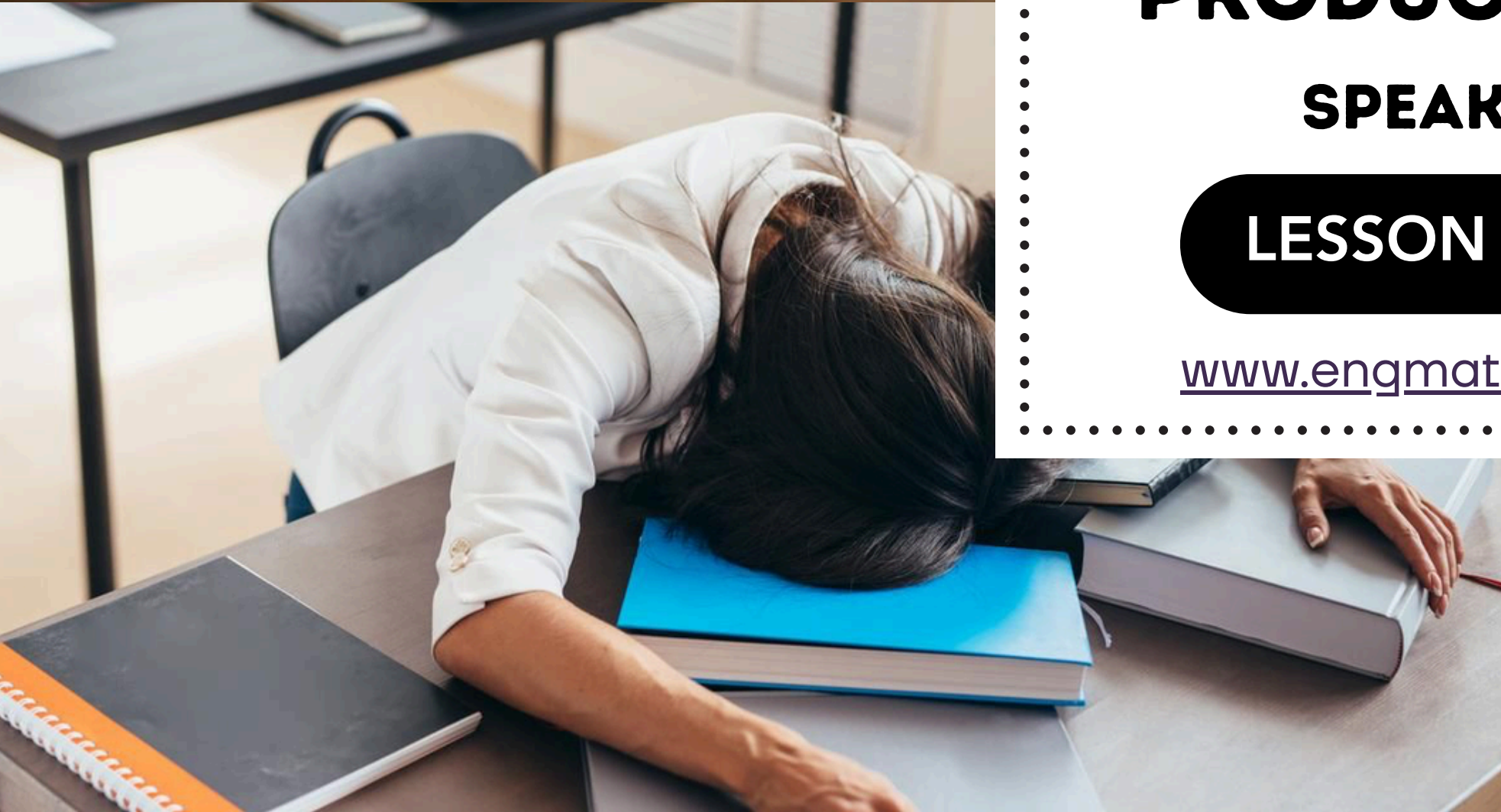


**TOXIC  
PRODUCTIVITY  
SPEAKING**

**LESSON A2-B1**

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Read the quote and answer the questions below.

“

"Sleep is for the weak. You have the same 24 hours in a day as Beyoncé."

