



Don't have much work to do today? Is your boss on holiday? Why bother coming to the office at all? Stay at home and watch Game of Thrones instead! Or perhaps you prefer philosophy ;-)

## Weekly English Practice

18th February 2016

English  
Coaching  
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# Spanish civil servant skips work for years

*Joaquín García failed to show up for his job at the water board for at least six years*

**skip work (informal):** to fail to attend; to miss  
**to be posted:** to send (someone) to a place to take up an appointment  
**waste:** unwanted or unusable material(s), substances or by-products  
**on the payroll:** a list of a company's employees and the amount of money they are to be paid  
**to fine s.b. (for s.t.):** punish (someone) for an illegal or illicit act by making them pay a sum of money  
**to turn up:** to attend  
**to be sidelined:** to be removed from the centre of activity or attention; to be placed in a less influential position  
**to make the most of s.t.:** to use s.t. to your best advantage

Only when Joaquín García, a Spanish civil servant, was due to collect an award for two decades of loyal and dedicated service did anyone realise that he had not, in fact, shown up to work for at least six years – and possibly as many as 14.

García, a 69-year-old engineer, began working for the local authority in the south-western city of Cádiz in 1990, according to *el Mundo*, and in 1996 was **posted** to the municipal water board, Agua de Cadiz, where his job was to supervise a **waste** water treatment plant.

In 2010, when García – who has now retired – was due to collect his long-service medal, the man who had hired him, deputy mayor Jorge Blas Fernández, wondered where he was: “He was still **on the payroll**,” he told the paper. “I thought, where is this man? Is he still there? Has he retired? Has he died?”

After the former manager of the water board, who had the office opposite García's, told Fernández he had not seen his employee for several years, the deputy mayor called the engineer in. “I asked him: what are you

doing?” Fernández said. “What did you do yesterday? And the previous month? He could not answer.”

A court this week **fined** Garcia €27,000 (£21,000), the equivalent after tax of one year of his annual salary, having earlier found that the engineer did not appear to have occupied his office for “at least six years” and had done “absolutely no work” between 2007 and 2010, the year before he retired.

**to skive (a skiver):** to avoid work or a duty by staying away or leaving early.  
“She used to **skive (off) lessons**.”  
“You are such a **skiver!** You're always taking cigarette breaks!”

García told the court that he had **turned up** to the office, although he admitted he may not have kept regular business hours. He said he was the victim of workplace bullying because of his family's socialist politics and had been deliberately **sidelined** at the water board.

The tribunal concluded that the water board had believed García was the responsibility of the city council for most of the period of his employment, while the city council thought he was working for the water board.

The engineer **made the most of** the confusion, becoming an avid reader of philosophy and an expert on the works of Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher credited with laying the foundations of the Enlightenment.

Read the original article from the Guardian [here](#)

“Let's chat about that.”

- What is your opinion of Joaquín García?  
Is he clever/lazy/crafty? All three?
- What is your opinion of his bosses and colleagues? And the companies involved?
- What do you think of the punishment he was given? Was it fair/lenient/harsh?
- If you had the possibility of doing the same as Joaquín, would you? Why (not)?
- What would you do if you didn't have to work?



# “iLook, iThink, iSpeak” Express yourself better!

And now for something completely different... **SPEAKING**

**PRACTICE**

## Even more **VOCABULARY EXPANSION**

### Business Idioms

#### A FOOT IN THE DOOR

To manage to enter an organization, a field of business, etc. that could bring you success. *“I always wanted to work for that company but it took me two years to get a **foot in the door**.”*

#### CASH COW

The part of a business that always makes a profit and that provides money for the rest of the business. *“The new product became the company’s **cash cow**.”*

#### TOO MANY CHIEFS, NOT ENOUGH INDIANS

Used to describe a situation in which there are too many people telling other people what to do, and not enough people to do the work. *“There are **too many chiefs and not enough Indians** in that company.”*

#### EAGER BEAVER

An enthusiastic person who works very hard. *“George is an **eager beaver** and is certain to succeed in business.”*

#### GOLDEN HANDSHAKE

A large sum of money that is given to somebody when they leave their job, or to persuade them to leave their job. *“When Tom left the company he was given a **golden handshake**.”*

#### GREASE SOMEONE'S PALM

To give somebody money in order to persuade them to do something dishonest. *“There are rumours that the company had to **grease someone’s palms** to get that contract.”*

#### HOLD THE FORT

To have the responsibility for something or care of somebody while other people are away or out. *“While the boss is out of the office, I’ll have to **hold the fort**.”*

#### KEEP YOUR HEAD ABOVE WATER

To deal with a difficult situation, especially one in which you have financial problems, and just manage to survive. *“Business is bad. I’m not sure how much longer we’ll be able to **keep our heads above water**.”*

#### GO BELLY UP

To fail completely. *“Last year the business **went belly up** after sales continued to fall.”*

#### SLEEPING PARTNER

A person who has put money into a business company but who is not actually involved in running it. *“Tom found a **sleeping partner** to invest money in his business.”*

#### RED TAPE

Official rules that seem more complicated than necessary and prevent things from being done quickly. *“You have to go through endless **red tape** to start up a business.”*

#### SELL ICE TO ESKIMOS

To persuade people to go against their best interests or to accept something unnecessary or preposterous. *“That salesman is such a smooth talker, he could **sell ice to Eskimos**.”*



**Rock concert**



**Traditional music**



**DJs**

*Describe the differences between these events*

- \* Which event would you prefer to go to?
- \* Describe why you wouldn’t go to the other two.
- \* How would people enjoy these different events in different ways?
- \* Describe a memorable music event you went to.

For the full list of idioms go to: <http://www.myenglishteacher.eu/blog/15-business-english-idioms-and-phrases-in-use/>