



lingoda

Secretary and assistance work

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL

Upper-intermediate

NUMBER

EN_BE_3712X

LANGUAGE

English

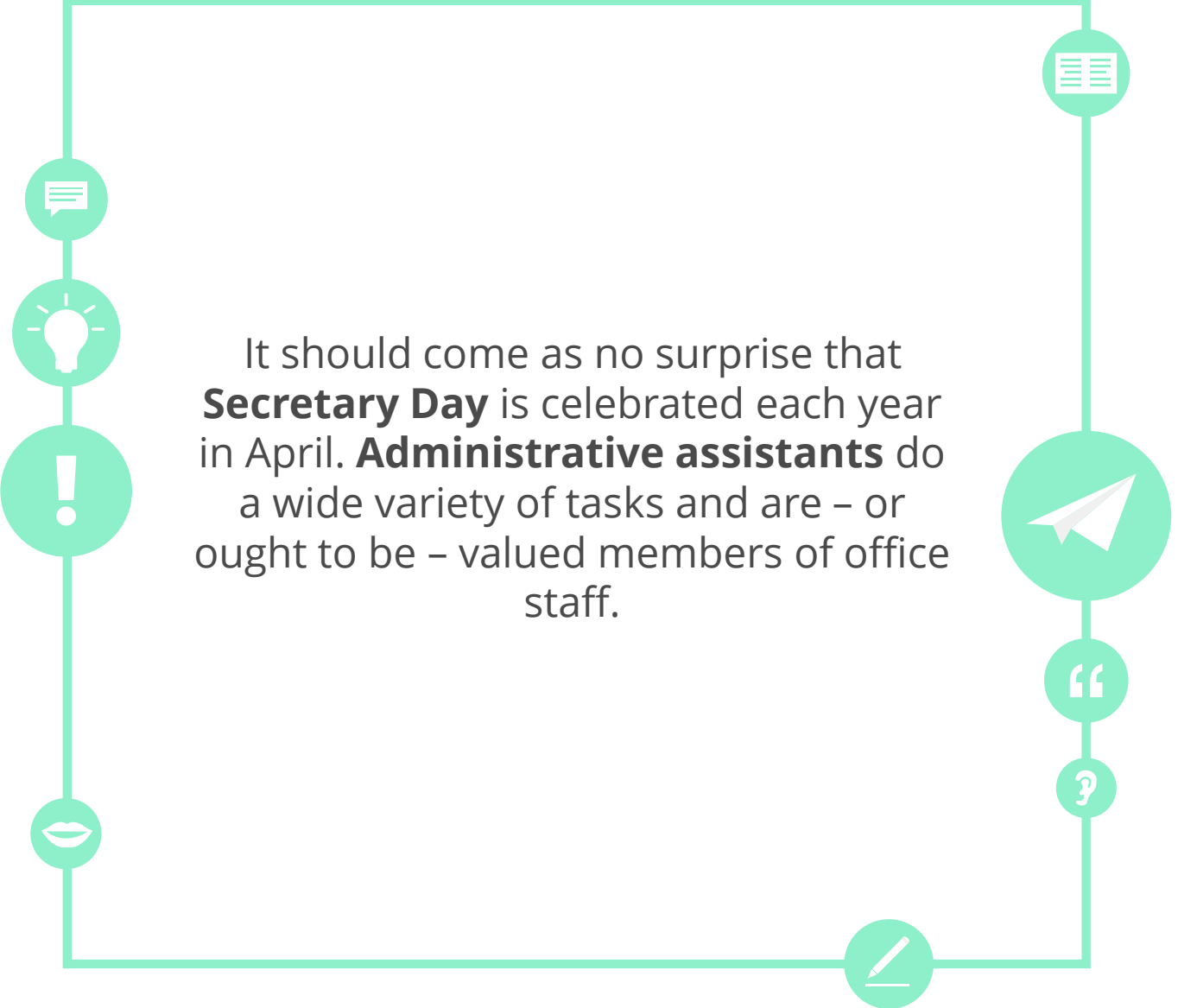




Goals

- Can read and understand a text on the roles of secretaries, PAs and administrative assistants
- Can write a concise email using new vocabulary and understanding





It should come as no surprise that **Secretary Day** is celebrated each year in April. **Administrative assistants** do a wide variety of tasks and are – or ought to be – valued members of office staff.



Warm up

What comes to mind when you think of a secretary?



What do you think the role of a secretary or admin assistant involves?