”

When you see quotes like this on TikTok or Instagram, how do they make you feel? Inspired or stressed?

Is it actually possible to live like this without going crazy?

Why do you think our culture makes us feel like we always need to do more?

Why is comparing ourselves to celebrities like Beyoncé completely unrealistic? What does her "24 hours" look like compared to a regular person's day?



## ARE YOU INFECTED BY THE HUSTLE BUG?

Read the 5 quiz questions below. Answer honestly with YES or NO and count your total number of YES answers. Check the results below to see if you are affected by toxic productivity.

### Q1: The "Lazy" Guilt

When you finally have 30 minutes of free time to do absolutely nothing, do you feel a sudden wave of guilt, thinking you should be studying, reading a useful book, or learning a language instead?

YES /  NO





## ARE YOU INFECTED BY THE HUSTLE BUG?

Read the 5 quiz questions below. Answer honestly with YES or NO and count your total number of YES answers.  
Check the results below to see if you are affected by toxic productivity.

### Q2: Multi-tasking Madness

Do you feel the urge to maximize every single second of your day? For example, do you always listen to educational podcasts/audiobooks on 1.5x speed while cooking, doing chores, or even walking in the park?

YES /  NO





## ARE YOU INFECTED BY THE HUSTLE BUG?

Read the 5 quiz questions below. Answer honestly with YES or NO and count your total number of YES answers.  
Check the results below to see if you are affected by toxic productivity.

### Q3: The "Sick Day" Struggle

If you catch a cold or feel physically unwell, is your first thought "Oh, great, now I'm falling behind and losing a whole day of work/study" rather than "I need to rest and take care of my body"?

YES /  NO





## ARE YOU INFECTED BY THE HUSTLE BUG?

Read the 5 quiz questions below. Answer honestly with YES or NO and count your total number of YES answers.  
Check the results below to see if you are affected by toxic productivity.

### Q4: The Never-Ending To-Do List

When you look at your to-do list at the end of a long, busy day and see that you crossed out 9 out of 10 tasks, do you focus on the 1 uncompleted task and feel like the whole day was a failure?

YES /  NO





## ARE YOU INFECTED BY THE HUSTLE BUG?

Read the 5 quiz questions below. Answer honestly with YES or NO and count your total number of YES answers.  
Check the results below to see if you are affected by toxic productivity.

### Q5: Rest as a reward, not a need

Do you believe that rest is something you have to earn only after working hard, rather than a basic human necessity that your body needs every day regardless of your performance?

YES /  NO





## ARE YOU INFECTED BY THE HUSTLE BUG?

Read the 5 quiz questions below. Answer honestly with YES or NO and count your total number of YES answers. Check the results below to see if you are affected by toxic productivity.

### 0-1 "YES"

You are safe! You know how to balance your life. For you, work is just work, not your entire personality.

### 2-3 "YES"

The Hustle Bug is biting you. You are very close to the edge. You often try to be on the go all the time, and you need to watch out before you hit a wall.

### 4-5 "YES"

Danger Zone! You are a textbook example of toxic productivity. You are actively part of hustle culture, and if you don't take a step back right now, you will run yourself into the ground very soon.





Fill in the gaps with the correct phrases from the vocabulary list. Then, answer the following questions.

keep your nose to the grindstone

hustle culture

hit a wall

run yourself into the ground

on the go

take a step back



1. Do you think modern \_\_\_\_\_ motivates people to achieve their goals, or does it just make everyone feel anxious and competitive?
2. When you have a massive amount of work or study, can you \_\_\_\_\_ for weeks, or do you lose concentration quickly?
3. Are you a person who is always \_\_\_\_\_, doing five things at the same time, or do you prefer a slow and organized lifestyle?
4. What do you usually do when you work for hours and suddenly \_\_\_\_\_ — do you drink more coffee or do you stop working?
5. Have you ever worked so hard that you actually \_\_\_\_\_ and became physically sick from exhaustion?
6. If a person feels constant stress, why is it sometimes so difficult for them to \_\_\_\_\_ and take a break?



Fill in the gaps with the correct phrases from the vocabulary list. Then, answer the following questions.

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  6. If a person feels constant stress, why is it sometimes so difficult for them to **take a step back** and take a break?



