

Jobs in an office

Warm-up

My job

1 Answer the following questions in full sentences.

1 Where do you work?

.....

2 Why did you decide to train as an office assistant?

.....

3 What do you like about your job?

.....

4 What are the benefits of being an office assistant?

.....

5 What are the disadvantages of being an office apprentice?

.....



2 Get into pairs and describe your job to your partner. Use your notes from activity 1 and the phrases from the LanguageBox. Take turns.

In this unit you are going to

- describe the skills and qualities an office assistant needs (*Speaking A2*)
- talk about your daily routine at work (*Speaking A2*)
- write a blog entry about your job and your daily routine at work (*Writing A2*)
- read a text about a day in the life of an apprentice (*Reading A2*)
- read an article about different types of offices (*Reading A2*)
- listen to four apprentices talking about their jobs (*Listening A2*)
- practise trouble-free grammar: Adverbs of frequency
Prepositions of place
- boost your vocabulary: Departments in an office
Office supplies.



6 What key skills and qualities does an office apprentice need to have? Name at least five.

.....

.....

.....

LanguageBox

I work as an apprentice at a law firm / at the ... (*name of city / town*) City Council / in a hospital ...

I wanted to work in an office / decided to train as an office assistant because I like to organise things / to talk to customers / working with a computer / the job offers a lot of variety ...

At work, I especially enjoy creating spreadsheets / providing administrative support / talking to customers / managing my boss's schedule ...

A benefit of being an office assistant is that I work in a communicative work environment / have fixed working hours ...

What I dislike about being an apprentice is that I sometimes have to deal with difficult customers / that the job can be stressful / that I have to concentrate a lot ...

A key skill for an office assistant is time management / attention to detail / stress resistance ...

In an office job, it is important to have good IT-skills / communication skills / math skills ...

Language in use

I always get up at 6 a.m.

Trouble-free grammar: Adverbs of frequency

We usually put **adverbs of frequency** in front of the verb.

Please note: to be is an exception

I **usually** work from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

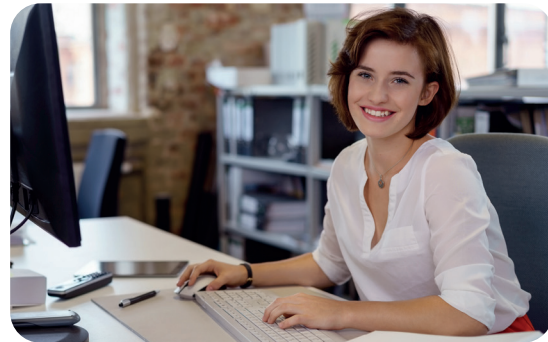
I am **always** customer-oriented.

I **sometimes** have to write minutes.

I am **never** late for work.

1

Form meaningful sentences. Keep the position of the adverb in mind. Use the correct form of the verb in the present tense. The first one (0) has been done for you. Then get into pairs and compare your results.



0 Henry / to sort the files / usually / in the morning / .

Henry usually sorts the files in the morning.

1 in the afternoon / often / to write / the apprentice / minutes / .

2 usually / to create spreadsheets / he / in the morning / .

3 I / polite / and / always / friendly / to act / .

4 invoices / Peter / on Mondays / to book / never / .

5 at weekends / never / to work / she / .

6 the office / to be closed / usually / on Sundays / .

7 often / Karen / the incoming mail / to deal with / .

8 always / to attend / vocational school / Lisa / .

9 sometimes / George / the mail / to distribute / .

Reading

Routine activities

- 1 Have a look at the VocabBooster. Match the pictures (1–6) with the appropriate words. Compare your results with a partner.

