

7.3 Vocabulary and skills development

GOALS ■ Understand ellipsis ■ Understand the meaning of prefixes

Reading & Speaking understanding ellipsis

- 1a Look at the illustration and the title of the article, which is an idiom. What does it mean? Discuss with a partner.
- b Read the first paragraph of the article and compare with your ideas.
- 2 Before you read the rest of the article, read the information in the Unlock the code box about understanding ellipsis.



UNLOCK THE CODE understanding ellipsis

Ellipsis is when one or more words are left out of a phrase or sentence because the writer assumes that they aren't necessary for understanding.

- In **noun ellipsis** we often don't repeat a noun (or pronoun or noun group) which has already been mentioned.

Julia has six years' experience, but Mike (has) only two (years' experience).

She bought a ticket but (she) didn't use it.

- In **verb ellipsis** we either don't repeat a verb form, or use only the auxiliary.

The weather has been excellent and the food (has been) delicious.

They are not working as hard as I feel they should (work).

Understanding ellipsis will help you understand the flow of a text.

- 3 Work with a partner. Use the words and phrases in the box that replace what you think has been left out through ellipsis.

do well he I member of staff say was

- 1 He tried several times, but failed.
- 2 I knew he would do well, but I wouldn't.
- 3 He fired two members of staff and promoted a third.
- 4 What you *don't* say is as important as what you do.
- 5 His ideas were imaginative and his work excellent.
- 6 I applied for promotion, but didn't get it.



Opinion

The carrot or

What motivates you more? The carrot (incentive or promise of reward) or the stick (threat of punishment)? Or maybe something else altogether?

When we try to make things better, whether a workplace, an organization or a whole system, like the banking system, or the health service, we usually try to either reward people by giving them incentives or control them through making rules.

But there are problems with both approaches. If people have to follow the rules and can't use their own judgment, they will sometimes make decisions which we can clearly see are unfair or wrong. And if we rely on incentives, we end up with people who are only concerned about their own self-interest. The incentives encourage them to 'game' the system, rather than to make decisions based on everyone's best interests.

Rules and incentives are not enough. We also need what psychologist Barry Schwarz refers to as 'practical wisdom'.

4 Now read the rest of the article and answer the questions. In most cases this will require you to understand ellipsis.

- 1 What three examples does the writer give of places which we might want to improve?
- 2 According to the writer, what is the problem with simply following rules?
- 3 What do incentives discourage people from doing?
- 4 What happens if you have moral skill but you don't have moral will?
- 5 How does Schwarz think the priorities of bankers have changed?
- 6 What three things does Schwarz think we need to improve in our systems and institutions?



the stick?

There are two parts to practical wisdom. Firstly, people need to be able to try things out and see them fail, which is never going to happen when they have to follow rules rigidly. Schwarz calls this 'moral skill'. The second part of practical wisdom is 'moral will', or the ability to do what is right for others as well as for yourself. And, says Schwarz, that can't be learnt when people are only motivated by incentives, because incentives make us self-centred.

If you have moral skill but not the will to do the right thing, you end up using your skills to manipulate people. For example, Schwarz argues that in the old days bankers wanted to make money, but they also wanted to serve their clients and communities. They made sure people weren't taking on more debt than they could manage, that they were saving for a rainy day. But by focusing on incentives, banking lost its moral will.

If we want institutions and systems which truly look after our best interests, we have to have rules and incentives and encourage the development of practical wisdom.

5 What rules and incentives does your place of work or study have? Tell your partner.

Vocabulary the meaning of prefixes

6a Look at the examples from the article. What other words can you think of which use the prefix in bold?

'people who are only concerned about their own **self**-interest'

'incentives make us **self**-centred'

b Read the information in the Vocabulary focus box about the meaning of prefixes.

VOCABULARY FOCUS the meaning of prefixes

Some prefixes have a very clear meaning which can help you to understand the meaning of the whole word.

- **self**- (done to or by yourself): *self-awareness* = understanding yourself
- **bi**- (two): *bilingual* = speaking two languages
- **inter**- (between or from one to another): *intercontinental* = between continents
- **mono**- (one): *monoplane* = a plane with one wing
- **multi**- (many): *multicoloured* = with many different colours
- **semi**- (half, or partly) *semicircle* = half a circle

Check the use of hyphens in a good dictionary.

7 Complete the sentences using the root word in brackets and a suitable prefix.

- 1 People who speak more than one language tend to earn more than people who are _____ (lingual).
- 2 When it comes to chocolate, I have absolutely no _____ (control). I can't help eating it.
- 3 Although he is seventy, he's still only _____ (retire); he works two days a week.
- 4 The company set up an _____ (nation) competition, with entries from all over the world.
- 5 It is 200 years since the school opened, so they are celebrating their _____ (centenary).

8a **TASK** Work with a partner. Look at the words in the box and try to guess the meaning, using the prefixes to help you.

biannual interconnect monotone multimillionaire
self-destructive semi-human

b Write a short text using as many of the words in the box as possible. Compare your text with your partner's.

▶ **VOX POPS VIDEO 7**