Administrative work



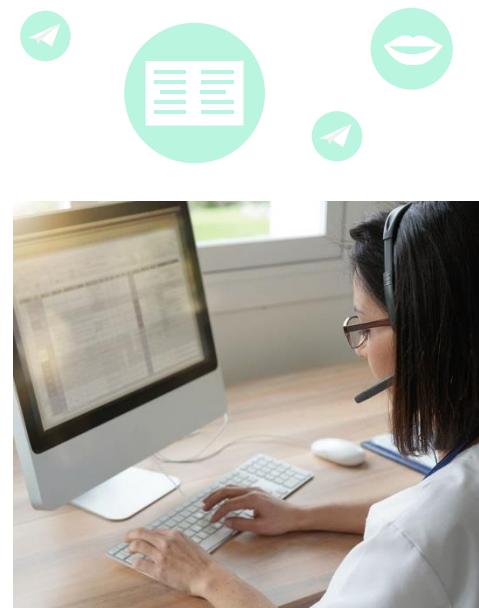
There is a stereotypical image of **secretaries** in popular culture: they are the stylish, big-haired women in films and TV programmes about the workplaces of the 1960s, or the overworked women whose bosses are leaders and politicians.

Other roles within the field of administration include **personal assistants (PAs)** and **administrative assistants**. Along with secretaries, these professionals are gatekeepers who help to keep things running, whether that's for an entire office or for just one busy executive.



Day-to-day responsibilities

Stereotypical images aside, what do actual secretaries say about their work? One aspect is that work days are often busy. Marie is the only administrative assistant at a small law firm. A team of twenty-five people relies on her know-how in matters related to office procedures such as billing, ordering and scheduling. She says that she **handles** all initial phone and in-person **enquiries** from potential clients and then transfers them to the right person. She also **schedules and arranges meetings**, which is tough to **coordinate** with so many busy legal professionals.





Staying cool on the job



Chloe, a personal assistant to a television executive, says that keeping a **professional** tone is essential in her line of work. She has to stay cool under pressure when callers are stressed or unpleasant, like an angry agent who called her names when she denied his request for a meeting. She also has to be mindful of **confidential** information, like how much a show's star gets paid.



Job adverts

Fill in the gaps in this job posting with the word that fits best.

confidential

professional

coordinate

schedule

personal
assistant

Prominent psychologist seeks _____. We are a team of well-established psychologists with a booming clinic and are in need of administrative support. The ideal candidate will be able to handle _____ patient information and treat new and established patients in a _____ and friendly manner. Prior experience in a health-related setting is desirable. The assistant will _____ patient appointments, manage the office calendar and will _____ office-wide events from start to finish.

We offer a competitive salary and benefits. Please send your CV, cover letter and references to drhughes@westmorelandwellness.co.uk.





Get ready to listen

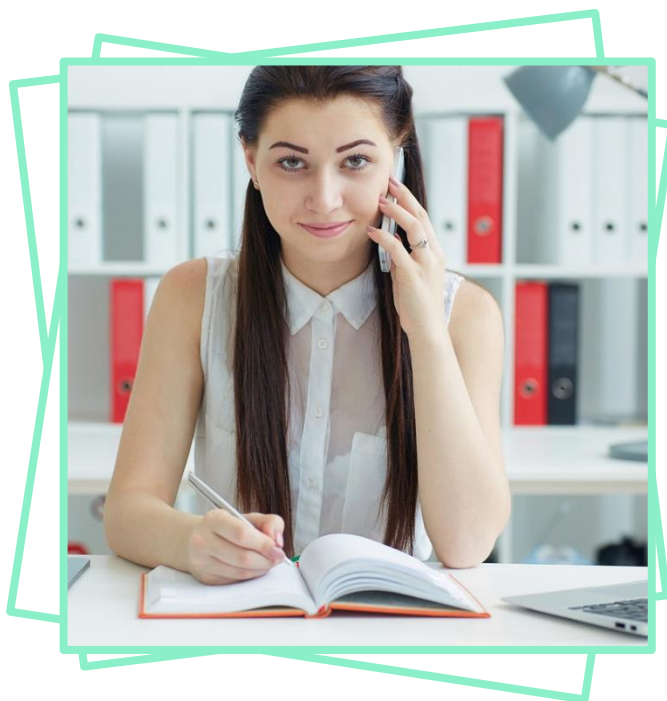


The next few pages will focus on your listening comprehension.



The best thing about my job is...

Listen to the two PAs talking about their job. Make notes on what they say and then answer the questions on the next two pages.





Find the match

Based on Chloe and Josh's descriptions of their jobs, complete the sentences (1-4) with the information that fits best.