Unscramble the mixed letters in brackets to find the idiom.

Read the situation and decide if it is a **Green Flag** (healthy) or a **Red Flag** (toxic). Explain why.

1

My teammate thinks that the only way to get a promotion is to *(k p e e u o r y e o n s o t e h t d n i t r g s e o n)* 24/7 and never take annual leave.

2

I have a rule: if I am studying and suddenly *(t h i a l l w)*, I immediately stop, listen to my favorite music, and drink some water.

3

My older brother has three kids and two jobs. He is always *(n o e h t o g)*, eating his breakfast in the car and answering calls while driving.

4

I decided to prepare for three different professional certificates at the same time. I know I might *(n u r f e l s y m t i o n e h t d u o n g r)*, but I want to be the best.

5

Our modern society loves *(e l t s u h r u t c l u e)*, where people show off how little they sleep and how much they work on Instagram



Read the text.



## FOMO: THE FEAR THAT KEEPS US BUSY

### WHAT IS FOMO?

The term "FOMO" (the Fear of Missing Out) was introduced in 2004 by Patrick McGinnis, but it became a global problem with the rise of smartphones. Psychologists define FOMO as a deep feeling of anxiety that other people are enjoying good things while you are absent. Social media makes this worse. When you see your colleagues or friends who are always on the go — attending conferences, taking courses, or networking — you start to panic. You think: "If I am not doing the same, I am failing."

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAP

To fight this anxiety, many people fall into the trap of **hustle culture**. They believe that the only solution is to work harder. They **keep their nose to the grindstone**, saying "yes" to every project, event, or online course, even when they don't have the time or energy.

Psychologists from the University of Oxford conducted a study on social media and well-being. They found that FOMO is directly linked to low life satisfaction and high stress. Instead of making us more successful, FOMO forces us to **run ourselves into the ground**. We try to be everywhere and do everything until our bodies say "stop."





Read the text. Answer the questions.

## FOMO: THE FEAR THAT KEEPS US BUSY

### OVERCOMING THE FEAR

Eventually, every person who lives with FOMO will **hit a wall**. You cannot live other people's lives and do all the tasks in the world. When you experience this extreme exhaustion, you realize that social media is just a "highlight reel" — people only post their best moments, not their boring or difficult days.

To protect your mental health, experts say it is time to **take a step back**. Today, psychologists recommend practicing JOMO (the Joy of Missing Out). It is the ability to enjoy your own life, stay offline, and understand that you don't need to be busy all the time to be happy.

1 In your own words, what is FOMO? Do you think older generations (like our grandparents) experienced FOMO, or is it a purely modern problem?

2 How does FOMO force people to run themselves into the ground? What is the connection between FOMO and being always on the go?

3 Do you think it is easy to switch from FOMO to JOMO in today's digital world?

4 Imagine you decide to take a step back and delete all social media apps for one week. What would be the hardest part for you? What would be the best part?



Read the short stories of eight different people below.  
Analyze their situations, give them realistic advice, and warn them about the dangers of their lifestyle.  
In your response, you **MUST** use the specific target phrase indicated in the brackets.

**OLIVIA (24, GRAPHIC DESIGNER)**

I feel like I'm trapped. I love my job, but I haven't had a proper weekend in six months. I feel constantly tired, I can't think of new creative ideas anymore, and I've started making silly mistakes.

*(hit a wall)*



**MARK (19, STUDENT)**

I want to build a great career, so I study full-time, do an internship, and run a small online business. I sleep 5 hours a night and drink 4 cups of coffee every day. I feel proud of being so busy!

*(hustle culture)*





Read the short stories of eight different people below.  
Analyze their situations, give them realistic advice, and warn them about the dangers of their lifestyle.  
In your response, you **MUST** use the specific target phrase indicated in the brackets.

### **DAVID (30, SOFTWARE ENGINEER)**

I've been working on a complex project for three weeks without any breaks. Yesterday, I sat down at my laptop and realized I couldn't write a single line of code. My brain just stopped working.

*(take a step back)*



### **ANNA (21, UNIVERSITY GRADUATE)**

All my friends from university already have jobs and start-ups. When I see their LinkedIn posts, I feel like a total loser. I feel this constant pressure that I need to work every single hour to catch up with them.

