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Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

## **British Airways strike almost over**

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**13 August, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **British Airways strike almost over**

**BNE:** A strike by catering workers at London's Heathrow airport has created chaos for thousands of air passengers. It has also severely affected the operations of British Airways (BA). Up to 70,000 travelers are waiting at or near the airport, not knowing when, or if, they will fly. Several hundred baggage handlers, cargo staff and other workers went on strike in support of 800 employees who were sacked by the US catering firm Gate Gourmet. A meeting is expected between unions and Gate Gourmet to break the deadlock.

BA's Chief Executive Rod Eddington said: "I urge the management of Gate Gourmet and senior [union] officials to find a speedy resolution to this crisis and end the misery they are heaping on our customers.... This is not our dispute. Our customers must come first and everyone involved in creating this chaotic situation must come to their senses." A further problem for BA is that nearly 100 airplanes and 1,000 pilots and cabin crew are still at the wrong airports around the world. BA said it would take days to clear the backlog.

## WARM-UPS

**1. FLIGHT CREW:** Imagine you are a pilot or part of the cabin crew for British Airways (or another airline). Walk around the classroom and talk to the other “pilots / flight attendants” about your job and lifestyle.

**2. AIRPORTS:** What are your experiences of airports? In pairs / groups, talk about how the following could be improved at an airport you all know:

- Getting to and from the airport
- Check-in
- Departure tax
- Security controls
- Duty free stores
- Restaurants
- Departure gates
- Other

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Strike / airports / catering services / travelers / baggage / strikes / chaotic situations / airline pilots / cabin crew*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. PASSENGER:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “passenger”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**5. BA STRIKE OPINIONS:** In pairs / groups, talk about these opinions on striking workers, Do you agree or disagree with them?

- a. Any airline worker who goes on strike should be immediately fired.
- b. Airlines should have much better back-up plans to deal with strikes.
- c. British Airways is the best airline in the world.
- d. British Airways makes big profits. It should pay its staff more.
- e. I don’t understand people who go on strike. They have signed a work contract.
- f. If caterers go on strike, passengers should take their own food on the airplane.
- g. If workers go on strike, it’s because employers are bad.
- h. If I were a stranded passenger, I would be very, very angry.

**6. QUICK DEBATE:** Students A think traveling by air is a wonderful way to travel. Students B think traveling by air is a terrible way to travel. Change partners often.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. Striking catering workers stopped British Airways' operations.         | T / F |
| b. Around 700,000 travelers are waiting at the airport.                   | T / F |
| c. Airport staff went on strike in support of 800 workers who were fired. | T / F |
| d. The catering company and unions are refusing to talk to each other.    | T / F |
| e. BA's CEO said the strike has heaped misery on BA customers.            | T / F |
| f. BA's CEO said people must come to their senses.                        | T / F |
| g. Many BA pilots are at the wrong airports around the world.             | T / F |
| h. BA said it would take a month to clear the backlog.                    | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |             |                   |
|-------------|-------------------|
| a. strike   | argument          |
| b. severely | stalemate         |
| c. baggage  | mess              |
| d. sacked   | luggage           |
| e. deadlock | piling            |
| f. urge     | industrial action |
| g. crisis   | ask               |
| h. heaping  | fired             |
| i. dispute  | confused          |
| j. chaotic  | seriously         |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. catering                 | senses                            |
| b. severely affected        | the deadlock                      |
| c. baggage                  | to this crisis                    |
| d. went on strike in        | handlers                          |
| e. break                    | workers                           |
| f. find a speedy resolution | the backlog                       |
| g. end                      | and cabin crew                    |
| h. come to their            | the operations of British Airways |
| i. pilots                   | the misery                        |
| j. take days to clear       | support of 800 employees          |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the correct space.

### British Airways strike almost over

**BNE:** A \_\_\_\_\_ by catering workers at London's Heathrow airport has created chaos for thousands of air passengers. It has also \_\_\_\_\_ affected the \_\_\_\_\_ of British Airways (BA). Up to 70,000 travelers are waiting at or near the airport, not \_\_\_\_\_ when, or if, they will fly. Several hundred baggage handlers, cargo \_\_\_\_\_ and other workers went on strike in \_\_\_\_\_ of 800 employees who were sacked by the US catering \_\_\_\_\_ Gate Gourmet. A meeting is expected between unions and Gate Gourmet to \_\_\_\_\_ the deadlock.

BA's Chief Executive Rod Eddington said: "I \_\_\_\_\_ the management of Gate Gourmet and senior [union] officials to find a \_\_\_\_\_ resolution to this crisis and end the \_\_\_\_\_ they are heaping on our customers.... This is not our \_\_\_\_\_. Our customers must come first and everyone involved in creating this \_\_\_\_\_ situation must come to their \_\_\_\_\_." A further problem for BA is that nearly 100 airplanes and 1,000 pilots and cabin crew are still at the \_\_\_\_\_ airports around the world. BA said it would take days to clear the \_\_\_\_\_.

