# Collective Bargaining

**1a*.* Discuss the following questions.**

1. How are **pay and conditions** agreed in your workplace?
2. How can you **resolve disputes** at work?
3. How do you make sure your **concerns are heard** at work?

**1b Work in small groups and discuss the definition below. What do you think is meant by collective bargaining? What do you think it involves?**

**Collective bargaining** is the official process by which trade unions negotiate with employers, on behalf of their members (TUC).

***\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

**2a Match the words together then listen to the video. Tick the phrases that you hear.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| austerity |  | * steward |
| shop |  | * politics |
| union |  | * work |
| industrial |  | * unionists |
| precarious |  | * dispute |
| trade |  | * recognition |

<https://youtu.be/feMtZerAEn4>

**2b Now listen to the video again. What gains have the workers won through collective bargaining?**

**2c Compare your ideas with a partner.**

**2d Mariana mentions that the union does not always agree with the bosses. In what ways might the interests of bosses go against the interests of workers?**

**2e Ivan states that he and his colleagues reached an agreement with their bosses despite tough negotiations. What would you like to achieve in your own workplace?**

***\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

**3a Match the following words whether they go *before* or *after* the noun. Can you define each one?**

*agreement wage power unit union representative position*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **bargaining** |  |

**3b Work in pairs. What do the words in bold mean?**

1. Our job isn't the only thing **that defines us.**
2. Our rights make sure we can't be **taken advantage of.**
3. They **took the initiative** to form a union.
4. **Securing a future** for their industry meant cutting labour costs.
5. Thanks to the agreements Ivan's shipyard will be **providing good jobs.**
6. Our rights have never been **handed to us** for free.

**3c Now fill in the gaps using the phrases from above.**

1. She thought of the idea and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to put it to work.
2. Having what we wanted just **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** wouldn’t have felt as good.
3. People who know little about their rights are regularly **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**.
4. There are some cooperatives in the area that are **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** which won't leave the area.
5. Put all that energy of yours towards **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** for your children.
6. We all face challenges and it is how we respond to them **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**.

**4a Work in groups. Think about a job you have had in the past or will do in the future. Discuss:**

* Whether it is normal to have collective bargaining agreements in these industries
* How you could achieve union recognition
* What difficulties you might face organising a union

# Answer Key and Teachers’ Notes (answers in red)

**Exercise 1**

Get students to work in pairs and ask students to give definitions for the words in bold. They can use dictionaries if they need to. Allow time for students to think about their answers and then discuss their ideas with a partner. Feedback as a class, maybe ask students to elaborate by providing specific examples.

**1a*.* Discuss the following questions.**

1. How are **pay and conditions** agreed in your workplace?
2. How can you **resolve disputes** at work?
3. How do you make sure your **concerns are heard** at work?

**1b Work in small groups and discuss the definition below. What do you think is meant by collective bargaining? What do you think it involves?**

**Collective bargaining** is the official process by which trade unions negotiate with employers, on behalf of their members (TUC).

The definition here comes from the TUC, though there are others. If this is a multi-national class, you could ask students to think about how it works in their own country. In many countries, trade unions are banned or the right to association is severely restricted.

**Exercise 2**

Ask students to do the matching task on their own, then compare their answers with a partner or in small groups. Deal with any definitions (students are encouraged to use dictionaries). Students then listen to the video once and tick the phrases that they hear. If students have difficulty it may be useful to play the video again stopping after each phrase.

Students then listen again and take notes – if students have difficulty, then they can watch the video *or* read the transcript. Students compare their ideas with a partner and get feedback from the group. The students can then answer the questions 2d and 2e related to the listening.

**2a Match the words together then listen to the video. Tick the phrases that you hear.**

**(answers in bold are in the listening) austerity politics, shop steward,** union recognition, industrial dispute, precarious work, **trade unionists**

<https://youtu.be/feMtZerAEn4>

**2b Now listen to the video again. What gains have workers won through collective bargaining?**

better pay and conditions, secure work, workers’ concerns are heard, retirees will be replaced with new workers

**2c Compare your ideas with a partner.**

**2d Mariana mentions the union does not always agree with the bosses. In what ways might the interests of bosses go against the interests of workers?**

Student-generated

**2e Ivan states that he and his colleagues reached an agreement with their bosses despite tough negotiations. What would you like to achieve in your own workplace?**

Student-generated

**Exercise 3**

Students can do this on their own or with a partner. It is fine to use dictionaries, concordancers or translations to check meaning. Ask students to perhaps give examples of each one.

