

B2-C1 English Worksheet

Midlife Sabbaticals: Career Breaks, Burnout and Rethinking Work

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Article

Sabbaticals were once associated mainly with academics or workers nearing retirement, but a Washington Post article published on 28 September 2026 suggests that the late 30s and 40s can also be a useful time for an extended career break. For some, burnout is the trigger. Others may step away from work to recharge their batteries, care for relatives or pursue a project that has been put off for years. Midlife can also be a natural moment to take stock: after a decade or two in one profession, some workers want space to decide whether their current path still suits them.

The appeal is easy to understand, but the practical obstacles are substantial. Most sabbaticals are unpaid and a job may not be guaranteed on return, so workers often need to set aside enough money to cover months without a salary. They may also have to weigh up housing costs, insurance, childcare and the longer-term effect on pensions or savings. Those with emergency funds can fall back on them, but using money intended for retirement can create new problems. A break therefore requires more than enthusiasm; it needs a realistic budget and a clear purpose.

Career concerns matter too. Someone away for several months may worry about losing momentum or struggling to keep up with changes in their field. Yet a sabbatical does not automatically mean starting again. Some people go back to the same employer with more energy, while others use the time to test a different direction through study, volunteering or a small project. The break may pay off if it brings clarity, but it is not a cure for every unhappy job. The strongest case for a sabbatical is often not escape, but deliberate time to reconsider priorities before making a bigger decision.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

No.	Statement	T / F
1	Sabbaticals are described as historically linked with academics or later career stages.	
2	The article presents the late 30s and 40s as one possible time for an extended career break.	
3	All midlife sabbaticals are taken because workers want to change careers.	
4	A person may need savings because many sabbaticals are unpaid.	
5	The article advises workers to use retirement funds before other savings.	
6	Returning from a sabbatical always means starting a career from the beginning.	
7	Study or volunteering can be used to test a different direction.	
8	The writer presents a sabbatical as a guaranteed cure for job dissatisfaction.	

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. step away from	A. reserve something for a particular purpose
2. recharge their batteries	B. return to a previous job, activity or situation
3. put off	C. produce a useful or worthwhile result
4. take stock	D. rest and recover energy
5. set aside	E. carefully consider your current situation before deciding
6. weigh up	F. use something as a backup when it is needed
7. fall back on	G. delay something until a later time
8. keep up with	H. temporarily leave or stop doing something
9. go back to	I. stay informed about changes or remain at the same pace
10. pay off	J. consider the advantages and disadvantages before deciding

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. associated	A. practical
2. extended	B. linked
3. pursue	C. reassess
4. obstacles	D. considerable
5. substantial	E. assured
6. guaranteed	F. undertake
7. realistic	G. intentional
8. enthusiasm	H. barriers
9. deliberate	I. eagerness
10. reconsider	J. prolonged

Use the New Language

Choose 5 words or phrases from the worksheet and write your own sentences.

No.	Your sentence
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Discussion Questions

Student A	Student B
1. Have you ever wanted to step away from work for several months? What would you do?	1. Are midlife sabbaticals a realistic opportunity, or mainly a benefit for higher earners?
2. If you had six months off with enough money, how would you spend it?	2. Should employers guarantee a job on return after a planned sabbatical?
3. Which responsibilities would be hardest to organise before taking a sabbatical?	3. Can a long break prevent burnout, or can it simply postpone a deeper workplace problem?
4. At what stage in a career is it most useful to take stock?	4. What might companies gain when experienced staff step away from work temporarily?
5. How much money would you want to set aside before a long break?	5. How should someone weigh up lost income against the personal benefits of time off?
6. Would you worry about being unable to keep up with changes in your field?	6. Could sabbaticals become a normal part of a 40-year career rather than an unusual privilege?
7. Would you prefer to go back to the same job or use the break to change direction?	7. Is it better to take a break before a crisis forces someone to stop?
8. What would make a sabbatical feel as if it had paid off?	8. Does society place too much value on uninterrupted career progression?

Answer Key

True/False	1=T, 2=T, 3=F, 4=T, 5=F, 6=F, 7=T, 8=F
Phrase Match	1=H, 2=D, 3=G, 4=E, 5=A, 6=J, 7=F, 8=I, 9=B, 10=C
Synonym Match	1=B, 2=J, 3=F, 4=H, 5=D, 6=E, 7=A, 8=I, 9=G, 10=C

Example Sentences With the Phrases

No.	Example sentence
1	After ten demanding years, she decided to step away from work for six months.
2	Some professionals travel simply to recharge their batteries.
3	They put off the trip until they had saved enough money.
4	A career break can give people time to take stock before making a major decision.
5	She set aside part of her salary every month before taking unpaid leave.
6	It is sensible to weigh up the financial costs before leaving a job.
7	He had emergency savings to fall back on during the break.
8	She took an online course to keep up with changes in her industry.
9	Many workers choose to go back to the same employer after a sabbatical.
10	Careful planning can pay off when it is time to return to work.