*operations*

*break*

*strike*

*support*

*staff*

*firm*

*severely*

*knowing*

*wrong*

*dispute*

*speedy*

*senses*

*misery*

*chaotic*

*backlog*

*urge*

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'cabin'** and **'pilot'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "FLYING" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about airplanes, airports and flying.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| • catering   | • urge    |
| • operations | • speedy  |
| • waiting    | • dispute |
| • baggage    | • senses  |
| • sacked     | • wrong   |
| • deadlock   | • backlog |

## **DISCUSSION**

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you first saw this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What are your thoughts on the striking workers?
- d. Do you / Would you belong to a union?
- e. Are strikes common in your country?
- f. If you were a passenger, would you feel sorry for the workers who were fired?
- g. What would you do if you had to spend 48 hours at an airport?
- h. What do you think of airplane food?
- i. Do you like flying?
- j. Have you ever had to wait a long time for a plane, train, or bus?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Are you impressed with the service on airlines?
- d. Do you think flying is the best way of traveling?
- e. Would you like to be a pilot or flight attendant?
- f. Have you ever experienced disrupted travel services?
- g. What is your impression of British Airways?
- h. What's the biggest problem you've faced in your life?
- i. What do you think of your country's national airline?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

## SPEAKING

**FLYING:** You have been asked by the airline industry to make recommendations on how to improve air travel. In pairs / groups, write down the biggest problem with each of the categories below. Decide on three suggestions for their improvement. Agree on and circle how serious the “present problem” is (1 = very bad, 5 = wonderful).

CATEGORY	PRESENT PROBLEM	RECOMMENDATIONS
Food	1 2 3 4 5	1. 2. 3.
In-flight entertainment	1 2 3 4 5	1. 2. 3.
The seat	1 2 3 4 5	1. 2. 3.
Baggage	1 2 3 4 5	1. 2. 3.
Checking in	1 2 3 4 5	1. 2. 3.
Other	1 2 3 4 5	1. 2. 3.

Change partners and explain what you discussed with your previous partner(s). Give each other feedback on your ideas. Combine your ideas to make your recommendations even better (you have to agree on the three best recommendations).

Return to your original partners and discuss any changes you made.



## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **British Airways strike almost over**

**BNE:** A strike by \_\_\_\_\_ workers at London's Heathrow airport has created chaos for thousands of air passengers. It has also \_\_\_\_\_ affected the operations of British Airways (BA). Up to 70,000 travelers are waiting at or near the airport, not \_\_\_\_\_ when, or if, they will fly. Several hundred baggage handlers, cargo staff and other workers went on strike in \_\_\_\_\_ of 800 employees who were \_\_\_\_\_ by the US catering firm Gate Gourmet. A meeting is expected between unions and Gate Gourmet to break the \_\_\_\_\_.

BA's Chief Executive Rod Eddington said: "I \_\_\_\_\_ the management of Gate Gourmet and senior [union] officials to find a \_\_\_\_\_ resolution to this crisis and end the misery they are \_\_\_\_\_ on our customers.... This is not our dispute. Our customers must come first and everyone involved in creating this \_\_\_\_\_ situation must come to their senses." A further problem for BA is that nearly 100 airplanes and 1,000 pilots and cabin crew are still at the \_\_\_\_\_ airports around the world. BA said it would take days to clear the \_\_\_\_\_.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on British Airways (or any other airline). Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. LETTER:** Imagine you were stranded at London's Heathrow airport for 48 hours, waiting for a flight to return to your home country. Write a letter to the British Airways CEO to complain. Ask him for compensation. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all have similar complaints and demands for compensation?

**4. DIARY / JOURNAL:** Imagine you had to wait at London's Heathrow airport for 48 hours. Write your diary / journal entry for that time. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

a. T      b. F      c. T      d. F      e. T      f. T      g. T      h. F

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. strike	industrial action
b. severely	seriously
c. baggage	luggage
d. sacked	fired
e. deadlock	stalemate
f. urge	ask
g. crisis	mess
h. heaping	piling
i. dispute	argument
j. chaotic	confused

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. catering	workers
b. severely affected	the operations of British Airways
c. baggage	handlers
d. went on strike in	support of 800 employees
e. break	the deadlock
f. find a speedy resolution	to this crisis
g. end	the misery
h. come to their	senses
i. pilots	and cabin crew
j. take days to clear	the backlog

### GAP FILL:

#### British Airways strike almost over

**BNE:** A **strike** by catering workers at London's Heathrow airport has created chaos for thousands of air passengers. It has also **severely** affected the **operations** of British Airways (BA). Up to 70,000 travelers are waiting at or near the airport, not **knowing** when, or if, they will fly. Several hundred baggage handlers, cargo **staff** and other workers went on strike in **support** of 800 employees who were sacked by the US catering **firm** Gate Gourmet. A meeting is expected between unions and Gate Gourmet to **break** the deadlock.

BA's Chief Executive Rod Eddington said: "I **urge** the management of Gate Gourmet and senior [union] officials to find a **speedy** resolution to this crisis and end the **misery** they are heaping on our customers.... This is not our **dispute**. Our customers must come first and everyone involved in creating this **chaotic** situation must come to their **senses**." A further problem for BA is that nearly 100 airplanes and 1,000 pilots and cabin crew are still at the **wrong** airports around the world. BA said it would take days to clear the **backlog**.