

GETTING ORGANISED



Lesson: Organising your work space

This lesson discusses how students' home environment – and in particular their office or study area – can be better organised. It contains suggestions which will help students think about organising their lives in a better way.

Level: Intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B1 and above)

Time: 60-90 mins

How to use this lesson:

The lesson can be done at home or in class. If done at home, aim to allow time in class for discussion of the different aspects of the topic (see suggestions below).

Teacher's Notes

1 **At home:** Students can fill in the questionnaire in preparation for the lesson.

In class: If not done at home, allow 3-4 minutes for students to choose three items. Give help with any difficult vocabulary items. Some words will be needed for later exercises.

2 Encourage class discussion and prompt with further questions such as:

- ▶ *Why do you think you are (un)tidy?*
- ▶ *Is it a problem if you forget an important date? Why?*
- ▶ *Do you think you would make a good secretary? Why / why not?*
- ▶ *Do you always put your keys in the same place?*
- ▶ *Do you have a safe place in your house where you keep important documents?*
- ▶ *Have you ever thought that you might have too many clothes or shoes?*
- ▶ *Do you ever spend time just organising things on your computer (e.g. putting songs or videos into categories or labelling photos and putting them in albums)?*
- ▶ *Some people like to keep every letter or email they receive – is this a good idea?*
- ▶ *What are the biggest distractions when you sit down to do some work? How can you get rid of them?*
- ▶ *How long would it take to get your room looking neat and tidy? Would it be helpful to set aside ten minutes a day to tidy up?*

3 **At home:** Students can try to add more suggestions and then rank the items in order of importance ready for discussion in class.

In class: Allow 3-4 minutes for students to read the suggestions and add more, before ranking the items in order of importance. Follow up by eliciting any other items that students have suggested. Then ask a few students for their top three, all the time, making sure that they give reasons for their choices.

You could also write the following on the board:

Reminders	New furniture	Diary
Throwing things away	Tidying	Writing lists
	Deleting emails / junk mail	

Go through the items and ask which students have each suggestion in their top three, keeping score on the board as you go through them. Which suggestions are the most/least popular? Which of the students' own suggestions does the class think could be helpful?



GETTING ORGANISED



Lesson: Organising your work space

- 4 **At home:** Students can prepare this exercise at home, using a dictionary if necessary. Note that the vocabulary here will help them greatly in exercise 6, so try to make sure they have a good idea of the meanings before they move on.

In class: Allow 2-3 minutes for students to attempt the task, before comparing their answers with a partner.

Answers:



1 desk tidy



2 filing cabinet



3 chest of drawers



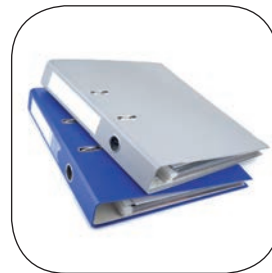
4 in / out tray



5 pile of papers



6 box files



7 folders



8 labels

- 5 **At home:** Students can prepare this exercise at home, reading the texts and looking for the answers in their own time, ready for checking in class.

In class: Students will need at least 10 minutes for each text. You might wish to do the first text first and check the answers before moving on to the second text. Check the answers and ask students to tell you the parts of the texts where the answers can be justified. Discuss any mistakes and point out how the correct answers can be arrived at.

Text 1

Suggested answers:

- 1 The *All-In-One-Place* desk tidy is something which **helps keep smaller items tidy on your desk**.
- 2 The *In/Out/Everything Else* tray is different from a standard in / out tray because **it has five layers**.
- 3 You might buy more than one *Life-Changer* filing cabinets if you have **a lot of paperwork**.
- 4 The *Elephant's Memory* calendar might be useful for **reminding you of someone's birthday**.
- 5 *SaFile* items could help someone to **keep their things separate**.
- 6 *Modern Office* is a **range of office furniture**.
- 7 The purpose of this text is to **advertise office supplies that the company sells**.



