

Changing lives

Task 1 Your lifestyle

Which adjectives best describe the life you live?

Which adjectives describe the life you would like to have in the future?

Are there any differences?

sporty	peaceful	glamorous	calm	exciting
active	hectic	fast-paced	rural	boring
adventurous	action-packed	urban	slow-paced	fun-filled

Task 2 Countryside and town life

Think of 2 differences between living in cities in your country and living in rural areas.

Compare:

- pace of life
 - expenses
 - job opportunities
 - schools
 - entertainment for young people
 - types of housing
 - transport networks
 - climate
 - environment
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- What advantages are there for young people in cities?
 - What advantages are there for young people in the countryside?
 - Find out where people in your class would prefer to live

Task 3 Changing Lives

Read about two families who changed their type of life and find out:

- Where did Jake and his family move to?
- Where was Jo living when she decided to move?
- Who came back to their childhood home?
- Who gave up a lot of material possessions and money?
- When did Jake's parents decide to change their life?
- When did JO decide to change her life?

Jake's story

My parents had a small cottage in The Peak District which they used for walking holidays. After I was born they started to go to the cottage more. In the end, we used to pack up the car every Friday evening after school and drive for 3 hours to get to the peace and quiet of our lovely cottage. During the week my parents worked in the IT industry near London, we went to expensive private schools and we all worked long hours and travelled a long way to school or work. We hardly saw each other. We had a lot of babysitters as my parents had to work long hours.

Every Sunday evening we used to lock up the cottage. But it got harder and harder to leave. Every Sunday morning was torture and we all hated the idea of leaving our village friends and the beautiful views. Last year my Dad had had enough. He sold our big house near London and my parents gave up their jobs and long working hours. They bought a smaller car and sold our speedboat. We are now squashed in to our holiday cottage, two adults, three kids and a dog. My parents get the work they can and do lots of work from home. We never have babysitters.

The best change for me is that I am not in a large class in a huge school. I go with my brothers to a tiny local school. After school my Mum doesn't need to drive us around as we get on our bikes and cycle round to see friends. My life is just so different. We feel calm and happy. We have got fewer things. Dad can't buy us all the CDs and stuff we used to want. I am outdoors more and have less time for my computer. I have got less but for me it seems like so much more. I am so glad we changed our life.

Jo's story

I grew up on a farm in a small village in the Peak District. We had the freedom of the fields and were outdoors in all types of weather. When I grew up I started to see that there was a big world out there and I wanted an exciting life. I wanted more glamour and adventure. Life on the farm seemed so boring and I couldn't wait to get away. I studied in London and travelled around the World.

In the 1990s I was a stylist working on magazines in New York and other parts of America. I lived in Boston and had a hectic social life. It was a million miles from my village. It was exciting but it was also exhausting. After having two children I started to change. My mind kept going back to those fields and hills in the English countryside. In my dreams I walked down all the roads and across the rivers that I knew. I thought of the smells and sounds of that peaceful life. I had everything in Boston. An exciting, successful life and a beautiful home. I wanted to look out at the hills and green fields of England. Boston wasn't home.

When my Dad rang to say an old farmhouse in the village was up for sale I jumped at the chance to buy back in to my old life. I persuaded my husband and kids to leave behind the American lifestyle. We made a difficult decision. It was more frightening than travelling around India by myself as a student.

Then when we got here I saw that my decision is not unusual. I have met old school friends who still live and work in the countryside but I meet more and more new faces. In our local school over half of the families are not locals. They are people who come from cities all over Britain. They have usually given up expensive houses and good jobs to move their families to a smaller house. They do the work they can find and they say they are happier. I know I am happier to be in my village and my family are too.

Task 4 Interpretation

- List the factors that made Jake's family and Jo's family decide to change their lifestyles.
- What might be the biggest change for Jake and for JO's kids?
- What types of things did Jake and his family find hard to leave in the village?
- What things might be hard to leave behind in Boston for Jo and her husband?
- Describe the type of life that Jake and Jo prefer in your own words.
- Do people make lifestyle changes like this in your country?
- Have you ever moved house? Describe what happened and how you felt about the move.

Task 5 My family

Describe a typical day in the life of your family.

Try to talk about:

- The type of lifestyle you have
- The hours you see each other
- The routines you follow on a normal day

Ask your partner about their family life: Parents' jobs

- Time spent with brothers or sisters
- Evening routines
- Weekend activities
- Things you do together.

Task 6 Sayings

Look at these typically English sayings.

- The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.
 - Home is where the heart is.
 - All that glitters is not gold.
 - Less is more.
 - All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.
 - The more people have, the more they want.
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- What do they mean?
 - Have you got any similar sayings in your own language?
 - Do you agree with them?
 - Are any of these sayings a good description of people in the stories?

Task 7 Discussion topics

Discuss these questions with other students in your class.

- Would you change your lifestyle if you could? How?
- Would you enjoy working from home? Why? Why not?
- Would you like to travel and work abroad? Where?
- What types of things make a place feel like home?
- What are the things that you love about your country?