

Night Owls

'Night owls' are people who are naturally more awake and active at night and tend to go to bed late. Research has found that night owls face higher rates of poor health, including having a 10 percent higher risk of dying younger than 'early birds' or people who get up early and feel more energetic first thing in the day. Night owls often suffer from long-term lack of sleep and this can increase the chance of diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Not having enough sleep even for just one night can make us moody; when it happens every single night for an extended period, depression can develop.



Associate professor Kristen Knutson at Northwestern University said: "This is a public health issue that cannot be ignored. We need to recognise that people have different body clocks which regulate the time we feel sleepy and wakeful throughout the day. Some people naturally wake up early while others feel more awake at night. All of this comes down to a combination of genes and the person's environment."

Employers can benefit from adjusting start times to suit individual employees' needs. Another study found that when companies let night owls start work later in the day or allowed them to work from home, there was an estimated US\$277m gain in productivity. It argues that people who are more awake at night should be allowed to start and finish work later. Not everyone is suited to get up for an 8am start.

Your group is doing a project on sleeping patterns and you are meeting to discuss this. You may want to talk about:

- the advantages of being a night owl
- the advantages of getting up early
- whether companies should have flexible working hours for people with different sleeping patterns
- anything else you think is important

PART B Individual Response

The examiner will ask you one or more questions based on Part A. You will have up to 1 minute to respond.

1. Do you wake up early on weekends?
2. Do you often have problems waking up in the morning?
3. What do you do if you cannot fall asleep?
4. What do you do to keep yourself awake when you are sleepy?
5. Have you ever overslept for something important?
6. What time of the day are you most productive?
7. Would you consider a job that requires working at night?
8. Do you envy people who only need a few hours of sleep?

You will be asked one of these questions. Prepare a 1-minute answer for at least three of them.

VOCABULARY - Level up your language

These 10 expressions will lift your speaking to Level 4 and above. Each one replaces a simple (Level 3) phrase that you would normally use.

STEP 1 Match each expression with its meaning. Write the letter (A-J) on the line.

1. my concentration peaks during ... _____	A. to make it weaker; how long you can concentrate on something
2. sleep deprivation / sleep deficit _____	B. to get the most useful work out of your time and effort
3. to impair my cognitive performance _____	C. not getting enough sleep, especially over a long period
4. to compromise my attention span _____	D. extreme tiredness and loss of motivation caused by long-term stress
5. to wind down before bedtime _____	E. to slowly damage your health over time
6. to take a toll on your health _____	F. keeping staff or students so that fewer of them leave
7. to maximise productivity _____	G. to reach its highest point, usually at a certain time of day
8. productivity _____	H. the amount of useful work that is produced
9. higher retention _____	I. to relax and slow down before you go to sleep
10. burnout _____	J. to make thinking, memory and learning weaker (formal)

STEP 2 Now look at the upgrade. Instead of the Level 3 phrase, use the Level 4+ expression:

Level 3 - what we usually say	Level 4+ - use this instead	Use it for
"My concentration is best at night."	my concentration peaks during ...	A
"I do not get enough sleep."	sleep deprivation / sleep deficit	A
"I cannot think clearly when I am tired."	to impair my cognitive performance	A
"I cannot focus for long when I am tired."	to compromise my attention span	A
"I relax before I sleep."	to wind down before bedtime	A
"Staying up late is bad for your health."	to take a toll on your health	A
"Later starts help night owls do more work."	to maximise productivity	C
"Later starts mean more work gets done."	productivity	C
"Flexible hours mean fewer workers leave."	higher retention	C
"Students who never rest lose motivation."	burnout	A

Use it for: A = any health / sleep-cost answer, including Part B · C = the flexible-working-hours bullet and Part B Q1

Challenge: use at least three of these expressions in your Part A discussion.

