



## What would Happen if We All Took Tablets to Make us More Productive?

### A) Warm up

1. At what time of the day would you say you are at your most productive?
2. Do you have any tactics or tools that you use to make yourself more productive during the work day?
3. What in your opinion are some of the positive and negatives to drinking coffee?

### B) Adapted Text - What Would Happen if we all Took Tablets to Make us More Productive?

## What would Happen if We All Took Tablets to Make us More Productive?

More and more people are taking tablets to improve their performance at work. Do they really work? And what would happen if we all started taking them?

For centuries, all workers have had to get them through their daily tasks is boring old caffeine. But no more. The latest generation has been experimenting with a new range of substances, which they believe will supercharge their mental abilities and help them get ahead.

One recent survey involving tens of thousands of people found that 30% of Americans who responded had taken tablets to improve performance in the last year. Will this new group of intellectual giants lead to a **surge** in economic growth? Might the working week become shorter, as people become more efficient?

One category of smart drugs which has received much attention than any other are the stimulants. In the fast-paced world of modern business, there's a growing interest in anything that can help in **gaining a competitive edge**. Among the tools individuals are turning to are Adderall and Ritalin. In the United States, both are approved as treatments for people with ADHD, a behavioural disorder which **inhibits** a person's ability to sit still or concentrate. Now they're also widely abused by people in highly competitive environments, especially in sectors such as finance, tech, and law. Despite such drugs only being available through a prescription, many young adults in the US know how to **obtain** them through friends or people they know.



Most people don't take them **to enhance** their intelligence, as improvements in this field have been proven to be modest at best. Instead, they take them **to foster** their mental energy, motivation to work, and above all an ability to remain focused on a specific task for long periods, especially when there is a clear goal or clear reward to be gained at the end. It appears that focus can even be maintained throughout the duration of a **mundane** task. One study found that people considered a seemingly dull maths task "interesting" when they were on Ritalin, due to the fact that Ritalin increased the levels of dopamine in the brain during **mundane** activities.

This **blurring of lines** between medical necessity and **the pursuit of** enhanced performance has raised numerous concerns, with many debating where the boundary should lie. Is it fair for individuals to use such drugs to get ahead in competitive fields? If some are using it **to enhance** their performance, does it create a pressured environment where others feel the need to do the same to keep up?

Many **draw parallels with** doping in sports. Just as athletes might take banned substances to run faster or lift heavier, professionals might use Adderall to think sharper or work longer. For those who choose not to, they may find themselves struggling to keep up with colleagues who can work longer hours or produce quicker results due to their enhanced cognitive abilities. **This disparity** can lead to burnout or feelings of inadequacy or pressure to start using the drug **to level the playing field**. Some young adults in the US have openly attempted to get an ADHD diagnosis in order to get hold of such tablets.

But what if everybody took them?

If the entire workforce were to start doping with prescription stimulants, it seems likely that they would have two major effects. Firstly, people would stop avoiding unpleasant tasks, and weary office workers who had perfected the art of not-working-at-work would start tackling the office filing system, keeping spreadsheets up to date, and enthusiastically attending dull meetings. Offices would become significantly more competitive.

However, the downsides far **outweigh** any potential advantages. Even in the short-term, there are several potential side-effects to Adderall and Ritalin, such as nervousness, anxiety, insomnia and stomach pains. Maybe you're hyper-focused for 12 hours, but then you could potentially fall below baseline for 24. Both are also known to be addictive, and there are already numerous reports of workers who are simply unable give them up.

There are also several over-the-counter (OTC) solutions for those who wish to achieve similar cognitive **enhancement** without the need for a prescription. Some of these include bacopa monnieri (A herb which has shown promise in improving memory and cognitive function over prolonged use), Rhodiola Rosea (often used to combat fatigue and boost mental clarity, especially under stress). Some even **resort to** nicotine in the form of chewables or 'snus' (as seen in the image), which can also enhance memory, focus and cognitive functioning.



Companies and employers are increasingly becoming aware the use of Adderall in the workplace. Many companies see it in their interest **to turn a blind eye**, viewing it as a means to enhance productivity. Others are concerned about the potential risks associated with its misuse, incorporating drug policies that address the use of prescription stimulants. However, these are hard to implement in practice, and they raise another question. Should such drugs be banned in the workplace? Should companies **impose** regular drugs tests to ensure that some are not getting an unfair advantage?

Such ethical questions are so complex that it may be up to companies themselves to come up with solutions (preferably without the help of any prescription medication!)

### C) Key Words from Context

Based on the context of the article, can you match the words in the box to the definitions listed below? Then add the word into the example sentence. You may need to change the form of the word to fit the meaning of the sentence.

a surge	to gain an edge	to foster	to inhibit
to obtain	mundane	to blur the lines	the pursuit of
to draw parallels	disparity	to level the playing field	
to outweigh	to resort to	to turn a blind eye	to impose

1. To pretend not to notice something: \_\_\_\_\_

*"The government often \_\_\_\_\_ to immoral business practices."  
"If you perform very well then I will \_\_\_\_\_ your mistakes."*

2. To get an advantage, to put yourself ahead of the competition: \_\_\_\_\_

*"The adoption of this new technology will help us to \_\_\_\_\_ over the competition."*

3. To get: \_\_\_\_\_

*"We have \_\_\_\_\_ our business license, so we can begin trading immediately."  
"We have managed to \_\_\_\_\_ some very important information."*

