



What do trade unions do?

This is a basic guide to what a trade union is, what we do and why you should join.

What is a trade union?

1 Trade unions are organisations that represent people at work. 'Representing' could mean someone from the union meeting with management on behalf of a member or a group of staff or taking up a problem with your employer for you.

2 Trade unions aim to protect their members. This includes making sure that workplaces are safe and that people's health is not being put at risk through their jobs. It also means legal protection – trade unions usually employ lawyers to make sure that companies and organisations treat their staff in accordance with the law.

3 Trade unions aim to improve their members' pay and conditions. If a single member of staff approaches management because they feel they should be paid more, they are much less likely to be successful than if every member of staff speaks as one through their trade union. Trade unions collectively negotiate better pay and conditions on behalf of their members and, statistically, union members earn more than non-union members.

What do trade unions do?

- Trade unions speak on behalf of their members.
- Trade unions provide members with information, advice and guidance about work-related problems.
- Trade unions provide members with a range of services including training, insurance, financial services and legal advice.



What do trade unions do?

- Trade unions bargain with employers to get better pay for members.
- Trade unions campaign on particular issues, for example low pay, discrimination and bullying.

Why join a trade union?

- Trade unions can help you if you have a problem at work.
- You're better off in a union. Research shows that union members in the UK receive higher pay (on average 12.5% more), better sickness and pension benefits, more holiday and more flexible working hours than non-members.
- Some people join in order to feel part of a wider community at work. Others join because they believe in giving employees a collective voice and making sure workers and not just employers and senior managers benefit from the success of an organisation.
- Trade unions are at the forefront of campaigns to create a fairer society.
- Workplaces are safer where there is a trade union—recent studies show that organisations that have trade union health and safety committees have half the injury rate than those that manage safety without unions."
- Every year, around 7,000 members seek help for a problem at work from their local UCU branch—last year UCU's legal service won more than £2m in settlements for members treated unfairly at work. In 2007 trade unions in UK as a whole won a record £330 million in compensation for members through this sort of legal action.

For more information visit the UCU website: www.ucu.org.uk

To join UCU go to: joinonline.ucu.org.uk