NOTE CARD

the advantages of being a night owl:	the advantages of getting up early:
whether companies should have flexible working hours for people with different sleeping patterns:	anything else you think is important:

Lesson 3 - Night Owls • Teacher's Version

Night Owls

'Night owls' are people who are naturally more awake and active at night and tend to go to bed late. Research has found that night owls face higher rates of poor health, including having a 10 percent higher risk of dying younger than 'early birds' or people who get up early and feel more energetic first thing in the day. Night owls often suffer from long-term lack of sleep and this can increase the chance of diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Not having enough sleep even for just one night can make us moody; when it happens every single night for an extended period, depression can develop.



Associate professor Kristen Knutson at Northwestern University said: "This is a public health issue that cannot be ignored. We need to recognise that people have different body clocks which regulate the time we feel sleepy and wakeful throughout the day. Some people naturally wake up early while others feel more awake at night. All of this comes down to a combination of genes and the person's environment."

Employers can benefit from adjusting start times to suit individual employees' needs. Another study found that when companies let night owls start work later in the day or allowed them to work from home, there was an estimated US\$277m gain in productivity. It argues that people who are more awake at night should be allowed to start and finish work later. Not everyone is suited to get up for an 8am start.

PART A Group Interaction

You will be given 10 minutes to prepare. The time allowed for the group interaction is 8 minutes (or 6 minutes for a group of 3 candidates). You may make notes on the notecard provided and refer to your notes during the discussion.

Your group is doing a project on sleeping patterns and you are meeting to discuss this. You may want to talk about:

- the advantages of being a night owl
- the advantages of getting up early
- whether companies should have flexible working hours for people with different sleeping patterns
- anything else you think is important

PART B Individual Response

The examiner will ask you one or more questions based on Part A. You will have up to 1 minute to respond. All eight questions for this set are listed below.

1. Do you wake up early on weekends?
2. Do you often have problems waking up in the morning?
3. What do you do if you cannot fall asleep?
4. What do you do to keep yourself awake when you are sleepy?
5. Have you ever overslept for something important?
6. What time of the day are you most productive?
7. Would you consider a job that requires working at night?
8. Do you envy people who only need a few hours of sleep?

Teacher note: the italic instruction line above is printed beside Part B on the exam paper's continuation page, not next to the questions on this page.

PART C Vocabulary - Level 3 → Level 4+ Upgrade

Ten target items for this discussion. For each one, read the basic sentence first, then upgrade it with the target vocabulary (bold and underlined). Elicit the upgrade before you show it.

Target vocabulary	Basic (Level 3) sentence	Upgraded (Level 4+) sentence
my concentration peaks during ...	<i>"My concentration is best at night."</i>	My concentration peaks during the late evening.
sleep deprivation / sleep deficit	<i>"I do not get enough sleep."</i>	Sleep deprivation affects my concentration every day.
impair my cognitive performance	<i>"I cannot think clearly when I am tired."</i>	A short night's sleep impairs my cognitive performance .
compromise my attention span	<i>"I cannot focus for long when I am tired."</i>	Scrolling at midnight compromises my attention span .
wind down before bedtime	<i>"I relax before I sleep."</i>	I need to wind down before bedtime instead of using my phone.
take a toll on your health	<i>"Staying up late is bad for your health."</i>	Working night shifts takes a toll on your health .
maximise productivity	<i>"Later starts help night owls do more work."</i>	Flexible hours maximise productivity for night owls.
productivity	<i>"Later starts mean night owls finish more work."</i>	Later starts lead to higher productivity across the whole team.
higher retention	<i>"Flexible hours mean fewer workers leave."</i>	Flexible hours lead to higher retention of good staff.

Target vocabulary	Basic (Level 3) sentence	Upgraded (Level 4+) sentence
burnout	<i>"Students who never rest lose motivation."</i>	Burning the midnight oil every night leads to burnout .

PART D Note Grid - Your Notes for the Discussion

Students fill these four squares during the 10-minute preparation time. Ideas matter more than vocabulary — use a target expression only where it fits naturally.

