Talking About Work: Tasks and Projects

Most people don't want a job where they do the same exact thing all day, every day. Most of us want a job where they can perform a **variety** of different **tasks**, using different **skills**, throughout the day. That way, it's possible to avoid **monotony** in your work.

One way to use all of your skills is to work on different **projects**. When you are **responsible** for a variety of different things, you might have more stress, but you won't be **bored**!

How do you avoid monotony at the office? Do you work on more than one project at a time? How many projects is it possible to manage at once? How many different skills do you use in your job? Can you describe them all in English?

Vocabulary

Variety: Do you like ice cream? When you go to the café for ice cream, do they sell only chocolate ice cream, or do they sell a lot of different kinds of ice cream? Most cafés now have ten or more kinds of ice cream. They have a <u>variety</u> of ice creams.

The word <u>variety</u> refers to many different kinds of something. My wife speaks German, English and French. I think that's a <u>variety</u> of languages. There are a <u>variety</u> of historic sites to visit in London, and a <u>variety</u> of hostels to stay at!

Tasks: Sometimes my wife leaves me a list of things to do when she's away. Some examples would include washing the dishes and the dirty clothes, walking the dog, and vacuuming the living room. Everything on the list is a <u>task</u>.

A <u>task</u> is a simple job to complete. A <u>task</u> can be putting files in alphabetical order, or making copies of important papers. Cleaning is a <u>task</u>, and so is entering information into a computer. When you're **responsible** for many different, connected **tasks**, we start talking about **projects**.

Skills: You can probably ride a bicycle. If you can, it's certain that you weren't born able to ride a bike. You had to work hard to learn it. Riding a bicycle is a <u>skill</u>.

A <u>skill</u> is any learned ability you might have. Alphabetizing quickly is a <u>skill</u>. Driving a car is a <u>skill</u>. Typing quickly is a <u>skill</u> and so is multitasking. And, of course, speaking English is a <u>skill</u>. Most people have more <u>skills</u> than even they know about. But you can never have too many

<u>skills</u>!

Monotony: Imagine hearing the same song, over and over with no breaks. Everywhere you went, everything you did, the soundtrack was the exact same song. How long would it take before you hated the song, before you started to go crazy? The feeling that would make you crazy is <u>monotony</u> and it means 'the same thing, over and over.' It's the opposite of **variety**.

When I was in college, some of the professors were famous of their <u>monotony</u>. *Nobody* was awake at the end of their lectures! Long drives at night are sometimes dangerous for me: the <u>monotony</u> of the road makes me want to sleep. Too much grammar and not enough fun in the English classroom can become <u>monotonous</u>, and not just for the students!

Projects: In a **monotonous** job, you might do the same task—or the same two or three tasks—over and over. You probably wouldn't work on a product from beginning to end, you'd do just one small part of the job. The opposite of that is when you work on a product from start to finish, performing a **variety** of different **tasks**, using a **variety** of different **skills**. If that's what you do, then you're working on a <u>project</u>.

Of course, almost nobody works on a <u>project</u> from start to end these days, but if you work on something with a clear beginning, middle, and end, using different **skills**, then it's a <u>project</u>. Bite Sized English is a project for me that's just getting started. Working on an old car can be a hobby <u>project</u>. My students seem to think that <u>projects</u> have more stress but less **monotony** than jobs where they only do one **task**.

Responsible: We have different jobs in our apartment. For example, I clean the kitchen, and my wife cleans the bathroom. Maybe it's strange that two people who are almost 30 years old need a list, but when the kitchen isn't clean and my wife is angry, there's no question of who is <u>responsible</u>.

A person who is <u>responsible</u> for something is the person who has to be sure that it is done. Being <u>responsible</u> can be a double-edged sword: it can mean that I'm in trouble when the kitchen isn't clean. But it can also mean that we know who was <u>responsible</u> when my mother-in-law comes to visit and says that our kitchen is very clean. We think of managers as being <u>responsible</u> people, but we all have <u>responsibilities</u> (that's the noun, <u>responsible</u> is an adjective).

Bored: Even with a wonderful teacher like me, I have students who tell me that learning English grammar makes them want to sleep! When they learn grammar, they tell me, they're <u>bored</u>. I try not to be insulted, but it's hard not to think that they think I'm a <u>boring</u> teacher.

If time flies when you're having fun, then time goes *very slowly* when you're not having fun.

When you have the feeling that time is standing still—I sometimes feel like this in a meeting—then you're <u>bored</u>. I think I was my most <u>bored</u> in my math classes in school, or on guard duty in the Army!