VocabBooster

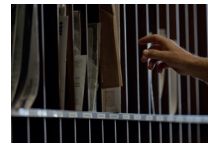
to photocopy ■ to file ■ to talk to customers ■ to create spreadsheets ■ to laminate ■ to distribute the mail ■ to take calls ■ to write e-mails



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

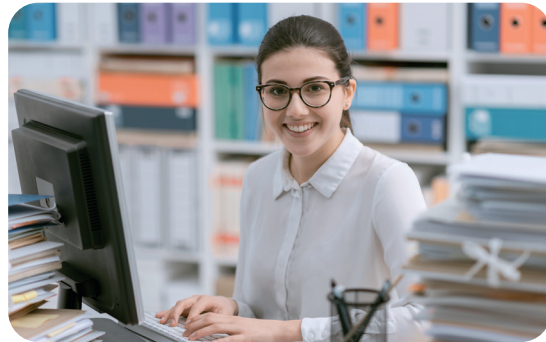
- 2 Have a look at the VocabBooster. Match the words / phrases in A with their appropriate definitions in B. Compare your results with a partner.

VocabBooster

	A	B
to crop up	1	<input type="checkbox"/> to write down which employees are not at work on a certain day
to make an enquiry	2	<input type="checkbox"/> a plan, a programme or a list of activities
to ensure	3	<input type="checkbox"/> the act of politely or officially asking for something
to process something	4	<input type="checkbox"/> letters and packets that are sent to people outside of a company
to record staff absences	5	<input type="checkbox"/> having a sufficient supply of something, e.g. office equipment
agenda	6	<input type="checkbox"/> to ask for information via e-mail, a letter or on the phone
to take minutes	7	<input type="checkbox"/> to happen or appear unexpectedly
well-stocked	8	<input type="checkbox"/> to work on something
outgoing mail	9	<input type="checkbox"/> to document what was said at a meeting
to pass on a message	10	<input type="checkbox"/> to make sure that something happens or is done in a certain way
to request	11	<input type="checkbox"/> to inform somebody about a message



Read the blog entry about a day in the life of a business administration apprentice. Parts of the text have been removed (1–5). Choose the correct part (A–G) for each gap. There are two elements that you do not need. Compare your results with a partner.



- A** My next job is to deal with the incoming mail.
- B** I've quickly got into a routine with my daily duties
- C** During my afternoon break, I sometimes write *WhatsApp* messages to my boyfriend Kevin.
- D** I try to get the minutes typed up as soon as possible.
- E** you have to be well-organised to file everything correctly
- F** I prepare all sorts of things including reports, booklets
- G** After the early morning rush dies down

A day in the life of a business administration apprentice

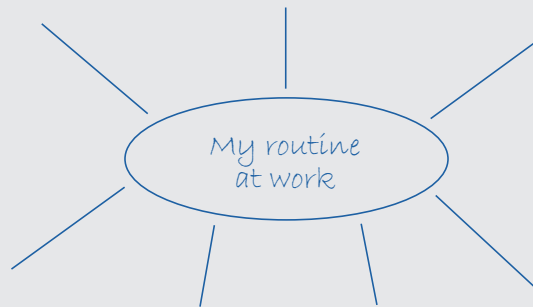
1 I start work at 8.45 a. m. and my first task of the day is to update the fire register and file away the previous day's list. [REDACTED] 1 and have a schedule to work through every day, 5 as well as doing whatever crops up unexpectedly. [REDACTED] 2 and distribute it to my colleagues. I process anything that isn't addressed to an individual and pass it on to the correct person. I process the outgoing mail at 10 the end of the day as well and take it to the post office.

The phone rings a lot so I'm always taking calls and passing on messages. I was nervous about dealing with calls when I first started, but I got used to it quickly and I'm now confident when 15 I'm on the phone. As time has passed, I've learnt how to deal with a lot of enquiries myself. [REDACTED] 3, I try to catch up with my colleagues to see what's on the agenda 20 for the day ahead. Although most of my work is emailed to me, it's good to catch up with everyone and it gives me the chance to ask questions about anything I am unsure about.

Another task I'm responsible for is keeping on top of photocopying requests, and ensuring 25 that all the office equipment is working and well stocked. [REDACTED] 4 and newsletters and use the binder and laminator so they're presented well. Most of my work is done on my computer and I'm responsible for 30 updating our webpage, recording staff absences and typing all sorts of documents on a daily basis. I've learned how to use lots of applications including spreadsheets, databases and work processing programmes. 35

In my office, there are lots of meetings and I've started taking minutes at some of them. After the meeting, [REDACTED] 5 whilst it's still fresh in my mind! Once a month, I attend a training day when I get the chance to 40 work on my qualification and speak to my assessor about how I'm getting on. It's also a good opportunity to meet up with other apprentices to hear how they're getting on in their work placements. 45

- 4 Think about your daily routine at work. What do you *always* / *sometimes* / *never* have to do? Use as many adverbs of frequency as possible. Take notes in the mind map.