1. Advantages of being a night owl • Quiet hours after 10 p.m. — fewer interruptions • Mental peak: concentration peaks late at night • It is a chronotype, not laziness	2. Advantages of getting up early • Feel more energetic first thing in the day • Time to plan, review notes, eat breakfast • No rush — less stress before school
3. Should companies have flexible working hours? • Yes — evidence: later starts raised productivity • Core hours + flexitime: the team still meets • Limits: shifts, nurses, teachers, 24-hour shops	4. Anything else you think is important • Habits beat genes — sleep habits can change • Screens and caffeine push sleep later • School start times: should they start later?

Appendix for Teachers - Useful Findings & News Reports for This Question

Quick-reference facts for this question (all free to read online). The same sources appear in full in Section 2 below — use this page when you want a one-glance list of the numbers. Quote only what is printed here; never invent or round the figures.

American Heart Association, 28 January 2026 — “Being a night owl may increase your heart risk”

newsroom.heart.org/news/being-a-night-owl-may-increase-your-heart-risk

- More than 300,000 adults followed for about 14 years; about 8% were “definitely evening people”.
- Night owls had a 16% higher risk of a heart attack or stroke — and were 79% more likely to have a poor heart-health score.
- Morning people had a 5% lower chance of a poor heart-health score.
- Most of the extra risk came from habits (nicotine use, inadequate sleep, poorer diet), not the body clock.
- Prof. Kristen Knutson — the same professor quoted in the exam article — says evening types “are not inherently less healthy”.

CUHK Faculty of Medicine (with Peking University), 20 February 2025 — app-based insomnia treatment

med.cuhk.edu.hk/press-releases/ (Asia’s first clinical research on digital CBT-I)

- 708 young people aged 15–25 with insomnia took part.
- Six weeks of app-based treatment cut the incidence of depression by 42% (10% vs 18% in the control group).
- Nearly 60% no longer had insomnia after one year.
- Participants shifted towards “morningness” — treating sleep problems changed their body clock.
- Only about 10% of young insomnia patients in Hong Kong seek help.

YouGov, 13 March 2024 — “How long do most people sleep globally?”

yougov.com/articles/48914-how-long-do-most-people-sleep-globally

- 91% of Hong Kong respondents who sleep under seven hours wish they could sleep more — among the highest of 17 markets.
- Fewer than half of residents in Singapore (44%), the UAE (45%) and Indonesia (48%) get seven or more hours.

CUHK survey of 4,456 secondary students — Hong Kong schools

med.cuhk.edu.hk/press-releases/cuhk-survey-reveals-majority-of-school-teens-have-insufficient-sleep

- 94% did not get the 9 hours recommended for their age; a quarter slept under 7 hours on school nights.
- Delaying the school start by 15 minutes improved students’ feelings about their sleep; 86% of students and 95% of teachers welcomed it.

1. Warm-up Questions (purpose: personalise the topic → elicit ideas + pre-teach vocabulary)

Q1. Do you wake up early on weekends?

Listen for	Push for times and comparisons, not “yes/no”: What time on Saturday? What time on a school day? Do you sleep in to “pay back” the sleep you lost in the week?
Model answer	“On school days I get up at 6:30, but at the weekend I sleep until 10 or 11 – I am catching up on sleep.”
Follow-up prompts	• What time do you go to bed on a school night? And on a Friday or Saturday? • Do you set an alarm at the weekend? Why / why not? • Why do we feel even more tired after a long weekend lie-in? (body clock: sleeping late makes Monday morning harder – link to chronotype) • Is sleeping late at the weekend a good idea for students?

Q2. Do you often have problems waking up in the morning?