4. A difference in level or in treatment: \_\_\_\_\_

*"There is a large \_\_\_\_\_ between the wealthiest and the poorest in our society."  
"We can see a big \_\_\_\_\_ in the market between the market leader and all other companies in the sector."*

5. To make a situation fair for everyone, to create a situation where no-one has an advantage: \_\_\_\_\_

*"We have been falling behind our competitors for a while now, but the introduction of this new technology should help us to \_\_\_\_\_."*

6. To compare two things and indicate that they are similar: \_\_\_\_\_

*"With the current difficult economic situation, we can \_\_\_\_\_ with the situation 20 years ago."*

*"The two companies are very similar in that we can \_\_\_\_\_ between their management structures."*

7. To be more than or more significant than: \_\_\_\_\_

*"I think that it is a good deal. The benefits clearly \_\_\_\_\_ the risks, so I think we should accept it."*

8. Dull, lacking in interest or excitement: \_\_\_\_\_

*"Employees soon become unhappy if they are only asked to complete \_\_\_\_\_ tasks."*

9. A sudden powerful increase or upward movement: \_\_\_\_\_

*"The country is witnessing a \_\_\_\_\_ in unemployment due to the financial crisis."*

*"Due to the fact that the company is growing, we are getting a real \_\_\_\_\_ in requests from potential clients."*

10. To adopt an undesirable course of action in order to solve a difficult or extreme situation: \_\_\_\_\_

*"Last year we had to \_\_\_\_\_ making some redundancies, as the company had just lost some key clients."*

11. To introduce an unwelcome or restrictive measure: \_\_\_\_\_

*"The government has \_\_\_\_\_ new regulations related to business licenses."*

*"The company has \_\_\_\_\_ some new rules meaning that we have to be in the office at least 3 days per week."*

12. To make the difference between two things less clear, or to make it difficult to see the exact truth about something: \_\_\_\_\_

*"The popularity of working from home has \_\_\_\_\_ between work and private life."*

13. The act of trying to achieve a plan, activity, or situation, often over a long period of time: \_\_\_\_\_

*"I have worked very hard in the \_\_\_\_\_ of a fulfilling career."*

*"Our company has made several innovations in the \_\_\_\_\_ of excellence."*

14. To slow down the progress or growth of something: \_\_\_\_\_

*"Our budget constraints are \_\_\_\_\_ our progress."*

15. To improve or encourage the development of something: \_\_\_\_\_

*"At our company, we aim to \_\_\_\_\_ a strong sense of team spirit."*

#### **D) Comprehension**

**Can you answer the questions below about the text?**

1. According to the article, in what ways can Adderall and Ritalin improve performance at work?

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2. If some employees take Adderall and Ritalin in the workplace, what could happen to employees who choose not to take them?

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3. According to the article, what are the different ways in which someone could get hold of Adderall or Ritalin? (You may have to look across the whole article for this question)

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4. What are the downsides to taking Adderall or Ritalin?

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5. According to the author, what are 2 contrasting approaches that companies take when they find out that one of their employees is taking a "smart drug"?

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6. Do you believe that companies should take steps to ban "smart drugs" in the workplace, and why?

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### E) Key Words in a New Context

Below you can find a paragraph. Can you fill in the gaps in the paragraph with the words from the box below? You may need to change the form of some of the verbs in order for them to fit into the sentence. One word is used twice.

to inhibit (x2)	to obtain	to turn a blind eye	blurred
a surge	disparity	to outweigh	
to level the playing field	to resort	to impose	pursuit

#### Gaining an Edge: Extreme measures that companies take to get ahead of the competition

While many companies focus on the quality of their products to gain a competitive edge, some may \_\_\_\_\_ to more extreme or controversial tactics in the \_\_\_\_\_ of profit. Here are some examples of more extreme ways that companies might try to get ahead:

- **Corporate Espionage:** Some companies engage in spying on their rivals to \_\_\_\_\_ confidential information about trade secrets, client data or strategic plans.
- **Sabotage:** In very rare and extreme cases, companies may decide to spread false information or disrupt supply chains in order to \_\_\_\_\_ a rival company's operations.
- **Price Dumping:** In an attempt to drive competitors out of the market, companies might temporarily turn to selling products at an unsustainably low price. This can lead to a short-term \_\_\_\_\_ in the company's sales, but may be considered anti-competitive. The lines between legal price dumping and illegal price dumping are also \_\_\_\_\_, so it could cause legal problems for the company.
- **Monopolistic Practices:** Big companies may try to establish or maintain a monopoly by engaging in unethical practices. Policies such as price-fixing, exclusive dealing and aggressive mergers all seek to widen the \_\_\_\_\_ between huge companies and the smaller players in the market, ensuring that such small fish have no chance to \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Lobbying and Political Influence:** Companies may try to influence government policies and regulations in their favour through lobbying and political contributions. Governments might \_\_\_\_\_ laws and regulations in a way that benefits their business, and therefore \_\_\_\_\_ the growth of competitors. Companies may lobby politicians to \_\_\_\_\_ to potential unethical practices that the company is engaging in.
- **Employee Poaching:** Aggressively stealing key talent from competitors can weaken the rival company and strengthen the poaching company. If this is taken to the extreme, it could cause legal disputes and damaged relationships, meaning that the disadvantages of stealing talent often \_\_\_\_\_ the advantages.