*(keep your nose to the grindstone)*





Read the short stories of eight different people below.  
Analyze their situations, give them realistic advice, and warn them about the dangers of their lifestyle.  
In your response, you **MUST** use the specific target phrase indicated in the brackets.

### **HELENA (35, WORKING MOTHER)**

My day is a non-stop marathon. I wake up at 6 AM, prepare breakfast, drop kids at school, rush to my full-time office job, then pick up kids, cook dinner, and clean. I don't remember the last time I just sat quietly.

*(on the go)*



### **TOM (27, FREELANCE TRANSLATOR)**

I love money, so I never say 'no' to clients. I take on every project I can find. I work from my bed, I eat while typing, and I haven't seen my friends in a month. I'm exhausted, but I think this is the only way to be successful.

*(run yourself into the ground)*





Read the short stories of eight different people below.  
Analyze their situations, give them realistic advice, and warn them about the dangers of their lifestyle.  
In your response, you **MUST** use the specific target phrase indicated in the brackets.

### **KATE (19, MEDICAL STUDENT)**

Medical school is brutal. I have been studying for 12 hours every day to pass my exams. I feel physically sick from lack of sleep. But if I stop, even for one evening, I feel terrible guilt.

*(hit a wall)*



### **SAM (32, STARTUP FOUNDER)**

I live by the motto 'No pain, no gain'. My startup is growing, but I am constantly traveling, answering messages at 2 AM, and running from one meeting to another. I just don't have the time to slow down.

*(take a step back)*





Look at the list of five statements about success and work. Complete the steps below.

1. If you want to have a great career, you must accept modern **hustle culture** and work every day.
2. It is impossible to become a professional or pass exams well unless you **keep your nose to the grindstone** for months.
3. Successful people are always **on the go**; if you have a lot of free time, you are lazy.
4. When you work for a long time and suddenly **hit a wall**, you must ignore it and continue working.
5. It is better to **take a step back** and rest than to work until you **run yourself into the ground**.

**Step 1:** Choose **one** statement you agree with the most, and **one** you disagree with the most.

Prepare your personal arguments to defend your choice.

**Step 2:** Choose **one** statement that you think is the most dangerous or unrealistic for a person's mental health in modern society. Explain your choice.

**Step 3:** Share your thoughts with a teacher or the class. Try to find a common "golden mean" (compromise) between success and health.





Complete the sentences below with your own ideas so that they make sense.

I think that people who are deeply trapped in hustle culture usually miss out on...

The moment I realize that I have hit a wall during a difficult task, I usually...

If you want to keep your nose to the grindstone without harming your mental health, you need to...

Before you completely run yourself into the ground, it is crucial to...

When my schedule is crazy and I am always on the go, the thing I miss the most is...

It takes a lot of courage to take a step back from your career or studies because...





## TALK FOR ONE MINUTE.

Choose one card. You have 1 minute to prepare your ideas, and then you must speak for exactly 1 minute without stopping.

Tell about your opinion on **hustle culture**. Why do you think so many young people on Instagram and TikTok want to show that they work all the time? Is it real success or a fake lifestyle?

Imagine your best friend is working too much and looks terrible. How can you persuade them **to take a step back**? What exactly will you say to them?

Tell about a time in your life when you had to **keep your nose to the grindstone** (e.g., school exams, entering university, a difficult project). Was it worth it?

Many people believe that to achieve big goals, you must **run yourself into the ground**. Do you agree that success always requires deep physical and mental exhaustion, or is there another way?

Imagine you work in a company where the boss expects everyone to **keep their nose to the grindstone** even on weekends. Would you accept this lifestyle for a high salary?

Our bodies often send us signals before **we run ourselves into the ground**. What are the first signs for you that you are working too hard?

## Wordlist



- **keep your nose to the grindstone** – to work very hard and stay focused on a task for a long time
- **hustle culture** – the idea that you should work as hard as possible all the time to be successful
- **hit a wall** – to reach a point where you cannot continue to work or make progress because you are too tired or stuck
- **run yourself into the ground** – to make yourself exhausted or ill by working much too hard
- **on the go** – very busy and always moving from one activity to another
- **take a step back** – to pause and stop working for a moment to think about a situation clearly