- 5 Now tell the class about your average workday. Use the phrases from the LanguageBox.

LanguageBox

I'd like to tell you something about my average workday. / I am going to talk about my average workday.

I work at ... (*name of company*) in ... (*location*).

I started working there one / two / three ... days / weeks / months ago.

On an average working day ...

In the morning I usually ...

Moreover, I also often / normally ...

I never / sometimes ...

My lunch break is from ... to ... o'clock.

In the afternoons I usually / hardly ever ...

Doing / Preparing ... is an important part of my workday.

All in all, I like about my job that ...

And this brings me to the end of my talk.

Thank you for listening.

Listening

Working from 9 to 5



Track 1-4

Listen to three apprentices talking about their jobs. Take notes in the grid. Then get into pairs and compare your results.

speaker	duties	vocational school?	 likes	 dislikes
1 Vanessa  company name <input type="text"/>				
2 Sebastian  company name <input type="text"/>				
3 Sabrina  company name <input type="text"/>				
4 Milan  company name <input type="text"/>				



Get into pairs and discuss the following questions.

- 1** Which of the four jobs presented in activity 1 would you like to do for a week? Why?
- 2** Which of the office duties mentioned by the apprentices in activity 1 do you find challenging? Why?
- 3** What do the office apprentices like best about their jobs?

Writing

My department

1

Have a look at the VocabBooster. Match the departments in A with the appropriate definitions in B to make meaningful sentences. Compare your results with a partner.

VocabBooster

	A	B
The IT Department	1	<input type="checkbox"/> delivers the products to the customers.
The Accounting Department	2	<input type="checkbox"/> is responsible for the employees, hires new staff and offers training and support.
The Customer Service Department	3	<input type="checkbox"/> sells products or services.
The Sales Department	4	<input type="checkbox"/> offers advice and solves problems that customers might have.
The Marketing Department	5	<input type="checkbox"/> deals with matters of the law such as contracts or lawsuits.
The Human Resources (HR) department	6	<input type="checkbox"/> improves the products or creates new products.
The Dispatch Department	7	<input type="checkbox"/> advertises and promotes the company's products or services.
The Research and Development (R & D) department	8	<input type="checkbox"/> takes care of the company's computers and networks.
The Legal Department	9	<input type="checkbox"/> monitors the payment of the accounts.



2

Your boss has asked you to write a blog entry about your job for an international website for apprentices. In your blog post you should

- describe the company and the department you work for
- inform your readers about the tasks and duties you have to perform on a day-to-day basis
- point out your career goals.

Use the tips for writing a blog entry on page 8. Write about 120 words.

LanguageBox

I work in the Accounting / Purchasing / IT Department of a solicitor's company / a hospital ... in ...

My department is responsible for legal matters / the delivery of products to customers / support and advice / finances ...

My everyday tasks include ...

I often / sometimes / never ...

I am responsible for ... (*verb + -ing*)

What I really like about my job is ...

My career goals are to learn as many things as possible / to be promoted ...

All in all, I like about my job that ...

And this brings me to the end of my talk.

Thank you for listening.

Please note: How to write a blog entry

- Blogs are usually written in the first-person perspective.
- The language of a blog can be formal or informal, depending on the readership.
- The first paragraph should catch the readers' attention.
- Don't forget to keep your readers interested throughout your blog entry.

Language in use

The company's headquarters are in Salzburg.

Trouble-free grammar: Prepositions of place

Prepositions of place indicate the position of things or people.



Countries: I live **in** Austria.

Cities: Anna lives **in** Madrid.

Buildings: We usually meet **in** the office.

Streets: I work for the subsidiary **in** Chestnut Street.



exact point / address: Our offices are **at** 121 Chestnut Street.



