

## What is Brexit and What Does a Leave Vote Mean?

**Language Focus:** 16 words, **Level:** *Intermediate - Advanced*

Like many other countries in Europe, the United Kingdom (or UK) is part of the European Union – but that is about to change. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016, British people voted to leave the European Union. This has become known as ‘Brexit’, a combination of the words ‘Britain’ and ‘exit’.

### What is the European Union?

The EU, as it’s more commonly known, is a group of European countries who have all signed up to a series of agreements. Members of the EU can **trade freely** with each other without having to pay fees, and people who were born in an EU country can live and work in any other EU country without needing a visa. The member countries often have similar laws, especially about development and agriculture.

### What happens now?

At the moment (April 2018) the UK is still a member of the European Union. After the vote they had to inform the rest of the EU about their decision by **triggering** Article 50 of the Lisbon **Treaty**. The UK and the EU are currently in two years of **negotiations** to try **to reach new agreements** on trade and the movement of people.

### Effect on the economy

Directly after the Brexit vote, the value of the UK’s money - the pound - dropped quickly. This was good news for any company who buys things in the UK and sells them abroad, but bad news for anyone trying to sell in Britain.

Many people were **predicting** that Brexit would cause a **recession**. So far the British economy is **fairly steady**, but there are some worrying signs, such as the housing market slowing down and **stock prices** falling. So far, employment has not been affected too much. The UK will be looking for new trading partners after their agreements with the EU are finished, so we could see the UK trying **to strengthen** their relationships with current partners such as the USA, Canada, China or Saudi Arabia.

### Other consequences

Europeans living and working in the UK may eventually need to apply for a visa so that they can stay. **Whether or not** that happens depends on the result of the UK’s negotiations with the EU. There are also many Brits living in Europe, who may also either need to apply for a visa for the country they are currently living in or go back to the UK.

It is **unlikely** that Brexit will have much of an effect on tourist visas; the UK will still want tourists to visit the country and they already have a **reciprocal agreement** with many countries to allow its citizens visa-free entry.

The UK will soon be able to make its own laws on things previously controlled by the EU, such as fishing **quotas** or employment rights.

In the end, we won't know the real effects of leaving the European Union until the UK and the EU have finished negotiating, which will be several years from now. One thing is for sure; it is **in both the UK and Europe's best interests** to make sure the change is a **smooth** one.

## *Language Focus* : Vocabulary + Expressions

1. **trade freely** - to exchange good and services, do business together without paying taxes and tariffs.

**Freely** - (adverb) do sth without restrictions or limitations

- *Countries in the EU can **trade freely** with each other.*
- *Visitors from outside the EU cannot move **freely** in the EU. They need to have visas to visit the different countries.*

2. **triggering** Article 50 - causing Article 50 to be used or enacted.

3. **Treaty** - (noun) an agreement between two or more countries or states.

- *The two countries signed a peace **treaty**.*

4. **negotiations** - (pl noun) talks or discussions people have when they are trying to agree on something

- *The **negotiations** between the two companies lasted for 3 weeks. Finally they agreed to work together.*

5. **to reach** new agreements - to agree on an agreement / to agree to something after sometime

- *After 3 days of negotiations the two companies **reached** a deal.*

6. **Predicting** - saying what will happen in the future

**To predict** (verb) - to try to say what will happen in the future

- *No one **predicted** the economic crisis in 2008.*

7. **a recession** - a period of time when the economy declines.

- *There is a **recession** happening in many countries in Europe.*

8. the British economy is **fairly steady** - quite stable and secure

**Fairly** - (adverb) quite , rather

**Steady** - (adjective) stable, not balanced or moving (sth physical) / consistent, secure, unchanging (job, economy)

- *The table is **steady** so it doesn't move a lot.*
- *The new restaurant in town is nice but it is **fairly** expensive.*

9. **stock** prices - pieces of company, group of shares, sold on the stock market

- *My friend owns some **stock** in Facebook.*

10. **to strengthen** - to make sth stronger

- The government said that investing in industry will **strengthen** the economy.

