
“Today for you, tomorrow for me”, six words that sum up the spirit of an initiative that has appeared in many cities around the world: time banking. There is no money in these peculiar banks. Instead, they offer a variety of services based on the abilities of the members, and they pay with hours, not money. Each client offers their own abilities to the rest of the members and can earn the help of others who want to share what they know. The hours system offers a variety of possibilities, such as advice about investing in the stock exchange, teaching how to cut hair, technology or language classes, and even plumbing.

Time banking is different from other community or volunteering projects because everyone’s time is valued equally. The system recognises that everyone has needs and something to offer. When joining a time bank, people agree to both give to and benefit from the project, increasing self-esteem, integration and personal relationships. People are able to access help or services that they may not otherwise be able to afford. It also reduces isolation and loneliness. Everyone benefits from being part of something bigger than themselves.

Time banks help build a sense of community where people know neighbours and can rely on each other for support. They bring together people of different ages, cultures, backgrounds and abilities, who interact with each other with mutual respect and understanding.

The only objection some people make is that they sometimes have doubts and may feel uncertain of other members’ offerings of service. However, in order to overcome this emotion and for security reasons, everyone who wants to become a member is interviewed and must provide references. Those wishing to work with children or vulnerable adults are checked by the police.

I * COMPREHENSION (4 points: questions 1-3, 1 point each; 4-5, 0.5 points each)

ANSWER QUESTIONS 1-3 ACCORDING TO THE INFORMATION GIVEN IN THE TEXT. USE YOUR OWN WORDS.

1. What do members get from these banks instead of money?
2. In which two ways does time banking differ from other volunteering projects?
3. Why does time banking make communities better?

ARE THESE STATEMENTS TRUE OR FALSE? JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWERS WITH THE PRECISE WORDS OR PHRASES FROM THE TEXT, OR USE YOUR OWN WORDS.

4. Time banks can help people with economic difficulties.
5. You don’t need any special requirements to join a time bank.

II * USE OF ENGLISH (3 points; questions 6-9, 0.25 points each; 10-13, 0.5 points each)

6. GIVE ONE SYNONYM FOR “abilities” (noun) AS IT IS USED IN THE TEXT.
7. WHICH WORD DOES NOT HAVE THE SAME MEANING? reduce / shorten / diminish / provide
8. GIVE AN ADJECTIVE WITH THE SAME ROOT AS “rely” (verb) (line 12).
9. FIND IN THE TEXT THE WORD WHICH HAS THE FOLLOWING DEFINITION: “to have enough money or time to be able to do something.”
10. GIVE A QUESTION FOR THE UNDERLINED WORDS: “It brings together people of different ages and backgrounds”.
11. TURN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE INTO REPORTED SPEECH: “We don’t worry if people spend too much money,” the director said.
12. COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING (CONDITIONAL) SENTENCE. “If I didn’t know my neighbours……”
13. JOIN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES USING AN APPROPRIATE LINKER (DO NOT USE AND, BUT, OR BECAUSE). MAKE CHANGES IF NECESSARY: “Clients share their own abilities and knowledge. They want to help and be helped.”

III * PRODUCTION (3 points)

14. WRITE A COMPOSITION OF APPROXIMATELY 120 WORDS ABOUT THE TOPIC PROPOSED AND FOCUS STRICTLY ON IT: How could you contribute to a time bank or any other volunteering project?