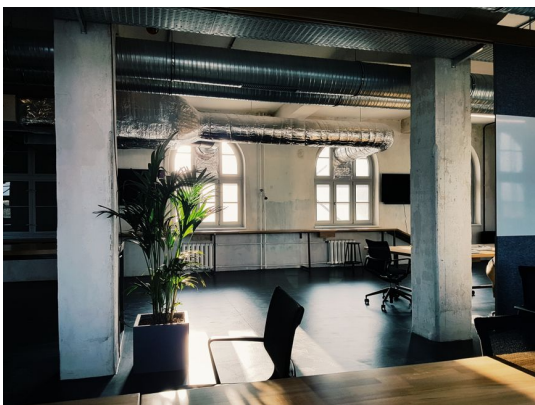
Word or phrase	My prediction	Accurate?
e.g. remote work	The text will explain what remote work is and why more people are doing it.	

Remember: after you finish the reading, come back and complete the Accurate? column. Write Y (yes) or N (no) for each prediction. Write ? if you are not sure. Discuss your results with a partner.

Working Apart Together: Remote Work and Team Communication

THE RISE OF REMOTE WORK

- ¹ Over the past decade, remote work has grown significantly across many industries. Before digital tools became widely available, most employees were expected to be physically present in an office every day. Today, however, many organisations allow staff to work from home, from cafes, or from co-working spaces. This shift has changed how businesses operate and how teams **communicate** with each other on a daily basis.
- ² Several factors have driven this change. Advances in **technology** have made it possible for people to attend meetings, share documents, and send messages without being in the same room. Events such as the global pandemic of the early 2020s also forced many organisations to move their operations online very quickly. As a result, both managers and employees have had to **adjust** to new ways of working that were unfamiliar just a few years ago.
- ³ Not all sectors have adopted remote work equally. Industries such as finance, marketing, and education have embraced it more readily than manufacturing or healthcare, where physical presence is often essential. Nevertheless, the trend towards more **flexible** working arrangements appears to be continuing across a wide range of business environments.



A large open-plan office building seen from the outside, with rows of empty desks visible through floor-to-ceiling windows.

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN REMOTE TEAMS

- ⁴ One of the biggest **challenges** of remote work is maintaining clear and regular communication between team members. In a traditional office, a **colleague** can simply walk to another desk to ask a question or share an update. When a team is spread across different locations, or even different time zones, this kind of informal exchange becomes much harder to achieve.
- ⁵ Misunderstandings can occur more frequently in written communication than in face-to-face conversation. When people **interact** mainly through emails or instant messages, they cannot always read body language or hear tone of voice. This means that the choice of words becomes very important. Teams must learn to write clearly and use **appropriate** language so that messages are understood in the way they were intended.
- ⁶ Another common difficulty **involves** keeping all team members informed and included. In a physical office, employees often hear news or updates passively, simply by being present. Remote workers can easily miss important information if communication systems are not well organised. Managers must therefore put structures in place to **ensure** that nobody is left out of key decisions or announcements.

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES FOR BETTER COORDINATION

- ⁷ Many organisations now use a range of digital tools to help their teams **coordinate** work effectively. Video conferencing platforms allow teams to hold regular meetings where members can see and hear each other. Project management software helps teams track tasks, set deadlines, and monitor progress. These tools can reduce confusion and make it easier for everyone to understand what they need to do and when.
- ⁸ Having a clear **schedule** is also essential for remote teams. When employees work at different hours or in different time zones, it can be difficult to find times when everyone is available. Many

organisations now ask teams to agree on core hours when all members must be online and reachable. Outside these core hours, employees may have more freedom to organise their own time, which many workers find appealing.



A group of workers seated around a large conference table, looking at a screen showing a video call with remote participants.

- ⁹ Regular virtual check-ins, where team members briefly report on their progress, are another popular strategy. These short meetings help managers stay informed and give employees an opportunity to raise questions or concerns. Research from business schools suggests that teams who meet regularly online report higher levels of trust and cooperation than those who communicate only by email.

THE FUTURE OF REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK

- ¹⁰ Many experts believe that a hybrid model, which combines some days in the office with some days working remotely, will become the standard arrangement for many organisations. This approach allows businesses to benefit from both face-to-face collaboration and the flexibility that remote work provides. However, it also requires careful planning to **ensure** that the balance works well for both the organisation and its employees.
- ¹¹ For employees, the ability to work in a **flexible** way has clear benefits. Many report lower commuting costs and more time for personal activities. However, some workers find it harder to separate their professional and personal lives when both take place in the same location. Organisations that **involve** employees in decisions about working arrangements tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction.

