

Talking About Work: Describing Your Office



Talking about work begins with your **workplace**. Your workplace can be in a **factory** or anywhere—if you work on the moon, then that's your workplace—but most of most of my students work at a **desk** in an **office**.

What you have in your office is probably not what I have in my office. But, there are a few things that most of us have, and I'm not just talking about computers! We all seem to keep **files** in a **filing cabinet**. (Even though we have computers, most offices aren't paperless.) Aside from the printer, many people have a **copier**.

What do you have in your office? Do you have anything unusual in your office? What's the strangest thing you've seen in an office? If you don't have an office, where is your workplace? How many things in the picture can you name in English? How many things in the

picture can you recognize, but not name in English?

Vocabulary

Workplace: Most of us *go* to work: we don't work in our homes. Wherever you go when you're going to work, that's your workplace. For a year, I worked in a **factory**, my workplace was a factory. Now, I work in a school. My workplace is a school. For me, at least, the school is a much better workplace than the factory was! For many of my students, their workplaces are **offices**.

Normally, the word workplace is a noun: “My workplace is so noisy!” But we can also use it as an adjective, to talk about things that happen at work, or belong to our workplaces. For example, there are workplace injuries and workplace stress. Hopefully you don't have any of those!

Factory: If you drive a car, have you ever thought about where it came from? Do you think it was made in an **office**? Of course not! You can bet that it came from a giant building somewhere where people put it together. The name for that giant building is a factory. Anywhere that a lot of nearly identical products are made is called a factory. Cars come from factories, but so do computers. There are TV factories and even some food comes from factories.

Desk: In your home or **office**, you probably have something like a table, where you can sit and work. It's just the right size for one person to work alone and if you have a computer, this is probably where you keep it. The word for this table-thing is a desk in English. In school, each of us had a desk where we kept our books and things. In the photo above, the **desk** is where the computers are sitting.

Office: If you work at a **desk** in a room by yourself or with just a few other people, you work in an office. The photo above is of an office.

We use the word office to describe the room where we work: “my office is tiny!” But, if we work at a desk (even if it's *not* in an office), we say we're 'at the office' when we're at work: “the funniest thing happened at the office today!” And, just like **workplace** we use the word office as an adjective to describe things from the office or that happen there: “I hate office politics!”

Files: I have a lot of papers in my home office. Some I have for taxes, others for work. It's hard to organize them all. What I try to do is put the papers that belong together—my tax information—in one pile and to put them in a folder. Then, the papers and the folder are a tax file.

The word file can apply to a collection of papers—we all seem to have a few files in our **offices**—but it's also a term associated with computers. If you have a digital camera, the camera

probably saves each picture as a separate file on your memory card. And, lastly, it can refer to any collection of information on a certain topic. A paranoid person, for example, might say “The CIA has files on everyone!” meaning a collection of information. Most of us, though, use the term to refer to paper or computer files.

In the picture above, there are files in holders on the desk, on both the left and the right side of the picture.

Filing Cabinet: Have you ever worked in an office with a lot of paper **files**? It can be hard to keep organized when you have ten or fifteen files. And when you have a hundred files, it can be almost impossible to find the one you want, when you want it. Of course, there's a solution for the problem. There's a piece of furniture that's made to hold a lot of **files**. Usually, it has drawers just the right size to hold **files**. It's a filing cabinet and most offices have at least one.

In the picture above, the filing cabinet is on the right, black, and under the desk.

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