

The Gig Economy: How Freelance Work Is Redefining Employment

COMPREHENSION • VOCABULARY • DISCUSSION

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Reading Passage

Read the passage carefully. Each paragraph is labelled with a letter for easy reference.

A In recent years, the gig economy has transformed the way many people approach their work. Freelancers, independent contractors, and part-time workers now make up a significant portion of the workforce. This shift began with the rise of technology platforms that connect workers with short-term jobs, allowing individuals to choose when and how much they work. For instance, platforms like Uber and Upwork have enabled people to earn money based on their skills, whether it's driving, graphic design, or writing. This flexibility appeals to those who desire a better work-life balance or who are seeking additional income alongside their main jobs. Many individuals are drawn to gig work because it allows them to pursue their passions while also managing their personal commitments effectively.

B However, this new model of employment comes with its own challenges. Freelancers often lack access to essential benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, and retirement plans, which are typically offered to full-time employees. Moreover, the income can be unpredictable, making financial planning difficult and stressful. Freelancers may experience periods of feast and famine, where they have too much work at one time and none at another. Despite these drawbacks, many workers find the gig economy liberating. They enjoy the ability to work on diverse projects and the freedom to choose their clients, which can lead to greater job satisfaction. As more individuals turn to freelance work, it is essential for policymakers to address these issues and create a more stable and supportive environment for gig workers. The future of employment may very well depend on how society adapts to this new reality, ensuring that gig workers are not left behind in terms of rights and protections.

Vocabulary Glossary

Key words and phrases from the passage. Study them before attempting the exercise below.

WORD / PHRASE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
gig economy	a way of working where people have short jobs or tasks instead of a full-time job	<i>She enjoys the flexibility of the gig economy because she can choose when to work.</i>
freelancers	people who work for themselves and sell their skills to different companies	<i>Freelancers often work from home and set their own schedules.</i>
independent contractors	workers who are hired to complete specific tasks and are not regular employees	<i>Independent contractors may work for several companies at the same time.</i>
platforms	online services that connect workers with jobs or tasks	<i>Many graphic designers use platforms to find new clients.</i>
flexibility	the ability to change or choose how and when to do something	<i>The job offers flexibility, allowing her to take care of her children during the day.</i>
benefits	extra things that workers get from their jobs, like health insurance or paid time off	<i>Full-time employees usually receive benefits such as health insurance.</i>
unpredictable	something that is not easy to know or guess in advance	<i>The weather here is very unpredictable; it can change quickly.</i>
feast and famine	a situation with times of plenty and times of scarcity	<i>Salespeople often experience feast and famine, with some months being very busy and others very slow.</i>

Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blank

Use one word or phrase from the glossary above to complete each sentence. Each item is used only once. Answers are on the final page.

1. Many people enjoy the _____ of the gig economy because they can work whenever they want.
2. _____ often need to find their own projects and clients to make a living.
3. Some workers in the gig economy use _____ like Uber to find jobs.
4. A common challenge for gig workers is the lack of job _____ such as health insurance.
5. The income in the gig economy can be _____, making it hard to plan financially.
6. Workers may face _____, meaning they have lots of work one month and none the next.

Comprehension Questions

These questions are different from the online practice test. Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D). Answers and explanations are on the final page.

Question 1

What has been a primary driver for the growth of the gig economy?

- A. The desire for more full-time jobs
- B. The increase in online platforms
- C. A decrease in technology use
- D. More company-provided benefits

Question 2

What is a potential drawback of gig work mentioned in the passage?

- A. Reduced job satisfaction
- B. Less freedom to choose clients
- C. Lack of essential benefits
- D. Limited project diversity

Question 3

Why might financial planning be difficult for gig workers?

- A. Steady income
- B. High expenses
- C. Unpredictable income
- D. Too many clients

Question 4

What is the author's purpose in mentioning policymakers in the passage?

- A. To suggest they limit gig work
- B. To emphasize the need for support
- C. To criticize their inaction
- D. To highlight their success

Question 5

How does the passage describe the attraction to gig work?

- A. It offers less job satisfaction
- B. It limits personal commitments
- C. It allows pursuing passions
- D. It restricts work-life balance

Discussion & Writing Prompts

Each prompt references a specific detail from the passage above. Use for classroom discussion or a short written response (150–200 words).

1. The passage mentions that freelancers lack access to benefits like health insurance and retirement plans. How could governments or companies address this issue to support gig workers?

2. The passage states that gig workers enjoy the freedom to choose their clients and projects. Do you think this freedom outweighs the challenges of income unpredictability? Why or why not?

3. According to the passage, technology platforms have been crucial in the rise of the gig economy. In what ways do you think future technological advancements might further change the nature of gig work?

Answer Key

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Q1 B

Q2 C

Q3 C

Q4 B

Q5 C

VOCABULARY EXERCISE

FIB1 flexibility

FIB2 Freelancers

FIB3 platforms

FIB4 benefits

FIB5 unpredictable

FIB6 feast and famine

Comprehension Question Explanations

Why the correct answer is right — and why each wrong option is incorrect.

1. What has been a primary driver for the growth of the gig economy?

✓ B — The increase in online platforms

B is correct because the passage states that the rise of technology platforms has driven gig economy growth.

✗ A — The desire for more full-time jobs

A is incorrect because the passage discusses part-time and freelance work, not full-time jobs.

✗ C — A decrease in technology use

C is incorrect because the passage mentions an increase in technology use, not a decrease.

✗ D — More company-provided benefits

D is incorrect because gig economy workers often lack company-provided benefits.

2. What is a potential drawback of gig work mentioned in the passage?

✓ C — Lack of essential benefits

C is correct because the passage states that gig workers often lack essential benefits.

✗ A — Reduced job satisfaction

A is incorrect because the passage suggests gig work can lead to greater job satisfaction.

✗ B — Less freedom to choose clients

B is incorrect because gig workers enjoy freedom to choose their clients.

✗ D — Limited project diversity

D is incorrect because the passage notes that gig work offers diverse projects.

3. Why might financial planning be difficult for gig workers?

✓ C — Unpredictable income

C is correct because the passage describes gig workers' income as unpredictable, making planning hard.

✗ A — Steady income

A is incorrect because the income is described as unpredictable, not steady.

✗ B — High expenses

B is incorrect because high expenses are not mentioned as a reason.

✗ D — Too many clients

D is incorrect because having too many clients is not mentioned as a problem.

4. What is the author's purpose in mentioning policymakers in the passage?

✓ **B — To emphasize the need for support**

B is correct because the author mentions policymakers to emphasize the need for a supportive environment for gig workers.

✗ **A — To suggest they limit gig work**

A is incorrect because the author does not suggest limiting gig work.

✗ **C — To criticize their inaction**

C is incorrect because the passage does not criticize policymakers.

✗ **D — To highlight their success**

D is incorrect because the passage does not highlight their success.

5. How does the passage describe the attraction to gig work?

✓ **C — It allows pursuing passions**

C is correct because the passage states gig work allows individuals to pursue their passions.

✗ **A — It offers less job satisfaction**

A is incorrect because the passage mentions greater job satisfaction.

✗ **B — It limits personal commitments**

B is incorrect because gig work helps manage personal commitments.

✗ **D — It restricts work-life balance**

D is incorrect because gig work is noted for improving work-life balance.

MORE B2 LEVEL READING PRACTICE

Letters Refugee Camp Family Story Hope — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/letters-refugee-camp-family-story-hope>

Global Health Preparedness Lessons Recent Pandemics — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/global-health-preparedness-lessons-recent-pandemics>

Climate Migration Communities Move — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/climate-migration-communities-move>