大学英语教程

A COLLEGE ENGLISH COURSE

Book Two B

中山大学出版社

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林丰青　林泽铨
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Lesson One

Office Equipment

Starting Time, Minutes_____Seconds_____

The oldest and simplest kinds of "office equipment" are writing instruments. Ancient Egyptian scribes (writers) used sharp, pointed instruments to draw pictures in wet clay. They were able to keep accurate records of population figures, crop production, and historical events in this manner. The use of lead for making marks is also of ancient origin. Modern-day pencils are pieces of graphite and clay encased in wood.

Some ancient peoples used sharpened reeds dipped in dyes to write on parchment or papyrus. Sharpened goose feathers, or *quills*, were used as writing instruments from as early as the 600s. Office workers used quill pens for hundreds of years, constantly re-dipping the quill in ink after every few words. Fountain pens, or barrel pens, were not invented until 1780. Pens were used to write letters, keep records, and do all the other writing necessary in carrying on a business.

Many people tried to invent a machine to print letters or numbers on paper as a faster and more leg-

ible (easily readable)substitute for handwriting. None succeeded until 1873, when three American inventors designed and sold the first workable typewriter. Since then many new models of typewriters have been invented, with numerous improvements.The early typewriters were *manual*, or hand-powered. In the late 1930s, the electric typewriter came into wide use. In these machines, an electric-powered motor does most of the "physical" work. The fingers need only touch the keys lightly in order to put them in motion. The typist can type faster and more easily. Typewriters have played an important part in the development of modern businesses.

As businesses became larger, and companies began dealing with huge numbers of people and large amounts of money and information, many more machines were needed in offices. New kinds of office equipment, whether powered by hand or electricity, have allowed office workers to perform their jobs much faster and with less effort.

Thousands of businesses are equipped with *dictating machines*. Someone talks into a microphone, and the words are recorded on special magnetic tape. A typist can listen to the words through earphones, while he or she is typing. The tape can then be "erased" and re-used.A dictating machine makes it unnecessary for a stenographer to copy the words she hears in

shorthand, and then rewrite them on a typewriter. The typist can be doing other work while the words are being recorded.

Many machines have been invented to "think out" mathematical problems involving large numbers. *Calculating* machines can be used to add, subtract, divide, and multiply numbers in minutes. *Adding* machines, *bookkeeping* machines, and *billing* machines are also used to compute large numbers in a short amount of time.

Many offices have some form of copying machine. *Mimeograph* machines use ink and stencils to make reprints, in much the same manner as a printing press. Newer copying machines produce *photocopies*. Reproductions made by cameras can be produced in minutes by various processes. Photocopying machines use special kinds of light-sensitive paper, which has been treated with chemicals, to take pictures and develop them immediately.

The most complicated kind of office equipment is the *electronic computer*. Computers are used by businesses to perform many different services. Large businesses use computers to keep records of money owed by customers and to send bills out each month. Some computers are used by engineering companies to solve difficult mathematical problems or to plan the construction of bridges and buildings. Computers are

very expensive, both to construct and to operate. "Time-sharing" plans enable many companies to use one large computer, which is kept in operation 24 hours a day. A person can sometimes use a computer simply by dialing a telephone in his office. Computers can perform many tasks in seconds that would otherwise require hundreds of people working for hundreds of hours.

There are many other kinds of office equipment. They all have one thing in common—they make office work easier and get it finished faster than it could ever be done by human beings alone. Some machines even fold letters, put them in envelopes, seal the envelopes, and print the addresses. Then a *postage meter* (in the office) stamps the letters.

*Finishing Time: Minutes*_____ *Seconds*_____

Check Your Comprehension

Choose the best answer to complete the sentence.

1. The oldest and simplest Egyptian instrument used _____ as the material for drawing.

   a. ink

   b. paint

   c. clay

2. A quill pen was used to write in ink while a reed pen was used to write_____.

a. also in ink

b. in clay

c. in dyes

3. The fountain pen was invented_____.

a. in 1780

b. as early as the 600s

c. in 1873

4. The inventors of the first typewriter_____.

a. were Egyptians

b. were Americans

c. were not mentioned in the reading

5. A power-driven typewriter was invented _____.

a. after 1936

b. in the 1930s

c. before the late 1930s

6. A dictating machine_____.

a. can reduce the work of typing

b. can make it possible for a shorthand typist not to copy a dictator' s words in shorthand

c. can type automatically what the dictator says

7. A copying machine_____.

a is also called a mimeograph machine

b. works differently as a mimeograph machine

c. works in much the same manner as a printing press

8. What is not mentioned in the reading?

a. Computers can be used to plan the construction of buildings.

b. Computers are expensive.

c. Many office staffs will be fired as computers can perform many tasks.

9. According to this reading, all the office equipment have one thing in common, that is, _____.

a. they can be used to save money

b. they can be used to replace human work

c. they can make work done faster and more easily.

10. In your opinion, the purpose of the author in writing this article is to _____.

a. convince people to buy office equipment

b. make a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of some office equipment

c. give a brief picture to the development of the office equipment

*Name*_____ *Date*_____ *Class*_____

*Reading Time, Minutes*_____ *Seconds*_____

*Words per minute*_____

*Total number right*_____ *Percent*_____

Vocabulary Practice:

Select the word or words closest in meaning to the underlined word or words.

1. The use of lead for making marks is also of ancient origin.
   a. is an out-dated method
   b. is an old but improved method
   c. originates from ancient times
2. Some ancient peoples dipped sharpened reeds in dyes to write on parchment or papyrus.
   a. a kind of ancient painting
   b. a kind of writing material
   c. a kind of paper used in ancient times
3. Office workers used quill pens for hundreds of years, constantly re-dipping the quill in ink after every few words.
   a. pens made from feathers
   b. pens made from lead
   c. felt-tip pens
4. A dictating machine makes it unnecessary for a stenographer to copy the words she hears in short hand.
   a. a writer
   b. a typewriter
   c. a shorthand typist
5. Mimeograph machines use ink and stencils to make

reprints.

a. a kind of pen

b. waxed paper

c. a kind of liquid for printing

*Name*_____ *Date*_____ *Class*_____

*Reading Time: Minutes*_____ *Seconds*_____

*Words per minute*_____

*Total number right*_____ *percent* ____ _____

Lesson Two

Farm Machinery

Starting Time: Minutes____ Seconds_____

Farmers once had few tools to help them, and they had to work hard to grow enough food for their families. But many kinds of farm machinery have been invented to make their work easier. These inventions made it possible for farmers to feed many people—to grow vast fields of crops or to raise huge herds of livestock.

The *plow* is one of the farmer's oldest pieces of machinery. It digs up the earth before the seeds are planted. The cast-iron plow, patented by Charles Newbold in 1797, did not wear out like earlier plows made of soft metals. Today a plow with four or more blades is hitched to a *tractor*, the farmer's most useful machine. The farmer drives the tractor through the field, and the plow is dragged behind it. A tractor-pulled plow can dig a wide, long strip of soil in a very short time.

When the plowing is finished, the soil is rough. Other machines, called *harrows*, are hauled by the tractor to smooth out the dirt. After the harrowing, seeds are planted by an *automatic planter*. This