Teach	Recycle the vocabulary from Section 0 as it comes up naturally – do not re-teach it here. Add: alarm, snooze, drowsy, caffeine, screen time.
Listen for	The reason behind the problem (homework, phone, gaming, chatting online, part-time job, noisy home) and whether students connect it to concentration in class.
Model answer	“I often have problems waking up because I burn the midnight oil on my phone. In the morning I suffer from daytime drowsiness and my concentration is impaired in the first two lessons.”
Follow-up prompts	• What usually keeps you awake at night? • What do you do to keep yourself awake when you are sleepy? (coffee, cold water, a nap, music) • Have you ever overslept for something important? What happened? • Do you think Hong Kong students get enough sleep? (lead into Section 2)

2. Recent News & Articles for Elaboration Reference (students use these to add evidence)

All articles are free to read online. Give students the key facts below, or set them as reading before the lesson – the numbers make useful evidence in the discussion.

Article 1 - American Heart Association, 28 January 2026

“Being a night owl may increase your heart risk” (Journal of the American Heart Association)

<https://newsroom.heart.org/news/being-a-night-owl-may-increase-your-heart-risk>

Study	More than 300,000 adults (average age about 57) were followed for about 14 years; about 8% were “definitely evening people” (bedtime around 2 a.m.), 24% morning people and 67% in between.
Heart risk	Night owls had a 16% higher risk of a heart attack or stroke, and were 79% more likely to have a poor overall heart-health score than the middle group.
Early birds	Morning people had a 5% lower chance of a poor heart-health score – being an early bird was not linked to extra risk.
Why	Most of the extra risk came from habits, not from the body clock itself – nicotine use (more than one third), inadequate sleep and a poorer diet.
Good news	Kristen Knutson (the same professor quoted in the exam article) says evening types “are not inherently less healthy”; they simply face challenges, so their habits are something they can change.
How students can use it	“The American Heart Association found night owls had a 16% higher risk of a heart attack or stroke – but most of that came from smoking and poor sleep, which are habits we can change.”

Article 2 - CUHK Faculty of Medicine (with Peking University), 20 February 2025

“App-based insomnia intervention can reduce the incidence rate of major depressive disorder in youth with insomnia by more than 40%”

<https://www.med.cuhk.edu.hk/press-releases/asia-s-first-clinical-research-by-cuhk-and-pku-finds-that-app-based-insomnia-intervention-can-reduce-the-incidence-rate-of-major-depressive-disorder-in-youth-with-insomnia>

Study	Asia’s first clinical research on digital CBT-I; 708 young people aged 15–25 in Hong Kong and mainland China with insomnia took part.
Result	Six weeks of app-based treatment cut the incidence of depression by 42% (10% vs 18% in the control group), and nearly 60% no longer had insomnia after one year.
Extra finding	Participants also shifted towards “morningness” – treating sleep problems changed their body clock.
Context	Depression affects 3.9%–5.2% of young

	people in Hong Kong, and only about 10% of young insomnia patients seek help.
How students can use it	"In Hong Kong, treating young people's insomnia cut their risk of depression by more than 40% – so sleep is not a luxury, it protects our mental health."

Hong Kong context - YouGov / CUHK

"How long do most people sleep globally – and which regions feel most sleep deprived?"
(YouGov, 13 March 2024)

<https://yougov.com/articles/48914-how-long-do-most-people-sleep-globally-and-which-regions-feel-most-sleep-deprived-2024>

Local habit	91% of Hong Kong respondents who sleep less than seven hours a night wish they could sleep more – one of the highest shares in the 17 markets surveyed (Spain 92%, Hong Kong 91%, Mexico 91%).
Neighbouring cities	Fewer than half of residents in Singapore (44%), the UAE (45%) and Indonesia (48%) get seven or more hours of sleep a night.
Hong Kong schools	- In a CUHK survey of 4,456 secondary students, 94% did not get the 9 hours recommended for their age and a quarter slept less than 7 hours on school nights. - URL: https://www.med.cuhk.edu.hk/press-releases/cuhk-survey-reveals-majority-of-school-teens-have-insufficient-sleep
How students can use it	"In Hong Kong, 91% of people who sleep under seven hours a night wish they could sleep more – and 9 in 10 of our secondary students do not get the sleep their age needs. This is our problem too."