The chairs are **next to** the conference table.



The swivel chair is **behind** the desk.



The office building is **on the left**.



The photocopier is **on the right**.



The conference rooms are **on** the second floor.



The filing cabinet is **opposite of** the desk.



The desk is **in front of** the window.



The swivel chair is **between** the bookshelf and the desk.

1

Have a look at the VocabBooster. Match the pictures of the office supplies (1–21) with the appropriate words. Fill in the grid. Then get into pairs and compare your results.

VocabBooster

note book ■ staples ■ stamp ■ hole punch ■ paper clips ■ pencil case ■ bulldog clips ■ scissors ■ stapler
 ■ biros ■ pencil ■ tape and tape dispenser ■ rulers ■ triangle ■ rubber / eraser ■ pushpins ■ compasses
 ■ felt pens ■ glue ■ highlighters

Please note: *rubber = British English; eraser = American English*



1		11	
2		12	
3		13	
4		14	
5		15	
6		16	
7		17	
8		18	
9		19	
10		20	
		21	

2

Have a look at the pictures in activity 1. Fill in the gaps with the appropriate prepositions (*on the left / on the right / in front of / next to / opposite / between*). The first one (0) has been done for you. Compare your results with a partner.

- 0 The scissors are between the notebook and the ruler.
- 1 The bulldog pins are _____ of the blue stapler.
- 2 The triangles are _____ at the top corner.
- 3 The hole punch is _____ the stapler and the notebook.
- 4 The red pencil case is _____ the _____
- 5 The blue pencil case is _____ at the bottom.
- 6 The pushpins are _____ the pens and the compasses.
- 7 The biros are _____ the notebook.
- 8 The notebook is _____ the tape dispenser.
- 9 The blue stapler is _____ the red one.

- 3 Have a look at the VocabBooster. Match the words in A with the appropriate definitions in B. Compare your results with a partner.

VocabBooster

	A	B
swivel chair	1	<input type="checkbox"/> a piece of furniture that you use to write at, usually with drawers
open-plan office	2	<input type="checkbox"/> a piece of cardboard that holds various papers
sticky notes	3	<input type="checkbox"/> sheets of paper held together by spiral binding
desk	4	<input type="checkbox"/> a sliding compartment where you can store things; often part of a cabinet
spiral note book	5	<input type="checkbox"/> a big office space with no walls dividing it into smaller areas
folder	6	<input type="checkbox"/> a large piece of furniture in an office, used for holding documents
filing cabinet	7	<input type="checkbox"/> small pieces of paper with a weak type of glue on the reverse side
drawer	8	<input type="checkbox"/> a chair that turns 360 degrees



- 4 Read the text. Fill the gaps (1–6) using the appropriate words from the box. Then get into pairs and compare your results.

swivel chair ■ sticky notes ■ filing cabinet ■ desk ■ folder ■ stapler

My Office

I work in a modern open-plan office. Like many offices, my office is a place where I can concentrate on my work and feel comfortable as well. My ¹ is in the front on the left-hand side. I sit on a comfortable ². Next to it is a ³ with three drawers where I keep paper clips, highlighters, erasers, pencil sharpeners and staples as well as folders. On my desk there is a spiral note book with a biro. I always keep some pens and pencils next to the phone because I always need to take notes on ⁴ when I'm on a call. My computer is situated in the centre of my desk, with the monitor directly in front of me. I use the ⁵ on the right-hand side of the monitor to stick paper together. My supervisor sits next to me to help me with my work. Right now, there is a cup of coffee on the right-hand side of the monitor. The desk on the right belongs to another apprentice. Can you see her red ⁶ on the filing cabinet?



- 5 Think of all the office supplies on your desk at work. Draw a picture of your desk on the right. Then get into pairs and describe your workspace. Use the phrases from the LanguageBox on page 11. Take turns.

My desk

LanguageBox

I share my office with one colleague / two / three / four colleagues ...

Our office looks modern / old-fashioned / functional / nice ...

My desk is in the middle of the room / to the left / to the right of the door / next to the window ...

When I sit at my desk, there is a monitor / a computer / a phone ... in front of me.