GETTING ORGANISED



Lesson: Organising your work space

Text 2

Answers:

- 1 B
- 2 C
- 3 B
- 4 A

6 **At home:** Ask students to write 3-4 sentences or a short paragraph in answer to the questions.

In class: Allow about five minutes for students to note down their answers to the questions (they don't need to be detailed answers). If students finish early, ask them to compare their answers with another student. Use the questions to conduct a class discussion. Further questions might include:

- ▶ *Is there anything that you think you might do to organise your life after this lesson?*
- ▶ *How organised are you when it comes to shopping / getting ready to go out / submitting work on time / staying in contact with people?*
- ▶ *Do you often save boxes thinking, 'This might be useful'? Do you use them? What for?*



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1 Complete the questionnaire.

How organised are you?

Answering these questions should tell you something about your organisational skills.

How often do you tidy your desk?

- I tidy as I go along
- Regularly
- When I'm bored
- Almost never

How do you remember an important date, like someone's birthday?

- I use a calendar
- People remind me
- I just remember it
- I just forget it

How many food items in your home are past their sell-by date?

- Probably none of them
- Certainly none of them - food gets eaten pretty quickly round here
- Don't open my fridge - you might not come out alive

Someone phones and you need to write down a message. How quickly can you find a pen?

- There's always a pen near the phone
- I can find a pen quite quickly
- I can't find a pen - I tell the person to phone back in five minutes

Do you know where the following are at this moment? Say where.

- Your keys _____
- Your phone _____
- Your birth certificate _____
- Your passport or ID card _____
- A piece of work you wrote for English three months ago _____

How often do you look for an item of clothing but can't find it?

- I can always find my clothes
- I can usually find my clothes
- I look for clothes every day
- I look for clothes several times a day

What best describes the files on your computer (written work, photos, videos, songs, etc)?

- I can find anything in under a minute
- Most things are easy to find
- It's a jungle in there

How often do you delete messages or emails?

- Straight after I've read them
- Every week
- Every few weeks
- Only when there's no more space

You go to your desk to write an essay. How long is it before you start writing?

- Less than five minutes
- Up to half an hour
- Over half an hour
- Essay? What essay?

How would you describe the room that you spend most of your time in?

- You could photograph it and put the picture in a magazine
- Everything is in its place and there's a place for everything
- Give me five minutes and it'll look fine
- It looks as if a bomb exploded in there

Student's copy

GETTING ORGANISED



Student's copy

Lesson: Organising your work space

2 What do you think your answers to the questionnaire say about you? Compare with a partner.

3 Which of the following would help you become better organised? Add any other ideas you can think of. Then number them, starting with 1 as the most useful.

- Setting up reminders on an electronic device
- Throwing away things that are not really useful
- Buying a new piece of furniture to store things out of sight
- Tidying your room or your desk every day
- Deleting unwanted emails and throwing away junk mail as soon as you receive it
- Keeping a diary (to remember what you've done, people's names, places you went to, when you did things, how you felt about things, etc)
- Writing a list of goals that you want to achieve in the next week/month/year (e.g. to finish a project, to get fit, to contact a relative more often)
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

4 Look at the pictures below and label them with these words.

labels	desk tidy	chest of drawers	box files
in / out tray	filing cabinet	pile of papers	folders



1



2



3



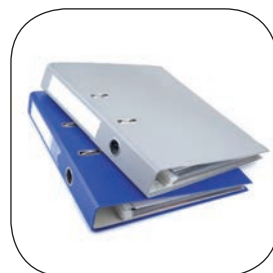
4



5



6



7



8

MACMILLAN LIFE SKILLS

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Lesson: Organising your work space

5 Read the two texts on the next two pages and answer the questions about each one.

Organise your study space

Need a little organisation in your life? We sell a wide range of fantastic products to help you organise your desk or office.