- ¹² Looking ahead, the relationship between **technology** and work will continue to evolve. New tools, including artificial intelligence assistants and advanced collaboration platforms, are already beginning to change how teams operate. The organisations that succeed will be those that learn to use these tools wisely, support their employees effectively, and continue to **communicate** openly about the opportunities and difficulties that remote work presents.

co-working spaces: shared offices that are rented by people from different organisations

pandemic: a disease that spreads across many countries at the same time

hybrid model: a working arrangement that mixes time in the office with time working remotely

virtual check-ins: short online meetings where team members give brief updates on their work

artificial intelligence assistants: computer programmes that can carry out tasks and answer questions automatically

Reading Comprehension

Mark each sentence as T (true) or F (false) according to the information in the reading text. Write T or F on the line before each sentence. Example: Remote work only became possible after the global pandemic of the early 2020s. – Answer: F, because the text says remote work grew over the past decade as digital tools became widely available, not only after the pandemic. Tip: First skim the whole text to get the general idea. Then read each sentence and use the paragraph numbers to find the specific information. Use a dictionary to help you understand new words.

----1.	Advances in technology have made it possible for people to attend meetings and share documents without being in the same room. (Para. 2)
----2.	Manufacturing and healthcare sectors have adopted remote work more readily than finance and marketing. (Para. 3)
----3.	When team members work in different locations, informal communication between colleagues becomes more difficult. (Para. 4)
----4.	Written communication such as email always makes misunderstandings less likely than face-to-face conversation. (Para. 5)
----5.	Remote workers can miss important updates if communication systems in an organisation are not well organised. (Para. 6)
----6.	Project management software helps teams track tasks and monitor progress. (Para. 7)
----7.	According to the article, most organisations require all employees to be available online at all times during the working day. (Para. 8)
----8.	Research mentioned in the article suggests that teams who meet regularly online report higher levels of trust than those who only use email. (Para. 9)
----9.	All employees find it easy to separate their professional and personal lives when working from home. (Para. 11)
----10.	The article states that organisations involving employees in decisions about working arrangements tend to have higher job satisfaction. (Para. 11)

Vocabulary Activities • STEP I: Word Level

A. Read these excerpts from a business article. For each excerpt, cross out the one word or phrase in parentheses that has a different meaning from the other three choices. (To cross out, draw a line through the word, like ~~this~~.)

1. It is important for all team members to (communicate / correspond / transmit / ~~obstruct~~) clearly when working remotely, especially when using written messages.
2. The manager decided to (coordinate / organise / supervise / undermine) the project by assigning clear tasks to each member of the team.
3. A good working arrangement should (involve / include / incorporate / exclude) regular opportunities for team members to share their progress.
4. Employees often need to (adjust / adapt / modify / resist) their working habits when they move from an office environment to working from home.

5. Teams must use (appropriate / suitable / relevant / careless) language in written messages to avoid confusion and misunderstandings.

B. For each situation below, decide whether you would find this a challenge when working remotely. Write Y (yes, it would be a challenge), N (no, it would not be a challenge), or M (maybe, it depends).

Step 1: Work alone. Read each scenario and write Y (yes), N (no), or M (maybe) next to each situation. Example: Your team schedules an important video meeting at 7 a.m. because colleagues in another time zone are only available then. Example answer: M, because although I am flexible about my working hours, it is sometimes a challenge to interact well with colleagues when I am tired early in the morning.

Step 2: Compare your answers with a partner.

Step 3: Try to use at least one of these words to explain your choices: adjust, ensure, technology.

Step 4: Share one idea with the class.

-----1.	You are working from home and your internet connection is slow. You cannot join the team video call and miss an important update.
-----2.	Your manager asks you to coordinate a project with three colleagues who live in different countries and work in different time zones.
-----3.	You receive a long email from a colleague but you are not sure what they want you to do. You cannot ask them directly because they are offline.
-----4.	Your organisation introduces new project management software (a digital tool for organising tasks and deadlines) and asks all employees to adjust to using it within one week.
-----5.	You work from home every day and realise that you rarely interact with any of your colleagues in person.
-----6.	Your manager wants to ensure that all team members are available during core hours from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., but your personal responsibilities make this difficult on some days.

