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Sample Assessment for Functional Skills English Reading Level 2

Noisy Office

Source Documents

Note:

These materials relate to the Functional Skills English assessments that will be in use from September 2015

3748-013 Sample Assessment
Level 2 Functional Skills English
Reading
Noisy Office

Source documents

Do not write your answers in this booklet as this will not be marked.
All answers should be written in the space provided on the question paper.

Document 1 – magazine article. Use this document to answer questions 1 and 2.

Ring, Bang, Clatter – What a noisy office!

Daniel Kehoe – Office Manager

Noise in the office, including heating and ventilation systems, slamming doors or even people talking, is a common cause of stress and distraction. There are real costs in productivity loss. Perhaps the easiest thing to do is to minimise your reaction to it. Your emotional response can be even more distracting for you than the original sound.

Firstly, let's ask who are the people having problems. Is it just you or is it others as well? If you are the only person who is affected by loud telephone conversations in the background, you probably can't do much more than make a personal appeal to colleagues to keep the noise down. Can the noise even be controlled or is it from an external source such as dogs barking or aircraft noise? If noise is amplified by poor acoustics, often caused by hard floor surfaces, for instance, then simple steps can be taken to reduce the noise level.

It could be that everyone is aware of the noise level and has come to accept it as usual background noise. Do people tolerate the noise because they believe it can't be reduced in an open-plan office or are they just unaware that they are actually putting up with an unnecessary noise? Simple, easy to implement changes such as relocating printers which churn out documents all day can change noise levels dramatically.

Are more people affected by the noise but suffering silently? Some people don't speak up on issues because they don't want to be seen as nit-picking or unable to cope. It can mean that good employees simply vote with their feet and find work elsewhere.

Is the issue noisy people having personal conversations? Maybe they are unaware just how much noise they are making and that it actually disturbs other people. Noisy environments do not support concentration and can often interrupt the flow of creative ideas. Inspiration rarely comes from a noisy situation but is more likely to come from a tranquil work space.

The solution will require the cooperation of everybody, so hold an office meeting and put ways to minimise noise on the agenda.

Document 2 – blog. Use this document to answer questions 3 to 5.

http:// *openoffice*.com/ Blog/

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Blog

Why a Quiet Office is Bad News for Business

By Andrew G. Rosen

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FEBRUARY 2016

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It seems to me that everyone requires a different set of circumstances to concentrate. In addition, I believe every job calls for a different level of communication. But why is it that often the only sound coming from many of today's offices is the sleepy hum of electronic equipment?

The demand for office silence is counter-productive. A noisy office has its problems, but any boss who encourages an atmosphere where you could hear a pin drop isn't helping the employees or the company.

A noisy office:

1. Allows open communication
Whispering can create a climate of solitude, secrecy and suspicion, even fuelling paranoia, but a noisier office means that you can chat without having to whisper. For more heated debates, a meeting room away from the main working area could provide a great compromise.

2. Makes people less self-conscious
If the room is too quiet, you may have an unintended audience eavesdropping on your conversation, which can change the way you communicate. It's sort of like reality TV stars - how can they really be themselves when there's a camera in their faces? Moreover, people overhearing the conversation would be distracted because any noise, even a simple chat, would slice through the silence. Many workers would email people who may be within speaking distance, rather than speak face-to-face, since you can't always speak freely if everyone can hear. With a slightly noisier office, there is no need to worry about disturbing other people.

3. Sparks creativity
A library-like work environment can kill spontaneity. People can exchange ideas and brainstorm the next big thing when talking is the rule rather than the exception.

People who need to concentrate to complete complicated tasks may need a little quiet time, so a simple way to address this could be the provision of a few quiet work stations which people could use when silence is needed.

4. Builds team spirit
The buzz of background chatter is good for morale. Team spirit is improved by people feeling free to communicate spontaneously and being relaxed enough to chat or let off steam. Quiet does have an important role in life, but the office is not a library.

Andrew G. Rosen *is the founder and editor of Jobacle.com, a career advice blog.*

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Document 3 – brochure. Use this document to answer question 6.

OfficeCalm Consultants – specialists in noise reduction

We are industry leaders for office design and acoustics. Our unique approach keeps us at the forefront of our field. To discover how our office design expertise can benefit your workplace, call OfficeCalm on 01593 8118 to book a preliminary meeting, which will allow us to assess your workplace.

Office noise control

Noise by definition is an unwanted sound. Think of drilling from a construction site. Very little can be done to block that out. But sounds in the office come from a wide variety of sources, from the click of keys on a keyboard to a pen dropping on a desk, from voices and computer fans to heating and ventilation equipment, and that's where we can help.

With the increase in the amount of open offices, an effect can too easily be an increase in disruptive noise levels, which we believe can affect productivity.

Too little background noise, however, will result in a lack of privacy in conversations. There is a balance which will give enough noise to allow a degree of privacy but not enough to greatly affect productivity.

Our research has found that the most common problems are caused by inconsistent noises such as laughter, loud chatter, vending machines and printers, some of which can be loud enough to break concentration. A cost free solution is to make staff aware of the issue and ask them to be more considerate. In addition, our office re-design service will ensure that noise producing equipment is isolated without being remote. Some noise is impossible to eliminate, such as emergency sirens.

Why does the sound travel so far?

Sound travels through the air at approximately 750mph (332m/sec), so any sound will reach everyone in an office within a second of being produced. Sound can also be transmitted via objects such as floors, beams and walls, when it will travel more slowly.

Different materials have a different effect on sound. Hard surfaces reflect sound, but softer materials absorb it.

What measures can you take?

For a free solution, large pieces of furniture such as wooden cupboards can act as effective sound absorbers, so moving them where you want sound reduced is a simple solution. In some cases sound can be diffused by installing specialist screens.

Ceilings can have the greatest effect on the sound quality in an open plan office. They can either absorb or reflect sound depending on the materials they are made of. We have a range of ceiling materials to suit all offices and all budgets.

Other solutions we offer are glass pods and privacy booths, which will insulate most of the sound.

Floors and coverings

OfficeCalm carpet tiles make a big difference. Although hard tiles or wooden floors look fantastic, they reflect noise and hard shoes make a lot of clatter. Stilettos should be banned!

CALL US TODAY ABOUT YOUR OFFICE WORKSPACE PROJECT

Prior to our first visit, ask everyone in your office to complete our confidential survey, which will tell us about the most annoying noises in your workplace. Visit **www.officecalm.com/survey** to access the survey. The results may surprise you!

Whatever the problem, we will sort it out for you.*

Please call **08456 031585 to book your free consultation today. We guarantee to identify at least one cost free solution to reduce noise in your office. You won't regret it!**

*We have no control over external noises.

Source document 1 adapted from:
http://www.dkmanagementtools.com/_blog/Daniel_Kehoe/post/Managing_the_Office_Environment_-_Noisy_Colleagues/

Source document 2 adapted from:
http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2011/04/26/why-a-quiet-office-is-bad-news

Source document 3 adapted from:

http://www.officescapellp.co.uk/office-noise-control-and-containmenrooms