

Answers to Exercises

C) Key Words from Context

1. A feeling, especially among successful people, that they doubt their own skills and talents, and fear that they will be exposed as not being worthy of their achievements: **imposter syndrome**

*"I have suffered from **imposter syndrome** throughout my career."*

2. A fundamental weakness in something: **a flaw**

*"There was one major **flaw** in our strategy, which caused the project to fail."*

*"He has a few **flaws**, which I believe are holding him back in his career."*

Collocations:

A flaw in the system / a flaw in the process / a flaw in the method / a flaw in his or her management style / a flaw in the approach / a flaw in his or her character / a flaw in the strategy / a flaw in the product

We can also use the word 'flawless' to describe something which doesn't have any flaws - something which is perfect. It is a great word to describe a product or service.

Flawless design / a flawless service / a flawless user experience / a flawless performance (of a person in a presentation for example) / flawless performance (general flawless performance of a product)

3. To be very closely connected to something: **to go hand in hand**

*"Hard work and success **go hand in hand**."*

4. To deal with failure or setbacks in a calm and accepting way: **to take something in your stride**

*"We didn't secure the contract, but we need to **take it in our stride** and learn from our mistakes so that we will be more successful next time."*

5. To blame or criticize yourself unfairly and excessively after a failure or setback: **to beat yourself up about something**

*"You can't **beat yourself up** about failing the job interview. "*

6. To do something with less determination and effort, to slow down: **to take your foot off the gas**

*"We are posting too often on our social media account, and I believe that it is harming the growth of our channel. Maybe we should **take our foot off the gas** and monitor engagement."*

Why this is useful in business:

We can use this when we believe that we are doing something too intensively, and it would be beneficial to slow down.

"We are currently spending too much money on advertising. We need to take our foot off the gas for a while."

7. To fix high standards for yourself or for others: **to set the bar high**

*"The University really **sets the bar high** for potential students to be accepted onto their courses."*

8. The act of voluntarily delaying something even though you know that there will be negative consequences for doing so. This is often done by deliberately distracting yourself with something else: **procrastination**

*"**Procrastination** is a big problem among heavy users of social media."*

*"I find that when I work from home, I am much more prone to **procrastination**, because there are so many distractions."*

9. To be as good as something or someone else: **to measure up**

*"In comparison with the iPhone, many believe that Android phones don't quite **measure up**."*

*"When I first joined the company, I was worried that I wouldn't **measure up**."*

10. To have intense worries, pain or difficulty caused by something over a period of time: **to be plagued by something**

*"Throughout my career, I was always **plagued by** feelings of doubt about my abilities."*

*"The department has always been **plagued by** disagreements and infighting."*

11. To make significant progress in something: **to make strides in something**

*"I am really **making strides** in my English."*

Why this is useful in business:

This is useful because it sounds dynamic, and sounds like your progress has been significant. We can also use this with adjectives such as 'huge' or 'great'

*"I have made huge strides in my communication skills."
"The company has made great strides in efficiency and customer service."*

12. To estimate or determine the level, amount or volume of something: **to gauge**

*"We need to **gauge** the level of risk before we make a final decision on whether to go ahead with the project."*

Collocations with 'gauge':

To gauge the level of risk / To gauge the level of interest / To gauge the level of damage
/ To gauge the audience's response

13. To be in a better situation or a more advantageous position: **to be better off**

*"If we follow the instructions closely then we will be **better off**."*

(we can also use this followed with an 'ing' form, which is a great way to make a suggestion in a meeting)

*"In my opinion, we would be **better off** focusing on a younger audience if we want to sell more products."*

Other example sentences for a meeting:

*"Wouldn't we be better off investing the money in other projects?"
"I think we would be better off cancelling the event."
"Don't you think we'd be better off scheduling another meeting for next week?"*

14. To develop and improve something, such as an attitude, image or skill: **to cultivate**

*"We aim to **cultivate** a more sophisticated image for our luxury brand."*

*"We have **cultivate** a strong sense of togetherness within the team."*

Why this is useful in business:

This can also be used in terms of relationships

To cultivate partnerships / to cultivate a strong network / to cultivate trust

Other collocations with 'cultivate':

To cultivate a company culture whereby... / to cultivate skills / to cultivate leadership qualities / to cultivate a strong reputation / to cultivate a powerful image / to cultivate opportunities / to cultivate a sustainable approach / to cultivate a strong work ethic / to cultivate a positive attitude among the team / to cultivate a productive atmosphere / to cultivate innovation

D) Comprehension

1. Based on context in the first paragraph, what do you think is meant by the phrase “*They feel like complete frauds*”?
If someone is a ‘fraud’, it means that they are deliberately intending to deceive others by unjustifiably claiming that they have certain qualities or qualifications. Based on the context, we can see that they feel as if their achievements are not a result of hard-work and haven’t been earned.
2. According to the author, what are 2 main flaws of perfectionists?
 - They set excessively high goals for themselves.
 - They are ‘control freaks’ and want to do everything themselves.
3. What does the article suggest that perfectionists tend to get wrong in relation to projects?
They plan too much for projects, and they delay starting them because they want to wait for the perfect time.
4. What is the real underlying reason as to why superwomen and supermen work so hard?
They feel as if they are frauds and that everyone around them is not.
5. What do workaholics like about working so hard, and how can they change this?
They like the validation, which is the approval and acceptance from others.
6. According to the author, what is the difference between the mindsets of a natural genius and a perfectionist?
They both set extremely high standards for themselves, but ‘natural geniuses’ also judge themselves on whether they get something right on the first try.
7. What does the article suggest is a possible drawback of learning more and more?
Learning more and more is a form of procrastination. It is a tactic that you use in order to delay doing the tasks or taking the steps that really matter.
8. What do you think the phrase ‘you are far from alone’ means in the final paragraph?
If something is far from something, it means that it is definitely not something. In this context, the author is saying that you are definitely not alone if you are suffering from confidence issues, because over 70% of high-achievers have suffered from imposter syndrome at some point in their career. Some more examples include:
far from satisfactory / far from clear / far from enjoyable

E) Key Words in a New Context

Chief Executive Anna Sheldon Talks about her Imposter Syndrome

Looking back at my career, and indeed my life in general, I have always been **plagued by** imposter syndrome. I remember walking into my first tutorial at University. I felt so out of place on that first day. Despite achieving excellent grades and comfortably landing a place at the university, I took a look around the class and assumed that everyone there was far more intelligent than myself, and far more deserving of a position at the university than I

was. I looked around the room and tried to **gauge** the intelligence of each student in the class, looking at the way they dressed, the way they spoke, and I just assumed that I wouldn't **measure up**. In that first seminar, I didn't contribute anything to the discussion. I thought I would be **better off** keeping quiet in order not to embarrass myself.

After a few months, I realised that the other members of my class also had **flaws**, and in many cases I knew more than they did. The feelings of being a 'fraud' eventually wore off as I was able to prove myself in my results.

Nowadays, I generally manage to keep imposter syndrome at bay, but it sometimes creeps in when I have to give an important presentation to the board. I have **made strides** in my presentation skills over the years, and therefore I feel much more confident than those early days at university when I was barely able to contribute to a discussion. However, I sometimes find myself analysing the facial expressions of all members of the audience, **gauging** their level of enthusiasm or interest to every single point that I make. Sometimes it is necessary to accept that not everyone will like what you have to say, and that certainly doesn't mean that you are an imposter or inadequate. You just have to **take it in your stride** and **cultivate** an inner-resilience over time. Imposter syndrome can creep back into your mindset when you least expect it, but the key is to embrace that feeling, label the feeling and move forward as normal.