Vocabulary Activities • STEP II: Sentence Level

Word Form Reference Chart

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
adjustment	adjust	adjustable	—
appropriateness	—	appropriate	appropriately
challenge	challenge	challenging	—
colleague	—	—	—
communication	communicate	communicative	—
coordination	coordinate	coordinated	—
assurance	ensure	—	—
flexibility	—	flexible	flexibly
interaction	interact	interactive	—
involvement	involve	involved	—
schedule	schedule	scheduled	—
technology	—	technological	technologically

Reference chart — **do not write in this table.** Use it to help you complete the tasks below. — means this part of speech does not exist for this word.

CORPUS (= information about how this word is used in academic English)

ensure = to make certain that something happens or is the case

Ensure is a verb often used in academic and professional writing. It is usually followed by a noun phrase or a that-clause. It suggests that someone takes action to guarantee a particular result. It is more formal than make sure.

Managers must **ensure** that all remote employees receive the same information as office-based staff.

The new policy was introduced to **ensure** fair treatment for workers in all locations.

C. Rewrite each sentence. Use the form of ensure shown in parentheses. Refer to the word form chart above. Compare your sentences with a partner.

1. The manager made certain that every team member received the meeting notes. (ensure)

The manager ensured that every team member received the meeting notes.

2. The company introduced new software to make certain that communication between teams was clear. (ensure)

3. It is the responsibility of team leaders to make certain that deadlines are met. (ensure)

4. Regular check-ins help to make certain that no team member is left without support. (ensure)

5. The organisation updated its communication policy to make certain that remote workers stayed informed. (ensure)

GRAMMAR (= how to use this word)

Although is a conjunction that introduces a contrast between two ideas. It can begin a sentence or sit in the middle of a sentence.

Although remote work offers many benefits, it can make communication between colleagues more difficult. / Some employees prefer working from home, **although** they sometimes feel isolated from their team.

Note: When **although** begins a sentence, use a comma at the end of the **although** clause. When **although** comes in the middle of a sentence, a comma usually comes before it.

D. Read each pair of sentences and follow these steps:

Step 1: Check (✓) the pairs that can be joined into one sentence using *although*. Write the combined sentence on the line below.

Step 2: For the pairs you did NOT check, choose one connecting word from this box and write a new sentence: *because* · *therefore* · *however* · *but* · *and*

(✓) 1.	Remote work offers employees greater flexibility. It can make it harder to coordinate with colleagues. <i>Although remote work offers employees greater flexibility, it can make it harder to coordinate with colleagues.</i>
___ 2.	Video calls help remote teams interact regularly. They cannot fully replace face-to-face communication.
___ 3.	Many employees enjoy working from home. Some find it difficult to separate work from personal life.
___ 4.	The team missed the project deadline. The manager decided to adjust the schedule for future tasks.
___ 5.	Digital tools make communication faster. Misunderstandings in written messages are still common.
___ 6.	The new software was difficult to learn at first. Most employees were using it confidently within a month.
___ 7.	Remote work reduces commuting time. Employees save money on travel costs.

CORPUS (= information about how this word is used in academic English)

schedule = a plan that lists events, tasks, or activities and the times at which they will happen

Schedule is used as both a noun and a verb in academic and professional English. As a noun, it refers to a timetable or plan. As a verb, it means to arrange or plan something for a particular time. It is commonly used in business and management contexts.

*The team agreed on a shared **schedule** so that everyone knew when online meetings would take place.*

*The project manager **scheduled** a review meeting for the end of each month to track progress.*

E. Answer these questions. Use the form of *schedule* shown in parentheses. Use information from the reading text OR your own ideas. Compare your answers with a partner.

1. Why is it important for remote teams to have a clear schedule? (*schedule*)

A clear schedule helps remote teams coordinate their work because everyone knows when they need to be available and what tasks must be completed by a certain time.

2. What problems can arise when a team does not have a shared schedule? (*schedule*)

3. How might a manager use a schedule to ensure that all colleagues are included in important meetings? (*schedule*)

4. Do you think a flexible schedule is always better than a fixed one? Give a reason for your answer. (*schedule*)

5. What does the article say about core hours and how they relate to a team's schedule? Refer to paragraph 8 in your answer. (*schedule*)

F. Remote work has both causes and effects on team communication and organisation. Two examples have been given. Add one more cause and one more effect of your own. Then compare your table with a partner. Use target words from the word form chart where possible.

Cause	Effect
Advances in technology made remote communication tools widely available.	More organisations began to allow employees to work from home.
Team members work in different time zones and cannot always meet at the same time.	Organisations introduced core hours to ensure some overlap in working schedules.
Write your own example here.	Write your own example here.