Students do task 3b in pairs, where they figure out the meaning of each one. Once they have done this, they fill in the gaps in 3c. Some useful definitions might be:

* **what defines us** – to describe or represent someone clearly
* **take advantage of** – exploit for one’s own benefit
* **take the initiative –** use your power to take an opportunity before someone else does
* **secure a future –** the guarantee of hopes and opportunities
* **provide good jobs –** give employment
* **be handed to us –** given to us without working for it

**3a Match the following words whether they go *before* or *after* the noun. Can you define each one?**

*agreement wage power unit union representative position*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Wage  Union | **bargaining** | Agreement  Power  Unit  Representative  Position |

**3b Work in pairs. What do the words in bold mean?**

1. Our job isn't the only thing **that defines us.**
2. Our rights make sure we can't be **taken advantage of.**
3. They **took the initiative** to form a union.
4. **Securing a future** for their industry meant cutting labour costs.
5. Thanks to the agreements Ivan's shipyard will be **providing good jobs.**
6. Our rights have never been **handed to us** for free.

**3c Now fill in the gaps using the phrases from above.**

1. She thought of the idea and **took the initiative** to put it to work.
2. Having what we wanted just **handed to us** wouldn’t have felt as good.
3. People who know little about their rights are regularly **taken advantage of.**
4. There are some cooperatives in the area that are **providing good jobs** which won't leave the area.
5. Put all that energy of yours towards **securing a future** for your children.
6. We all face challenges and it is how we respond to them **that defines us.**

**Exercise 4**

This is a freer discussion task. Ask students to work in groups and give them time to think of their answers. Students discuss their ideas in groups (maybe give different roles to students, one leads the discussion, one takes notes of the ideas discussed, one deals with vocabulary). Feedback as a class.

**4a Work in groups. Think about a job you have had in the past or will do in the future. Discuss:**

* Whether it is normal to have collective bargaining agreements in these industries
* How you could achieve union recognition
* What difficulties you might face

# Transcript

We spent a lot of time at work and, although our job isn't the only thing that defines us, our pay, hours and conditions have a big impact on the rest of our lives. With everything going on, it's easy to forget who we are and where we come from

It's understandable: we don't have time to remember how we won our rights and why we have to fight for them. Those in power who pushed austerity politics want us to forget what our parents and grandparents won before us. Today we have to keep fighting for those rights against that minority that seeks to eliminate the gains of the past.

The rights we enjoy today were won in yesterday's struggles and today's struggles represent the gains we haven't won yet. Our rights at work keep us safe, secure time off to spend with our family and friends and make sure we can't be taken advantage of.

Mariana works making clothes that are sold across Europe when she started at the factory there was no union but she saw that her colleagues needed a voice. She got together a group of workers and they took the initiative to form a union. It wasn't easy at first but they needed to organise for the bosses to listen.

Now, Mariana is their factory's shop steward negotiating with management and winning better pay and conditions for her colleagues. Although they don't always agree with the bosses Mariana thinks it's much better than before. The workers' concerns are heard and conditions are better thanks to Mariana and to the union she started.

There are too many of us who don't have rights or whose rights at work aren't respected. Work is becoming more and more precarious but trade unions are fighting for another way.

Ivan and his colleagues had always been taught that securing a future for their industry meant cutting labour costs-- meaning with their rights and pay. But Ivan and all his fellow trade unionists in the shipyard never accepted that and after a year of tough negotiation they got an agreement guaranteeing that almost all early retirees would be replaced with new workers.

Thanks to the agreements Ivan's shipyard will be providing good jobs for the region's young people for years to come. It's a huge win for Ivan, the workers and their whole community

Our rights have never been handed to us for free. We win them by sticking together, by organising. Whether young or old whatever we do we do, we work together. No it's not our job that defines us, but the solidarity we find at work does. And when we work together, fight together, we can win together.