

# Learning at Work: Who Pays?



## Pre - Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Have you ever taken a course or training to improve your work skills?
2. What new skills do people often need at work today?
3. What problems might happen if workers do not continue learning new skills?

### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. ____ automation    | a) a situation where something is in danger of being lost or harmed.  |
| 2. ____ keep up       | b) something that is strong, effective, and able to work well.        |
| 3. ____ foot the bill | c) pressure or stress that makes something difficult to manage.       |
| 4. ____ hurdle        | d) to stay at the same level as changes or progress.                  |
| 5. ____ strain        | e) the use of machines or software to do work that people used to do. |
| 6. ____ robust        | f) something important that can be gained or lost in a situation.     |
| 7. ____ stake         | g). to pay the cost for something.                                    |
| 8. ____ jeopardy      | h) to stop or slow down progress for a time.                          |
| 9. ____ ongoing       | i) a problem or difficulty that makes progress harder.                |
| 10. ____ stall        | j) something that continues over a period of time.                    |

# Learning at Work: Who Pays?



## Reading

*Should companies pay for employees' further education?*

1. The future of work is here, and it's moving fast. **Automation**, AI, and new technologies are reshaping jobs overnight. To **keep up**, employees constantly need to learn new skills. This raises a critical question: Should companies **foot the bill** for their employees' further education?
2. For many businesses, the immediate costs are a major **hurdle**. Funding courses, training programs, and study time requires significant investment—a particular **strain** for smaller companies. There's also the nagging fear of losing that investment entirely if an employee leaves after gaining new qualifications. As one manager put it: "We train people, but we cannot control their future choices." For them, it's a financial gamble.
3. But what about the long game? The data tells a compelling story. Research consistently shows that companies with **robust** learning programs see higher productivity and, crucially, lower staff turnover. A 2022 World Economic Forum report warned that most workers will need new skills within five years due to automation. Seen through this lens, investing in education isn't an extra cost; it's essential for future-proofing your business. A skilled team is your best competitive advantage.
4. From the employee's side, the **stakes** are personal. Without company support, many risk being left behind. Not everyone can self-fund a degree or certification, creating a gap between those with resources and those without. In fast-evolving fields like tech or healthcare, a lack of **ongoing** training doesn't just **stall** careers—it can put entire jobs in **jeopardy**.
5. Of course, a counter-argument persists: learning is a personal responsibility. Some believe companies should focus on current roles, not future career paths, and that employees, as the primary beneficiaries, should manage their own development.
6. Ultimately, this debate is about timing. Investing in education strains budgets today, but not investing might cost far more tomorrow in lost talent and relevance. Should businesses invest now, or wait and potentially pay the price later? The answer will define both our workforce and our economy. What's your take?

**Fact:** About 85% of workers at companies with more than 50 employees receive formal training at work.

— *Devlinpeck.com*

## Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers below.

1. What changes in the workplace are making new skills more important for employees?

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2. Why do some companies see paying for education as a financial risk?

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3. Why might some employees struggle to continue their education without company support?

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4. According to the reading, how can learning programs benefit companies in the long term?

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5. Why do some people believe that learning should be the employee's responsibility?

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## Vocabulary Review

### A. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.  
You may need to change the word forms.

1. Paying for long courses can put a financial \_\_\_\_\_ on small businesses.
2. A lack of training can put workers' jobs in serious \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The company decided to \_\_\_\_\_ the bill for employees who wanted to study job-related skills.
4. To succeed in a fast-changing industry, companies need a \_\_\_\_\_ training program, not a weak one.
5. Without regular learning, an employee's career may begin to \_\_\_\_\_ over time.
6. Many factory jobs changed after \_\_\_\_\_ was introduced, and machines began doing more of the work.

### B. Odd One Out

Circle the word that does NOT belong in the group.

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. a) automation<br>b) obstacle<br>c) hurdle | 3. a) stall<br>b) delay<br>c) robust          | 5. a) keep up<br>b) pressure<br>c) strain | 7. a) stake<br>b) automation<br>c) interest   |
| 2. a) ongoing<br>b) hurdle<br>c) continue    | 4. a) pay for<br>b) stall<br>c) foot the bill | 6. a) robust<br>b) strong<br>c) jeopardy  | 8. a) keep up<br>b) stay current<br>c) hurdle |

## Discussion

1. What kinds of job-related courses do you think are most useful today?
2. How do you feel when companies expect workers to learn new skills in their free time?
3. Should companies support all employees equally, or only those in certain roles?
4. What risks do companies face if they do not invest in employee training?
5. If you were a business owner, when would you agree to pay for an employee's education?

## Debate

Use the useful expressions on page 6 to help you make your points.

### Topic 1:

**Pro:** If companies demand new skills, they should be responsible for paying for training.

**Con:** Companies do not owe employees education beyond the skills needed for the job today.

### Topic 2:

**Pro:** Refusing to support employee education puts jobs and entire industries at risk.

**Con:** Spending money on employee education can weaken a company's ability to survive.

## Writing

Choose one discussion question from the previous activity.

Write one opinion paragraph about your answer.

### Writing Tips

Remember to:

- Start with your opinion (what you think).
- Give one or two reasons for your opinion.
- Add one example from your experience or imagination to support your idea.
- End with a short concluding sentence.

## Useful Expressions and Transitions for Debating

### Giving an Opinion

- In my opinion...
- I believe that...
- From my point of view...
- I think that...
- Personally, I feel that...

### Adding / Responding to a Point

- I'd like to add something.
- Can I add something here?
- That's a good point.
- Another thing to consider is...
- Building on what you said...

### Asking for Clarification

- What do you mean by...?
- Could you explain that again?
- Do you mean that...?
- I'm not sure I understand.

### Summarizing & Concluding

- To sum up...
- In conclusion...
- So what you're saying is...
- Let me summarize my idea...
- Finally, I'd like to say...

### Agreeing & Partly Agreeing

- I agree with you.
- I agree to some extent, but...
- I see your point.
- That's true, but...
- You're right about that.
- I feel the same way.
- I understand what you mean.

### Disagreeing Politely

- I'm not sure I agree.
- I'm afraid I disagree.
- I see your point, but I think...
- I don't really agree with that.
- With all due respect, I think...
- That may be true, but...

### Persuading

- Try to see it this way...
- Imagine if...
- Wouldn't you agree that...?
- Think about the fact that...

## Role-Play Activity — Who Should Pay for Learning?

### Situation

A medium-sized company is holding a meeting to decide whether it should pay for employees' further education as jobs change because of new technology.

**Roles** Assign one role to each learner:

Role	Opinion
Company Director	You are worried about costs and long-term business survival.
HR Manager	You focus on employee development, retention, and fairness.
Senior Employee	You want training to keep your skills up to date and stay employable.
Junior Employee	You cannot afford further education without company support.
Finance Manager	You are concerned about budgets, risks, and return on investment.
Team Leader	You need skilled staff to meet future work demands.

Discuss whether the company should:

- pay fully for education,
- pay part of the cost, or
- not pay at all.

You may also discuss conditions, such as study limits or staying with the company after training.

The group must agree on one clear policy about paying for employee education and be ready to explain why they chose it.