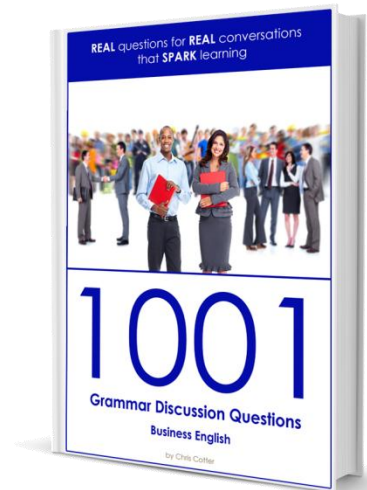
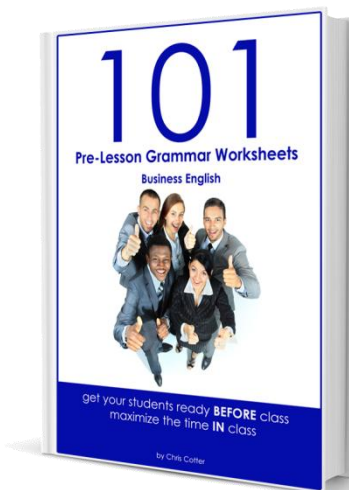


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the ARTICLE (for teachers)

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 may be vocabulary unfamiliar to the students.

the Article (for students)

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Notes:

STEP ONE

Brainstorm: Brainstorm with a partner(s) words and ideas associated with "efficient" for 2 minutes. Spend another 5 minutes or less discussing the words and ideas together.

STEP TWO

Discuss: Do you agree or disagree? Why?

- | | |
|----|--|
| a. | I wish I were a neater person. |
| b. | I wish I were a more efficient person. |
| c. | I wish I were a more creative person. |
| d. | Messy people at the office are usually less productive than neat people. |
| e. | Messy people at the office are usually more creative than neat people. |

STEP THREE

The Article: Read the article, and work with a partner to understand it. Lastly, summarize in your own words.

STEP FOUR

Discuss (part I): 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. | Are there any very messy people in your office? If yes, does their messiness bother you? Why/not? |
| d. | Are there any very neat people in your office? If yes, does their neatness bother you? Why/not? |
| e. | Are there any negative connotations to being messy? If yes, what? |
| f. | Are there any negative connotations to being neat? If yes, what? |

STEP FIVE

Discuss (part II): 1) Brainstorm in groups/pairs problems that harm efficiency at an office. 2) Think of solutions for each of these problems. 3) Make a list of pros and cons for each solution. 4) Debate each solution in pairs, with partner A the boss and partner B the employee. Record your answers/responses to present to the class.

Problem	Solution	pros & cons