Ryanair may raise fares and freeze pay

LEVEL B2


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I. WARM-UP

1. What factors can make flight prices go up?
2. Have you ever changed travel plans because of cost? Why?
3. How do fuel prices affect everyday life in your country?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

freeze
to stop increases for a period, for example stopping pay rises

airfare
the price you pay for a seat on a flight

hedge
to reduce risk by fixing prices in advance

forecast
to say what is expected to happen in the future

conflict
serious fighting or war between groups or countries

labour
work done by employees, or workers as a group

profit
money a company makes after costs are paid

artificial intelligence
computer systems that do tasks needing human-like thinking

III. READING

Ryanair has warned that it could freeze staff pay and push up airfares, because its fuel costs have surged after the US-Israel war with Iran. The airline expects prices for aviation fuel to stay high well into 2027 unless there is a swift resolution to the conflict.

Its fuel bill is forecast to be €2bn higher in the short term. The carrier said pre-tax profits fell 16% to €2.4bn in the six months to the end of September, mainly because fuel costs rose by 15%. Although about 80% of its fuel bill was hedged at fixed prices, the cost of the remainder has doubled.

Supply of refined products from the Gulf has dropped, increasing competition for fuel produced elsewhere. Ryanair expects European airfares to increase to help cover costs, and is also considering temporary pay freezes as labour agreements mature.

Chief executive Michael O'Leary has said fares could rise by 15% to 20% next year, but he doubts that will fully cover higher oil bills. The firm also plans to expand its use of artificial intelligence in back-office support.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "Ryanair says it may freeze workers' pay and...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Ryanair say it may freeze pay and raise airfares?
2. How much higher is Ryanair's fuel bill forecast to be in the short term?
3. What happened to Ryanair's pre-tax profits in the six months to September?
4. What share of Ryanair's fuel bill was hedged, and what happened to the rest?
5. By how much does Michael O'Leary say fares could rise next year?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should airlines pass higher fuel costs to travellers? Why or why not?
2. Is a pay freeze fair during a cost surge? What alternatives exist?
3. How could artificial intelligence cut costs in office work?
4. What makes you choose one airline over another besides price?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Used to / would

Use used to + base verb for past states or habits that are not true now. Use would + base verb for repeated past actions (not states).

"As a new traveller, I **used to be** *nervous about fares."*
"In my old job, my manager **would check** *fuel prices every morning."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with used to or would + the verb.

1. As a student, I (fly) ___ on budget fares every term. _____
2. Before AI tools, clerks (process) ___ invoices by hand. _____
3. At my last company, HR (freeze) ___ pay in tough years. _____
4. Our office (have) ___ fewer automation tools back then. _____
5. Back then, I (know) ___ little about fuel hedging. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check airfare, hedge, pay freeze, labour, and artificial intelligence. Highlight how headline numbers (€, %, periods) support the main idea.
- Run a first reading for gist, then a second for figures and causes. Sensitivity: the story mentions war in the Middle East; keep the focus on how conflict affects fuel markets, not on politics, and allow students to opt out of personal comments.
- Differentiation: stronger students calculate simple what-if scenarios (e.g., a 15% fare rise on a sample ticket), while others underline evidence in the text for each answer.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Poll the room first, then pair stronger and weaker students to compare reasons.
2. Elicit options (hiring freeze, route cuts, slower growth) before small-group debate.
3. Ask for concrete tasks AI could automate; push for benefits and limits, not hype.
4. Board a list of non-price factors (routes, safety, punctuality) and rank them in groups.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In two teams, prepare and deliver 2-minute statements for and against a pay freeze at an airline.

Writing: Write a 90-word customer email explaining why airfares may rise and how the airline will respond.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Used to / would

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Ryanair say it may freeze pay and raise airfares?
   Because fuel costs have surged due to the conflict and higher aviation fuel prices.
2. How much higher is Ryanair's fuel bill forecast to be in the short term?
   €2bn higher.
3. What happened to Ryanair's pre-tax profits in the six months to September?
   They fell 16% to €2.4bn.
4. What share of Ryanair's fuel bill was hedged, and what happened to the rest?
   About 80% of the bill was hedged; the cost of the remainder doubled.
5. By how much does Michael O'Leary say fares could rise next year?
   By about 15% to 20%.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use used to + base verb for past states or habits that are not true now. Use would + base verb for repeated past actions (not states). (Examples constructed.)

> *"As a new traveller, I* **used to be** *nervous about fares."*
>
> *"In my old job, my manager* **would check** *fuel prices every morning."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with used to or would + the verb.

1. As a student, I ___ on budget fares every term. **used to/would fly**
2. Before AI tools, clerks ___ invoices by hand. **used to/would process**
3. At my last company, HR ___ pay in tough years. **used to/would freeze**
4. Our office ___ fewer automation tools back then. **used to have**
5. Back then, I ___ little about fuel hedging. **used to know**