3. Ideas for the Discussion Task (Part A)

The deck's "Ideas for your discussion" slide shows a condensed version of this bank (2–3 short, stat-free prompts per card); this is the fuller bank for teacher reference and handouts.

Part A bullet	Ideas to feed the group
A. The advantages of being a night owl	- Quiet hours: after 10 p.m. the house is calm – no interruptions, easier to concentrate on homework, reading or revision. - Mental peak: many people think most clearly late at night; the article notes that night owls are "naturally more awake and active at night" – it is a body clock, not laziness. - Suits modern work: online work, global teams and freelancing often allow later starts; night owls can work when contacts in other time zones are awake. - Social life: late-night chatting, gaming and streaming are a normal part of teenage life, so night owls are often "in sync" with their

	friends. • Better mood in the evening: mornings can be the worst part of the day, while the same person may be calmer, funnier and more motivated after dark. • Careers that fit: chefs, doctors and nurses on night shifts, musicians, programmers, journalists, security and 24-hour shop staff.
B. The advantages of getting up early	• Morning energy: the article says early birds “feel more energetic first thing in the day” – you start the day before you feel behind. • Planning time: a quieter morning gives you time to review notes, plan the day, exercise or actually eat breakfast. • School performance: the morning is when most lessons and public exams happen; being awake for the first two lessons (and listening papers) matters. • Health and habits: early birds had a 5% lower chance of a poor heart-health score (AHA 2026); regular routines are also linked to better mental health. • Less stress: waking up early removes the rush – no skipped breakfast, no running for the bus, no forgotten homework. • Finish earlier: an early start means finishing by mid-afternoon, with more daylight and free time in the evening – “the early bird catches the worm” (first choice of classes, jobs and gym slots).
C. Whether companies should have flexible working hours for people with different sleeping patterns	• Yes – the evidence: when companies let night owls start work later, there was an estimated US\$277m gain in productivity (article); the AHA adds that treatments and interventions work better when timed to a person’s chronotype. • Yes – fairness and retention: forcing everyone into an 8 a.m. start punishes a natural body clock; flexibility helps companies attract and keep talent. • Middle ground: “core hours” (e.g. 11 a.m.– 4 p.m.) when everyone must be available, plus flexible start and finish times – the team still meets. • Practical limits: not every job can be flexible – nurses, teachers, drivers, restaurant and 24-hour shop staff work in shifts, and factories or service teams need cover. • Team cost: meetings, training and handovers are harder when people keep different hours; new staff need supervision. • Working from home: the article mentions later starts or working from home as options – but some roles need face-to-face contact.

	• Health first: flexible hours are not an excuse for sleep deprivation. A later start only helps if the person also keeps a regular routine.
D. Anything else you think is important	• Habits beat genes: most of the extra heart risk came from lifestyle (smoking, inadequate sleep, poor diet), so sleep habits are something students can change. • Screens and caffeine: scrolling, gaming and coffee or milk tea after 9 p.m. push sleep later and make the next morning worse. • School start times: delaying the school start by just 15 minutes improved students' feelings about their sleep, and 86% of students and 95% of teachers welcomed it (CUHK) – should Hong Kong schools start later? • Sleep protects mental health: lack of sleep “every single night for an extended period” can lead to depression (article); treating insomnia cut depression risk by over 40% (CUHK 2025). • Do not blame the person: body clocks come from “a combination of genes and the person’s environment” – as Prof. Knutson says, it is a public health issue that cannot be ignored. • Practical sleep hygiene: fixed bed and wake times (even at weekends), no screens 30–60 minutes before bed, a dark and cool room, and naps shorter than 20 minutes. • The night-owl student trap: staying up to study feels productive, but you lose the next day’s lessons – study in the early evening instead.

4. Part B - Individual Response (up to 1 minute; skeleton: opinion → reasons → example → balanced conclusion)

Q1. Would you consider a job that requires working at night?