- ▶ How about the **All-In-One-Place** desk tidy? Pens, pencils, rubbers, paper clips and memory cards – all the things we often lose – will be exactly where you need them in one attractive container, right there on your desk.
- ▶ Keep those papers tidy with our unique **In/Out/Everything Else** tray – an impressive tower system with five levels so you'll never again need to look for a piece of paper or an important letter or bill.
- ▶ Too many papers? Try our **Life-Changer** filing cabinets; they hold everything you need in one attractive piece of furniture. For those with a lot of paperwork, buy more than one cabinet and place them on top of each other for even more storage space.
- ▶ Never forget an important date again. With our **Elephant's Memory** electronic desk calendar, you just enter the things you want to remember and choose how and when you want it to remind you. There's a great variety of different sounds from 'Gentle reminder' to 'Emergency – Do It Now!'
- ▶ Put things in their place using **SaFile**, our colour-coded range of box files, folders, boxes and labels. Keep everything safe with SaFile – we are certain to have something for your needs.
- ▶ And store your books, files and boxes in a designer-made bookcase, cabinet or chest of drawers from our attractive **Modern Office** range.

We help you organise your life so there's more time to do the things you love!

Complete the sentences using your own words as much as possible.

- 1 The *All-In-One-Place* desk tidy is something which _____

- 2 The *In/Out/Everything Else* tray is different from a standard in / out tray because _____

- 3 You might buy more than one *Life-Changer* filing cabinets if _____

- 4 The *Elephant's Memory* calendar might be useful for _____

- 5 *SaFile* items could help someone to _____

- 6 *Modern Office* is _____

- 7 The purpose of this text is to _____

Student's copy

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Student's copy

My Blog

Filing system? I use a piling system!

By admin

I agree that we all need to be organised in some way or other, because life would be terrible if we could never find anything. But if I put everything in alphabetical order, I'd forget what I called it! On my desk is a huge pile of papers and books, and next to my desk is another huge pile. Does that make me disorganised? Most people would say so. But actually, I think I have got the best filing system in the world. Let me give you an example. When I need something, my memory tells me that I last saw it about six months ago, during the summer – nothing detailed; just a vague idea of when it was. So I start looking, maybe half-way down the pile. The first thing I see might be something I did after the summer. Dig a little deeper into the pile and I find things from before the summer. I now know that the paper I'm looking for is between the two, and it takes me seconds to find it. When the pile on my desk gets too tall and threatens to fall over, I will place it next to the pile on the floor and start a new pile on my desk. Older things will, of course, be in one of the piles on the floor. I don't need to make up categories or add labels to files. My system works for me – and it doesn't cost a penny!

Comment

Type your comment here.

Choose the correct answer.

- What is the best way to describe the writer's system for storing information?
 - Everything is in alphabetical order.
 - He keeps papers in chronological order.
 - He categorises everything.
- How does he feel about being organised?
 - He would rather not organise his work.
 - He thinks he should try harder to organise his papers.
 - He feels that he is organised enough.
- How does he find something among his papers?
 - He tries to remember exactly where he put it.
 - He remembers approximately when he last saw it.
 - He goes through everything in a pile.
- Where will the writer find something he has not seen for a very long time?
 - In a pile on the floor.
 - In a pile on his desk.
 - Somewhere else in the room.

6 Discuss the following questions.

- ▶ Apart from a desk, a lamp, a pen and some paper, what else do you consider essential in your study area?
- ▶ If you had €100 to spend on making your study area more organised, what would you spend it on?
- ▶ Do you know any home-made or cheap ways to help organise your life (e.g. using a coffee mug to store pens)?
- ▶ Does having something new (like a new desk) motivate you to stay tidy?
- ▶ Have you ever found something you thought you'd lost? What was it? Where did you find it?
- ▶ Does it matter if we are a little disorganised?
- ▶ Do you believe that talented people such as writers and artists are often disorganised?
- ▶ Is there any other area of your life where you need to be more organised?