Furthermore, there is a cabinet with two / three / four ... drawers where I store ...

In addition to all the office supplies, I also put some personal items on my desk: There is a plant / a photo of me and my family / a stuffed animal ...

Reading

A modern office

- 1 Have a look at the VocabBooster. Match the pictures of different office types (1–4) with the appropriate words.

VocabBooster

cubicle ■ half partitions ■ open-plan ■ team enclosures



1



2



3



4



- 2 Get into pairs and answer the following questions.

- 1 Which office most closely resembles the office where you work? What are the differences?
- 2 What does your office look like? In what kind of building is your office located? Describe it.
- 3 Who do you share your office with? How many colleagues are there in your office?



- 3 Read the article about open-plan offices and underline the most important information. Then have a look at the statements (1–6) on page 12 and tick whether they are true (T) or false (F) and put a cross (x) in the correct box. Provide the correct answers for the wrong statements. The first one (0) has been done for you. Compare your results with a partner.

Four types of open-plan office: which one works for you?

- 1 Open-plan offices have become almost the norm in a variety of industries over the past 10 years. There are key reasons for this. Open-plan offices are great for encouraging communication between staff and for boosting an open-door

policy. The other main reason for their popularity is that they are generally less expensive to fit out. The general manager. The team ensures the smooth running of our hotel.

10 **1. Cubicle**

This is one of the most common types of open office plans, where the workstations are set up as cubicles, generally with three walls of partitioning around them. This layout provides the greatest level of privacy outside of a closed office plan and can help control noise levels, especially when good sound barriers are used for the partitioning. The downside to cubicles is that they can be quite claustrophobic and limit the amount of natural light in each workstation.

2. Half partitions

Half partitions allow workers to see and speak to each other over the barriers when standing. The barriers act as a space divider and help absorb some level of noise but are generally less private than cubicle designs. If the office has employees who work in teams, half partitions can help with communication between team members while still allowing for more natural light throughout the office. The negative to half partitions is that some team members may find it hard to concentrate due to increased noise levels. There is also limited privacy when it comes to phone conversations.

3. Team enclosures

Team offices allow members of the same team to work together without losing focus and getting distracted by people not in their immediate team. This is great for creative teams where brainstorming and discussion are a large part of the day to day. Ideas flow and can be discussed right away instead of waiting for a booked meeting room or calling for a formal discussion. However, individual privacy is a downside to this style, as well as limitation to people not in a specific team.

4. One large, open space

This style is suited more to smaller setups and quieter environments, where partitioning may not be required. In this type, individuals will work side by side at adjoining stations. This style of open-plan might work well for micro business owners or freelancers looking for desk rentals. This space will have a big, open and collaborative feel while also providing a quiet environment.

	T	F	Correct answer
0 Open-plan offices have become the norm in the last thirty years.		X	They have become the norm in the last ten years.
1 Open-plan offices are usually very expensive.			
2 In a cubicle, some employees may feel like they do not have enough space or natural light.			
3 Half partitions allow for a great deal of privacy for phone conversations.			
4 Some people cannot concentrate well in half partition offices because it can be very noisy.			
5 Team enclosures can limit the creative flow of ideas.			
6 One large space is better suited for office environments on a greater scale.			



5

Get into pairs and answer the following questions. Use the phrases from the LanguageBox.

- 1 Which of the four office types (cubicle, half partitions, team enclosures, open space) do you like best? Why? Explain.
- 2 Which of the four office types do you dislike? Why? Give reasons.
- 3 What does your dream office look like?

LanguageBox

I like the cubicle / half partition / open-plan / team enclosure office best because ...

I prefer ... (*type of office*) because ...

An advantage of this type of office is that one can concentrate better / communicate easily with colleagues ...

Another benefit is that the noise level is low / there is more space for creativity ...

I like ... (*type of office*) the least because I think it is too noisy / it is hard to concentrate / it seems chaotic / too small / lonely ...

I dislike ... (*type of office*) because ...

My dream office is a cubicle / an open-space office ... with lots of plants / big windows / a cafeteria / a lounge for relaxing ... because ...