Yes (concede or take this side first)	• It suits my chronotype – I feel most awake and creative at night. • Quieter and fewer distractions; night shifts often pay a shift allowance or a higher hourly rate – useful for a student. • Some night jobs really matter: doctors and nurses, IT support, security, 24-hour transport and global customer service.
No / but (the stronger side - link back to the topic)	• Long-term night work takes a toll on your health (heart disease, diabetes, obesity – the article’s list). • It causes sleep deprivation: you sleep through daylight, so family and social life suffer.

	• Travelling home in the early hours can be unsafe, and it becomes harder as you get older. • The AHA study found most of the extra risk came from habits – so night work is only manageable with a very regular routine.
Model closing line	“So I would try night work for a short time – maybe while I am studying – but as a long-term career it would take a toll on my health, so I would rather keep my body clock regular and sleep at night.”

Q2. Do you envy people who only need a few hours of sleep?

Envy (to concede first)	• They seem to gain hours every day – more time for revision, a part-time job, hobbies or gaming. • They look efficient, and some celebrities and business leaders boast about sleeping only four hours.
Not envy (recommended main position)	• True short sleepers are rare; most people who claim to need four hours are actually sleep-deprived and borrow energy from their health. • Sleep deprivation impairs your concentration and memory – exactly the things students need most. • Sleep is not time wasted: it is when the brain stores what we studied. • Forcing a night owl to live like an early bird does not work either – the answer is a regular routine that fits your chronotype.
Model balanced conclusion	“I used to envy them, but the evidence shows they are probably sleep-deprived and paying for those extra hours. I would rather sleep seven hours and remember what I studied – and the CUHK study shows that sleeping well even protects our mental health.”

5. Deck Skill Focus - Conceding a Point and Countering with Evidence (deck slide 5)

The upgraded response (B*) must do two things: concede politely with natural turn-taking, and counter with a fact plus upgraded vocabulary. On the slide the six chunks are numbered; the matching words sit in the chip strip at the bottom of the card (reveal them after the first attempt). Model dialogue:

A (plain opinion)	I think companies should let night owls start work later because they are more productive at night.
B (blunt first draft)	I disagree, Candidate A. That is not fair to early birds, and the office can never close.
B* (upgraded)	That’s a fair point, Candidate A. I understand that early birds should not be treated unfairly. However, we should also look at the

	(1) evidence. In fact, the article (2) reported that when companies let night owls start later, there was a gain of US\$277 million in (3) productivity. In other words, working with a person's (4) chronotype benefits the whole company. I believe a system of (5) flexible working hours, with a few (6) core hours in the middle of the day, would keep everyone happy. Any other thoughts?
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Gap-fill key

#	Word	Where it goes in B* / why
1	evidence	"we should also look at the _____" - introduces the fact
2	reported	"the article _____ that when companies let night owls start later..." - the reporting verb
3	productivity	"a gain of US\$277 million in _____" - the measurement
4	chronotype	"working with a person's _____" - topic vocabulary
5	flexible working hours	"a system of _____" - the solution
6	core hours	"with a few _____ in the middle of the day" - the practical detail

Teaching points	• Conceding first: "That's a fair point... I understand that..." sounds polite and keeps the group talking, instead of a blunt "I disagree" - B shows the blunt first draft students should upgrade. • Countering with evidence: one number from the article turns an opinion into an argument (US\$277m productivity gain; 16% higher heart risk; 42% lower depression risk). • Natural turn-taking: end by passing the turn - "Any other thoughts?" / "What do you think, Candidate C?" • Careful with "I agree with you but..." - it sounds weak. Use "However", "That's true, and yet..." or "I see what you mean; even so..." • Phrase bank for students: "That's a fair point" · "I see what you mean, but" · "However, we should also look at..." · "In fact, the article reported..." · "In other words" · "I believe a more practical solution is..."
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6. Teaching Notes - What to Listen For