11. **Whether or not that happens** - it will happen or it won't depending on the result of sth else

**Whether** - if, or not

- *My sister got offered a new job but she doesn't know **whether** to accept it **or not**. (if she should accept it or if she shouldn't accept it)*

12. **Unlikely** - not probable, sth probably won't happen

- *England are **unlikely** to win the world cup.*

13. **reciprocal** agreement - an agreement where two people or groups agree to give each other the same treatment, benefits or advantages.

- *Ireland and England signed a **reciprocal** agreement to allow people to travel without a passport between the two countries.*

14. fishing **quotas** - official limits of fish that you can catch

**quotas** - official limits or fixed number of things

- Canada has a **quota** on immigration every year. (*there is a limit on how many people can enter Canada to live and work*)

15. **in both the UK and Europe's best interests** - it will benefit the UK and Europe

**to be in sb's best interest to do sth** - (expression) it benefits sb to do sth

- *My parents told me it is **in my best interest** to be polite to my teacher.*

16. a **smooth** one - (adjective) easy, without any problems

\*It is more normal to use the adverb 'Smoothly'

**Smoothly** - (adverb) without problems or difficulties

- *My exams went **smoothly**.*

## Language Focus: Exercises

### Comprehension Questions

Find the answers to these questions in the article..

1. What is Brexit?
2. Why is it called 'Brexit'?
3. How did the UK inform the rest of their decision?.
4. What negative effects has the Brexit vote had on the British economy?
5. What is the consequence of Brexit relating to the movement of people?

### Comprehension Questions: True or False ?

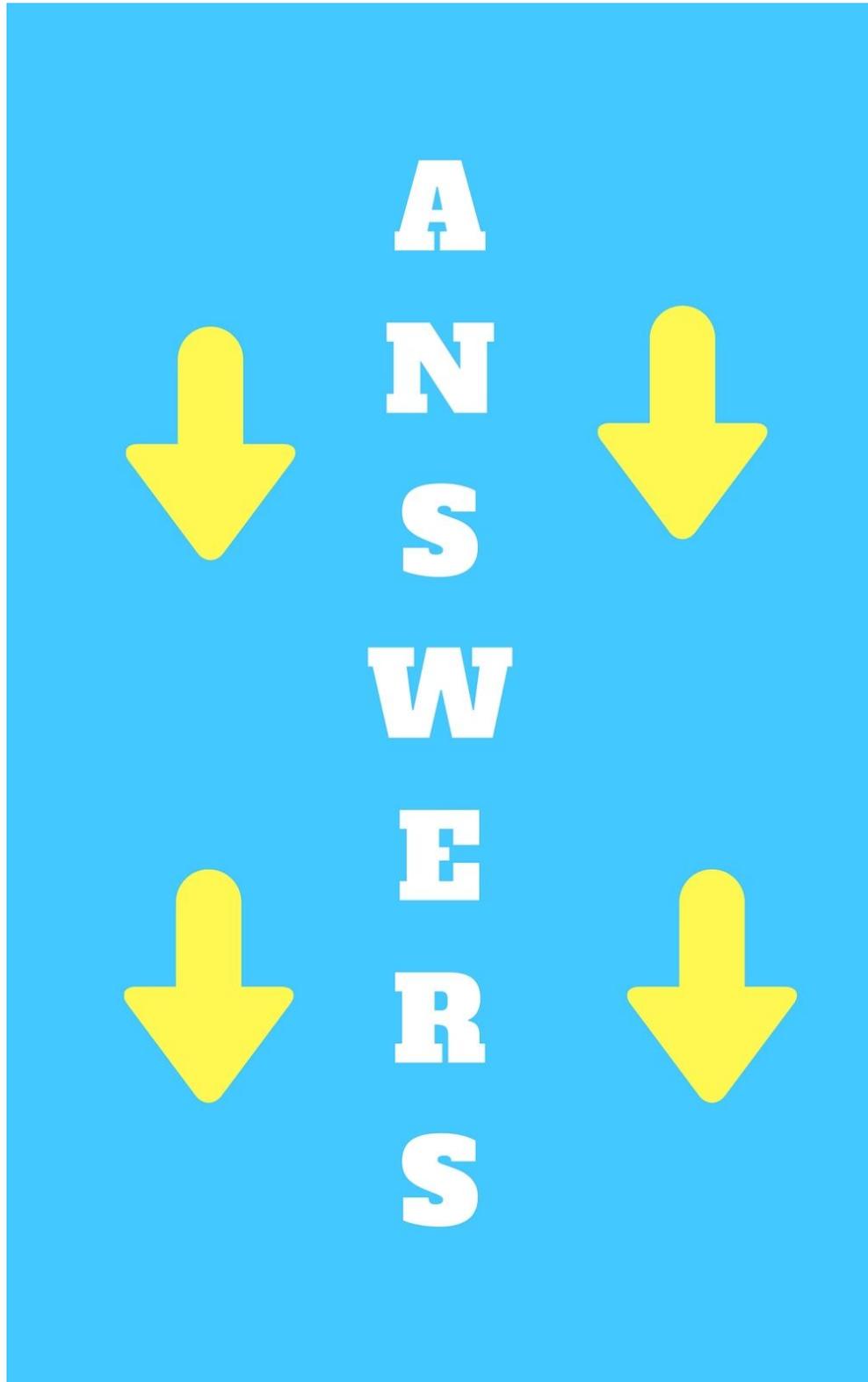
Say whether the following statements are true or false. If they are false, say why.

