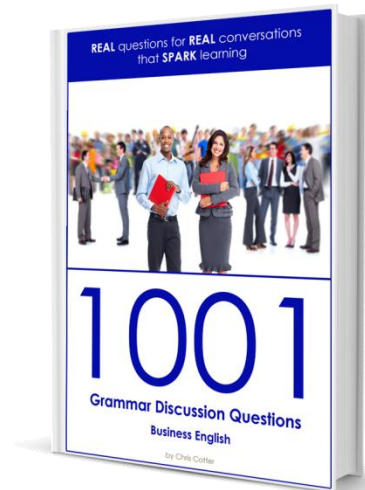
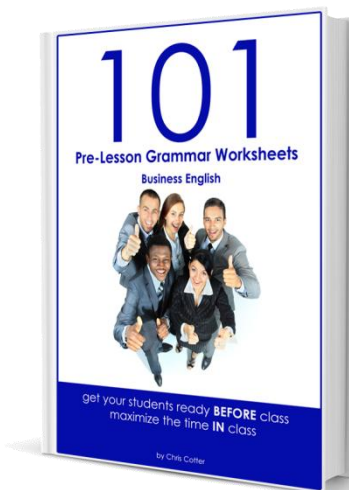
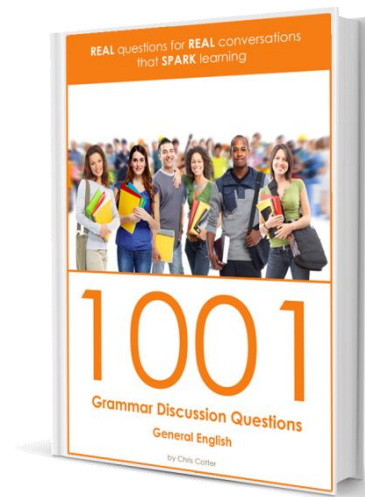


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## the ARTICLE (for teachers)

### Messiness More Efficient

Every office has at least one slob -- the employee whose desk looks like a tornado has struck. Papers are stacked precariously. Post It Notes from months and months ago are still tacked to the cubicle wall. The garbage overflows with takeout coffee cups and empty bags. But a business book suggests that neat people are actually less efficient and less creative, or at least so says the book's author, David Freedman.

A mess, it turns out, works surprisingly well for the person who made it, he explains. It becomes a filing system of sorts. Take Karen Jackson, who readily admits that her desk looks like a disaster area. Yet it's an organized mess, she says, because she knows where everything is. Clean it up, or otherwise disturb the mess, and the method behind the madness goes out the window.

What may come as the biggest shock, though, is how a messy workspace can serve as a natural reminder system. Old papers and notes stacked with more recent information will get picked through. As a result, connections between the old and the new become possible, which translates into increased creativity and opportunity. Filed away papers, on the other hand, usually end up forgotten, and anything thrown away is lost forever. As for efficiency, tidy employees usually spend from one to four hours per day keeping their desk clean, time more productively spent attending to the tasks at hand.

But Barry Izsak, who heads the National Association of Professional Organizers, disputes the author's claims. Izsak explains that the average person, because of the mess, will often feel increased stress. There will be accompanying feelings of missed deadlines and lost opportunities. And according to another study, that inability to quickly retrieve information can cost companies money -- \$50 per week for each employee. At large organizations, that can quickly run into millions of dollars.

**Teacher's Notes:**

\* Underlined words in red typeface are the answers.

## the Article (for students)

Listen and fill in the missing sentences. Compare your answers with a partner, and then listen once more.

### Messiness More Efficient

Every office has at least one slob -- a) \_\_\_\_\_.

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The garbage overflows with takeout coffee cups and empty bags. But a business book suggests that

b) \_\_\_\_\_, or at least so says the book's author, David Freedman.

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c) \_\_\_\_\_.

What may come as the biggest shock, though, is how a messy workspace can serve as a natural reminder system. Old papers and notes stacked with more recent information will get picked through. As a result, connections between the old and the new become possible, which translates into increased creativity and opportunity. Filed away papers, on the other hand, usually end up forgotten, and anything thrown away is lost forever. As for efficiency, d) \_\_\_\_\_, time more productively spent attending to the tasks at hand.

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e) \_\_\_\_\_ -- \$50 per week for each employee. At large organizations, that can quickly run into millions of dollars.

**Notes:**

## STEP ONE

**Speculate:** Write in the missing words for today's article title: "Messiness ( ) ( )" Why did you choose these words for the blanks?

## STEP TWO

**Questions:** Read as much of the article as you can in two minutes. Guess the answers to the questions below, then listen to your teacher read the article. Try to confirm your answers.

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| a. | How does the article describe the office slob?                       |
| b. | Why does Freedman consider a mess as a sort of filing system?        |
| c. | Why does a mess increase creativity?                                 |
| d. | How many hours does the average employee spend tidying his/her desk? |
| e. | Why would the average employee feel stress from a messy workspace?   |

## STEP THREE

**Fill in the Blanks:** Listen to your teacher read the article again. Fill in the blanks with the missing words.

## STEP FOUR

**Fragments:** Remember how the fragments were used, and complete the sentence from today's article.

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| a. | <b>Post It Notes from...</b>  |
| b. | <b>A mess, it turns out, works...</b>   |
| c. | <b>What may come as the biggest shock, though, is how a messy workspace...</b>        |
| d. | <b>As a result, connections between the old and the new become possible, which...</b> |
| e. | <b>Izsak explains that the average person...</b>                                      |

## STEP FIVE

**Discuss:** Talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Remember to support your answers!

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| a. | Did you like this article?  |
| b. | Do you think that messy people are more or less efficient than neat people? Why?                  |
| c. | How much time do you spend a day or week cleaning your workspace? Is this too much or too little? |
| d. | Are there any very messy people in your office? If yes, does their messiness bother you? Why/not? |