Look for	What a strong answer sounds like
Connected ideas (45-60 s)	Opinion → reason → example → link back to sleeping patterns or flexible work: 3-4 ideas, not one repeated sentence.
Level 4+ vocabulary	sleep deprivation, sleep-deprived, burn the midnight oil, catch up on sleep, take a toll on your health, impair your concentration, daytime drowsiness, chronotype, flexible working hours / flextime, core hours.
Evidence	One number from Section 2: 16% higher heart risk; 79% poorer heart health; 42% lower depression risk; 91% of Hong Kong short sleepers want more sleep.
Part A turn-taking	Inviting others ("What do you think?"), building on ideas ("That's a fair point, and it also means..."), conceding before disagreeing, and not dominating the group.
Part B focus	Answers the question asked - e.g. "Would YOU consider a job that requires working at night?" - rather than delivering a memorised speech about sleep.
Common slips	"Night owl" confused with "early bird"; a reason with no example; ignoring the second half of a two-part question ("...and why?"); Level 3 words left un-upgraded (very tired, stay up late, bad for you).
Scaffolds for weaker students	Sentence starters: "One advantage is...", "This matters because...", "As the article showed, ...", "For example, I..." Keep the Level 3 phrase on the board next to the upgrade so they can reach for it mid-answer.

7. Deck at a Glance (animation order - one click per group)

Every content slide reveals its information click by click, so the class sees one idea at a time. Press the space bar (or click) to advance; use the left arrow to go back and hide a group again.

Slide	Clicks in order
1 Title	No animation - the cover shows the topic and the Early Birds vs. Night Owls graphic straight away.
2 Warm-up	1 Q1 card · 2 Q2 card · 3 "Night owl" bar + Netflix / YouTube / Instagram · 4 "Sleep early" bar + Calm / Fitbit / Starbucks
3 Vocabulary	One click per expression (ten clicks). Click 1 shows "sleep deprivation" with the Level 3 phrase it replaces; ask students to upgrade each phrase before you reveal it.
4 Hidden cost	1 exam graphic + caption · 2 the 16% heart-risk stat · 3 the wider-picture stats (79% / 1 in 4 / 91%) · 4 "Think about it" prompts
5 Skill	1 A (plain opinion) · 2 B (blunt disagreement) · 3 B* (upgraded answer) · 4 the six upgraded words (reveal only after students have tried

	the gaps)
6 Part A	1 the exam page (article + task bullets + PART B heading). This is the page students have on their handout.
7 Ideas grid	1 card 1 · 2 card 2 · 3 card 3 · 4 card 4 – one Part A bullet per click.
8 Part B	1 Q1 + card · 2 Q1 idea prompts · 3 Q2 + card · 4 Q2 idea prompts – keep the prompts hidden until a student has tried the question.

Night Owls

Sleep patterns, body clocks and flexible working hours

DSE 2023 Paper 4 Set 2.1 • Lesson 3 • Speaking Practice



Early Birds vs. Night Owls

Warm-up

QUESTION 1 (Student A)

Do you wake up early on weekends?

NIGHT OWL - LATE TO BED



Netflix



YouTube



Instagram

QUESTION 2 (Student B)

Do you often have problems waking up in the morning?

Sleep early · No screens before bed · Regular body clock



Calm



Fitbit



Starbucks

Level up your language: 10 expressions for this discussion

1. my concentration peaks during ...

instead of "I do my best work at night"

to reach its highest point

2. sleep deprivation

instead of "not enough sleep"

not getting enough sleep over a long period

3. impair my cognitive performance

instead of "I cannot think clearly"

weaken thinking, memory and learning

4. compromise my attention span

instead of "I cannot focus for long"

make it weaker; how long you concentrate

5. wind down before bedtime

instead of "relax before I sleep"

slow down and relax before sleeping

6. take a toll on your health

instead of "be bad for your health"

slowly damage your health

7. maximise productivity

instead of "do more work"

get the most out of your effort

8. productivity

instead of "the work you get done"

the amount of useful work produced

9. higher retention

instead of "fewer staff leave"

keeping staff so they do not leave

10. burnout

instead of "losing all motivation"

extreme tiredness from long-term stress

What is the hidden cost of being a night owl?



