

## **Reading and Comprehension Check: Work Situations**

In the U.S., part-time usually means working less than 40 hours a week. Maybe you work 20, 25, or 30 hours a week. Full-time jobs typically require you to work 40 hours a week. For example, a *full-time* employee might work Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. *Part-time* workers might only work a few afternoons or on the weekends.

Typically, part-time workers make an hourly *wage*. This means that for every hour they work, they will earn a certain amount. The minimum wage in the United States is \$7.25 per hour. Some states have a higher minimum wage due to a higher cost of living, but here in Iowa, the minimum wage in Iowa is still \$7.25. Luckily, most jobs in Johnson County will pay more than the minimum wage. You can find a variety of jobs that pay from \$10 to \$15 an hour as of 2025.

Full-time workers typically make a *salary*. This means that instead of earning a certain dollar amount per hour, they make a certain amount for the whole year, though they are still typically paid biweekly. Workers who earn a salary typically describe how much they earn by the yearly amount. For example, “I earn 50 thousand a year” or “50k a year.”

Full-time workers can also get benefits from their company. This means extra pay for working more than 40 hours a week, called “*overtime*,” health insurance, dental insurance, and potentially paid time off (PTO).

Jobs are often divided into *shifts*. A shift is the time you work from start to finish. Common shifts include:

1. Morning shift (7am-3pm)
2. Afternoon or swing shift (3pm-11pm)
3. Overnight or graveyard shift (11pm-7am)

Some jobs, like grocery store employees or part-time work, will start shifts at odd times. For example, perhaps you start work at 2:15pm and you leave at 6:45pm, but it is most common to start at the top of the hour or at the half hour.

In the U.S., punctuality is very important. Remember to arrive at work on time and leave on time as well. Being late, even by 5 to 10 minutes, can have serious negative consequences at jobs in the U.S. Some countries offer employees great protection from termination, or being fired, but Iowa is an “*at-will employment*” state. This means your employer can terminate your job at any time, for any reason, so always check your schedule in advance so you know when you are working and can plan ahead.

## True or False

- \_\_\_\_ 1. Some states have higher minimum wages than others.
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Part-time workers often have more flexibility in the hours they work.
- \_\_\_\_ 3. The average daily shift in the U.S. is eight hours.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Bosses in the U.S. need to complete paperwork and a week-long waiting period before firing an employee.

## Share your opinion. Do you agree or disagree, and why?

Americans' work schedules offer more flexibility than other countries.

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The minimum wage in the U.S., and in Iowa, is not high enough to meet workers' needs.

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I will have enough time to plan if I check my work schedule 24 hours in advance. For example, I can check on Friday to see if I work on Saturday.

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