G. Rank these strategies for improving communication in remote teams from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important) in your opinion. Write your number on the line. There is no correct answer — this is your own view. *Example: 1 Using video calls for regular team meetings.* First, write your ranking individually. Then discuss with a partner — explain your top choice out loud. Then, as a class, compare your rankings. Which strategy does the class consider most important? Why?

----	Using video calls for regular team meetings
----	Setting core hours when all team members must be online
----	Using project management software to track tasks and deadlines
----	Sending a brief written update to all colleagues at the end of each day
----	Scheduling a weekly check-in where team members can raise concerns
----	Creating a shared online document where all team news and announcements are posted

Self-Assessment Review

H. Go back to the self-assessment grid on page 1 and reassess your knowledge of the target words. How has your understanding of the words changed? Which words do you feel most confident about now? Discuss with a partner.

Extension — Writing and Discussion Topics

Choose ONE topic. Write about it or discuss it with a partner. You can use ideas from the reading text or your own experience.

A good answer includes: a clear opinion, two pieces of evidence from the reading text, and at least three target words.

1. a) Do you think remote work makes it harder or easier for colleagues to build good working relationships? Why? Discuss with a partner. b) Write a short paragraph (approximately 80-100 words) giving your opinion. Use at least three target words from this worksheet.

Example sentence: Although technology allows remote teams to communicate quickly, it can be a challenge to interact in a way that builds trust.

2. a) What do you think is the biggest challenge that a manager faces when coordinating a remote team? Discuss with a partner. b) Write a short paragraph (approximately 80-100 words) explaining the challenge and suggesting one way to address it. Use at least three target words from this worksheet.

Example sentence: One of the main challenges is to ensure that all colleagues are involved in decisions, even when they work in different locations.

3. a) Would you prefer to work fully remotely, fully in an office, or in a hybrid arrangement? Why? Discuss with a partner. b) Write a short paragraph (approximately 80-100 words) explaining your preference. Use at least three target words from this worksheet.

Example sentence: A flexible schedule would allow me to adjust my working hours and interact with colleagues at times that suit everyone in the team.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Teacher Notes

TIMINGS

Task	Suggested time
Self-Assessment	8 mins
Before You Read	8 mins
Previewing and Predicting (APPLY)	4 mins
Reading text	12 mins
Reading Comprehension	15 mins
Vocabulary Step I (Tasks A–B)	20 mins
Vocabulary Step II (Tasks C–G)	45 mins
Self-Assessment Review	3 mins
Total core worksheet	approx. 90–115 mins
Extension (homework)	20–30 mins

OPEN TASKS

Tasks B, E, F, and G are open-ended. Accept any well-reasoned answer that uses the target vocabulary correctly.

Task E item 1 model answer: *A clear schedule helps remote teams coordinate their work because everyone knows when they need to be available and what tasks must be completed by a certain time.*

Fast finishers: Ask them to compare Task D sentences with a partner or begin the extension topic.

Answer Key

Reading Comprehension

- 1 T
- 2 F
- 3 T
- 4 F
- 5 T
- 6 T
- 7 F
- 8 T
- 9 F
- 10 T

Vocabulary Activities — Task A: Odd One Out

- 1 obstruct
- 2 undermine
- 3 exclude

- 4 resist
- 5 careless

Vocabulary Activities — Task C: Rewrite Each Sentence

- 1 The manager ensured that every team member received the meeting notes.
- 2 The company introduced new software to ensure that communication between teams was clear.
- 3 It is the responsibility of team leaders to ensure that deadlines are met.
- 4 Regular check-ins help to ensure that no team member is left without support.
- 5 The organisation updated its communication policy to ensure that remote workers stayed informed.

Vocabulary Activities — Task D: Sentence Combining with although

Can be joined with although 2, 3, 5, 6

- 2 Although video calls help remote teams interact regularly, they cannot fully replace face-to-face communication.
- 3 Although many employees enjoy working from home, some find it difficult to separate work from personal life.
- 5 Although digital tools make communication faster, misunderstandings in written messages are still common.
- 6 Although the new software was difficult to learn at first, most employees were using it confidently within a month.
- 4 – use therefore (Both sentences describe events that follow logically from each other: missing a deadline leads to adjusting future plans. This is a cause-and-result relationship, not a contrast, so therefore is the appropriate connector.)
- 7 – use and (Both sentences state benefits of remote work and support the same conclusion. There is no contrast between them, so and is the appropriate connector.)

Note For Task D, accept either word order in the although sentence where both are grammatically correct. Remind students to check comma placement: a comma follows the although clause when although begins the sentence.