Early bird vs night owl (from the exam article)

Think about it:

- Night owls have a ____% higher risk of dying younger.
- Which other health problems does the article mention?
- What could happen to a night owl's mood and schoolwork?

16%

higher risk of heart attack or stroke for night owls

Journal of the American Heart Association · 28 January 2026

The wider picture:

79% night owls were more likely to have poor overall heart health (AHA)

1 in 4 Hong Kong students sleep under 7 hours on school nights (CUHK)

91% of Hong Kong people who sleep under 7 hours wish they could sleep more (YouGov)

Skill: Conceding a point, then countering with evidence

A: I think companies should let night owls start work later because they are more productive at night.

B: **I disagree, Candidate A.** That is not fair to early birds, and the office can never close.

B*: **That's a fair point**, Candidate A. **I understand that** early birds should not be treated unfairly. However, we should also look at the **(1)** _____. In fact, the article **(2)** _____ that when companies let night owls start later, there was a gain of US\$277 million in **(3)** _____. In other words, working with a person's **(4)** _____ benefits the whole company. I believe a system of **(5)** _____, with a few **(6)** _____ in the middle of the day, would keep everyone happy. **Any other thoughts?**

Upgraded words - the numbers match the blanks in B*:

1 evidence

2 reported

3 productivity

4 chronotype

5 flexible working hours

6 core hours

This article appeared in a lifestyle magazine:

Night Owls

‘Night owls’ are people who are naturally more awake and active at night and tend to go to bed late. Research has found that night owls face higher rates of poor health, including having a 10 percent higher risk of dying younger than ‘early birds’ or people who get up early and feel more energetic first thing in the day. Night owls often suffer from long-term lack of sleep and this can increase the chance of diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Not having enough sleep even for just one night can make us moody; when it happens every single night for an extended period, depression can develop.



Associate professor Kristen Knutson at Northwestern University said: “This is a public health issue that cannot be ignored. We need to recognise that people have different body clocks which regulate the time we feel sleepy and wakeful throughout the day. Some people naturally wake up early while others feel more awake at night. All of this comes down to a combination of genes and the person’s environment.”

Employers can benefit from adjusting start times to suit individual employees’ needs. Another study found that when companies let night owls start work later in the day or allowed them to work from home, there was an estimated US\$277m gain in productivity. It argues that people who are more awake at night should be allowed to start and finish work later. Not everyone is suited to get up for an 8am start.

Your group is doing a project on sleeping patterns and you are meeting to discuss this. You may want to talk about:

- the advantages of being a night owl
- the advantages of getting up early
- whether companies should have flexible working hours for people with different sleeping patterns
- anything else you think is important

PART B Individual Response

The examiner will ask you one or more questions based on Part A. You will have up to 1 minute to respond.

Ideas for your discussion



1 Advantages of being a night owl

- quiet hours – no interruptions after 10 p.m.
- creative peak – best ideas come late at night
- suits online, global or freelance work
- in sync with friends' late-night life

2 Advantages of getting up early

- morning energy – start before you feel behind
- time to plan, revise, exercise or eat breakfast
- awake for morning lessons and public exams
- finish earlier – more free time and daylight

3 Flexible working hours?

- match work to a person's body clock
- later starts raised productivity by US\$277m
- fairness – keep some core hours
- not possible for every job (nurses, drivers, shops)

4 Anything else important

- screens and caffeine steal our sleep
- much of the risk is habits, not genes
- should Hong Kong schools start later?
- sleep protects our mood and mental health

Part B: Individual Response practice

Would you consider a job that requires working at night?

Yes: matches my body clock, quieter, shift allowance, works across time zones

No: health risks, poor sleep, less family and social time, travelling home at night

Do you envy people who only need a few hours of sleep?

Envy: more hours for study, work and hobbies

Not envy: they are often sleep-deprived; quality of sleep matters more than quantity