**DAYLIGHT ROBBERY**

1. **Work in groups. Discuss these questions.**

a In what different ways can companies steal wages from workers?

b What reasons do you think companies might give to explain such theft?

c How can wage theft be stopped?

**2** [**Watch a video**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwn4xYyCASs) **involving activists from a volunteer group called Seattle Solidarity (SeaSol) and a fast-food restaurant chain called Pita Pit. Answer these questions.**

1 What was John’s job?

2 What problem did he encounter?

3 What was the first step in the campaign?

4 How much money did Pita Pit owe John?

5 What was the second stage of the campaign?

6 How long were the protesters willing to continue their action?

7 How did the protests affect Pita Pit’s business?

8 How did the campaign end?

**3a Work in pairs. Discuss what you think the words in *bold* *italics* below mean.**

1 Pita Pit ***withheld*** nearly 20% of John’s pay. They said it was for taxes.

2 SeaSol delivered a letter saying the company owed John 450 ***bucks***.

3 SeaSol asked Pita Pit to ***pay up*** within ten days

4 They threatened to ***take further action*** if John wasn’t paid the money he was owed.

5 Time passed and ***the deadline was up***.

6 SeaSol started to ***picket*** Pita Pit every Tuesday and Thursday.

7 They decided to ***escalate*** the protests and came back with more people on Thursday.

8 In the end, the boss ***gave in*** and ***paid*** John ***in full***.

**b Now discuss these questions.**

* What other things – apart from wages – can be **withheld**?
* In what other situations might you need to **pay up**?
* When else might you have a **deadline**?
* Which verbs most commonly go with **deadline**?
* When else might people **picket** a building? Why?
* What else can you **escalate** – apart from protests?

**4 Now** [**watch a second video in which SeaSol deliver a demand letter to a landlord**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rnctk3fpx-g)**. Answer these questions.**

1 How would you describe the action?

2 What type of tactics does SeaSol use?

3 Who has control in the situation? What makes you say that?

**5a SeaSol don’t use lawyers and they don’t really trust the media. Instead, when**

**they need to escalate a campaign, they use “direct action” tactics.**

**Match the tactics in 1-5 with the definitions in a-e.**

1 A phone zap

2 A picket

3 A Facebook blast

4 Postering

5 A communications blockade

a a protest in front of a building

b a 24-hour period where supporters call a boss or landlord over and over again.

c a 24-hour period where supporters call, email, and post social media messages

d a 24-hour period where supporters post messages on a company’s Facebook page.

e putting up posters in the local area targeting the business or the landlord

**5b Work in groups. Discuss the pros and cons of each tactic.**

**Which do you think would usually be most effective? Why?**

**ANSWER KEY & TEACHER’S NOTES**

As a lead-in, you could ask the whole class what they think the title of the lesson means and how it connects to **wage theft**.

**Exercise 1**

Put students into small groups and ask them to discuss these questions. Monitor and help out with new language where necessary. You may want to get some better versions of things students are trying to say up on the board so you can come back to this as part of your round-up. Gap words here and there and then when you round up, see if you can elicit the missing words from the group. Include the first letter of the missing words if you want to make it easier.

There are no correct answers here. Work with the ideas students come up with. However, you may want to mention the following:

1. Wage theft might happen when workers aren’t paid for all the hours they work or are not paid at all; when they’re not paid the minimum wage, overtime pay or for other legal rights; when they’re wrongly treated as independent contractors or as self- employed; and when they’re charged a fee to get a job.

2 Possible excuses employers may give: the company keeps tips, not workers; deductions need to be made to pay extra taxes or costs; the company is experiencing cash-flow problems; claiming that workers aren’t entitled to payments when they are.

3 Possible ways wage theft can be tackled include making all employers follow the law in all workplaces; updating labour laws to protect all workers; increasing the minimum wage to bring workers out of poverty; ensuring equal status and protection for all workers, regardless of immigration status.

**Exercise 2**

Here’s the video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwn4xYyCASs>

Tell students they’re going to watch a video and give them a minute or two to read 1-8 so they know what to take notes on. Play the video. Give students a few minutes to compare their notes / answers in pairs. Then round up by getting ideas from the whole group.