1. By triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, the UK was immediately no longer part of the EU.
2. The drop in value of the pound had a positive effect for some companies.
3. After the Brexit vote, the UK has entered into a recession.
4. The UK is trying to find new trade partners outside of Europe.
5. Brexit means that all tourists going to the UK will need a visa.
6. One benefit of Brexit is that the UK can make its own laws relating to employment rights.

### Complete the sentences: EXERCISES

Complete these sentences with a **highlighted** word or phrase from the article.

1. My sisters and I bought my dad a present for his birthday but I don't know ..... he will like it. (*if he will or will not*)
2. Bob used to work a few times per month but now he has a ..... job in a company. (*secure, stable*)
3. It ..... to learn English if you want to work in international business. (*it will benefit you*)
4. The police operation went ..... and the criminals were arrested. (*without problems or difficulties*)
5. The weatherman said it is ..... to snow tomorrow. (*not probable*)
6. Some people believe that they can ..... the future. (*say what will happen*)
7. I ..... an agreement with my boss where I can work 2 days from home and 3 days from the office. (*made, agreed*)
8. Lifting weights in the gym will ..... your muscles. (*make stronger*)



## ANSWERS SHEET

### Comprehension Questions: **ANSWERS**

1. *British people voted to leave the European Union.*
2. *'Brexit', a combination of the words 'Britain' and 'exit'.*
3. *They informed the rest of the European Union by "...triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty".*
4. *...the value of the UK's money - the pound - dropped quickly...the housing market slowing down and stock prices falling.*
5. *Europeans living and working in the UK may eventually need to apply for a visa so that they can stay...There are also many Brits living in Europe, who may also either need to apply for a visa for the country they are currently living in or go back to the UK.*

### True or False ? : **ANSWERS**

1. FALSE: Article 50 triggered the two years of negotiations between the UK and EU.
2. TRUE
3. FALSE: So far the British economy is fairly steady.
4. TRUE
5. FALSE: The UK already has reciprocal agreements with many countries to allow its citizens visa-free entry.
6. TRUE

### Complete the sentences: **ANSWERS**

1. My sisters and I bought my dad a present for his birthday but I don't know **whether or not** he will like it. (*if he will or will not*)
2. Bob used to work a few times per month but now he has a **steady** job in a company. (*secure, stable*)
3. It **is in your best interest** to learn English if you want to work in international business. (*it will benefit you*)
4. The police operation went **smoothly** and the criminals were arrested. (*without problems or difficulties*)
5. The weatherman said it is **unlikely** to snow tomorrow. (*not probable*)

6. Some people believe that they can **predict** the future. (*say what will happen*)
7. I **reached** an agreement with my boss where I can work 2 days from home and 3 days from the office. (*made, agreed*)
8. Lifting weights in the gym will **strengthen** your muscles. (*make stronger*)