**Answers:**

1 He was a cycle delivery guy.

2 Pita Pit withheld 20% of his pay for taxes – they said. Then, when the time came to pay his taxes, they said they hadn’t paid any of his taxes, meaning he’d have to.

3 John SeaSol and they delivered a letter to Pita Pit’s management explaining what they’d done wrong and asking them to pay up within ten days.

4 $450

5 They started picketing the restaurant and asking customers not to eat there.

6 Every Tuesday and Thursday for ever, for as long as it takes.

7 The pickets really damaged business. The boss said they were killing trade.

8 In the end, the boss paid John everything he was owed.

**Exercise 3a**

Explain you’re going to look a bit more at some of the language that came up in the text. Put students in pairs and get them to discuss what they think the words in bold italics mean. You could maybe do the first one with the whole class to model the task, if you want to. After a few minutes, stop the groups and round up, eliciting ideas from the group and clarifying where necessary.

1 They deliberately didn’t give the money to John.

2 dollars. You might add that in the UK, pounds are often called **quid** – ***200 quid***, etc.

3 pay money that you owe – especially when you’re unwilling to pay

4 to carry out more protests that would affect Pita Pit’s business

5 the time the company had been told to pay by arrived

6 protest outside the building

7 to make the protests bigger and more serious

8 accepted defeat . . . paid everything John was owed, paid completely

**Exercise 3b**

You could ask these questions to the whole class as you’re checking the answers to exercise 3a. Alternatively, once you’ve checked students understand the vocabulary, put them back in pairs and give them a few minutes to discuss the questions before asking the whole group for ideas. You might use the time when students are discussing the questions to write some extra examples on the board. For example:

*Quite a few countries have decided to withhold their support for the treaty.*

*The deadline’s next Wednesday, and I don’t want to miss it.*

* You can **withhold** payment, support, information (from the police), evidence, rent, benefit payments.
* You need to **pay up** when you owe someone money or when you’ve lost a bet
* You might have a **deadline** at work or at school / college.
* You can **meet** or **miss** a **deadline**, bosses sometimes **set deadlines**.
* When people **go on strike**, they often **picket** a building.
* You can **escalate** a problem a row, a conflict, the rate of infection / inflation, etc.

**Exercise 4**

Here’s the video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rnctk3fpx-g>

Again, tell students they’re going to watch a video and give them a minute or two to read 1-3 so they know what to take notes on. Play the video. Give students a couple of minutes to compare their notes / answers in pairs. Then round up by getting ideas from the whole group.

**Answers:**

1 They go to the landlord’s place en masse – in a large group. This lets the landlord know he’s not just dealing with one person, but with an organised group.

2 It could be seen as threatening, but they’re polite – even humorous. They’re operating within the law and they want to show solidarity with Maria. It’s supportive.

3 SeaSol do. There’s strength in numbers. They’re filming everything. They clearly know the law. They’re polite, but firm.

**Exercise 5a**

Give students a minute or two to do the matching exercise on their own. Then elicit answers from the whole class.

1b 2a 3d 4e 5c

You can also expand on the vocabulary by explaining that **a blockade** can also be a situation in which a country or place is surrounded by soldiers or ships to stop people going in or out – so there might be **an air and sea blockade of** an area during a war. Countries also **impose** (and **lift**) **economic blockades**.

**5b** Put students in small groups of 3 or 4. Let them discuss the questions in groups. Monitor and help out with new language, where necessary. You may want to get some better versions of things students are trying to say up on the board so you can come back to this as part of your round-up. It’s always good to gap the odd word here and there and then see if you can elicit the missing words from the group. You can include the first letter of the missing words if you want to make it easier. For example:

*If you c…….. out a Facebook blast, it can d………. a company’s reputation.* (carry, damage)

* *Yeah, but on the other hand, the comments are easy to d………. .* (delete)

One other way to round up might simply be to ask the whole group for their ideas on the pros and cons – and the most effective tactic. You could write some of these ideas up on the board – using whole sentences, to show students better ways of saying what they’re trying to say.