1. Chloe enjoys her job because...

a. a perk associated with Josh's job.

2. Travelling with his boss to book fairs is...

b. part of Chloe's daily routine.

3. Working on events, answering e-mails and arranging meetings are...

c. it's exciting to be a part of developing television shows.

4. An inflexible work schedule is...

d. a reason Josh would like to find a new job.



positives

negatives

consider their fields
of employment and
day-to-day
responsibilities





Writing matters



David, an administrative assistant, says it is important to be a strong and confident writer if you work in administration. Why? **Correspondence** is a big part of the job. He often answers e-mails or letters **on behalf of** his supervisor, the CEO. Hannah, who works as a secretary, agrees with this and says that **proofreading** is essential when you're producing documents like e-mails, memos or formal letters.



Tips for good communication

David says that when writing e-mails to the whole office, he tries to be **concise** and organise his thoughts so that everyone can understand him. It's also important not to underestimate a short and clear subject line – it makes people **prioritise** your e-mail. And even in the entertainment sector, you should avoid using casual language, emojis and too many exclamation marks.

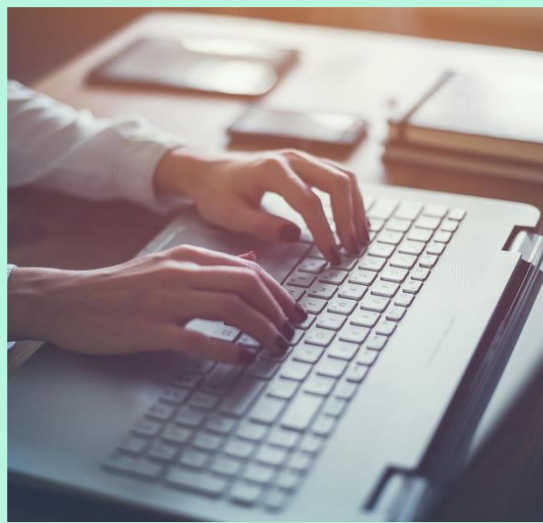




Writing in a professional manner

In the text, David and Hannah share their thoughts on writing professionally and confidently.

Discuss each of the questions below.



1) Why are writing skills important for David and Hannah's roles?

2) Name two tips that are mentioned in the text.

3) What does David say about e-mail subject lines?

4) What can be considered a **don't** when it comes to professional e-mails?



Review the e-mail

Identify all the ways in which you could improve this inter-office e-mail. Consider grammar, tone and structure as you review it.

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□

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To: <all staff>

Subject: Hey!!

Hi guys!

We've been trying to find a time that works for everyone for an all-office safety training meeting!!! It's going to be Tuesday 1st November. We're gonna talk about: first aid stuff, fire safety (getting out, etc.) and suspicious person training. Here's how it will go: first aid will be 8:45-10:15; fire safety from 11:00 to 1:00; and suspicious person training 1:15-2:00.

Hope this works for everyone. If you've done first aid training within the last year, let me know – you can skip that session then.

Thanks 😊



Rewrite the e-mail

Rewrite the e-mail you reviewed on the previous page so that it is clearly written and professional in tone.

To: <all staff>

Subject:



Get ready to listen



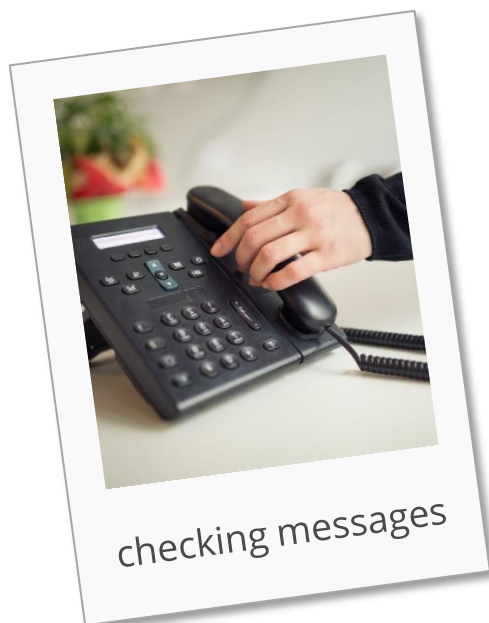
The next page will focus on your listening comprehension.



Monday morning messages

You work as the PA for the principal of a university. You check your voicemails on Monday morning and hear a message from your boss.

Complete the tasks below.



1

Listen to the message from your boss, which will be read by your teacher.

2

Make notes on what you hear.

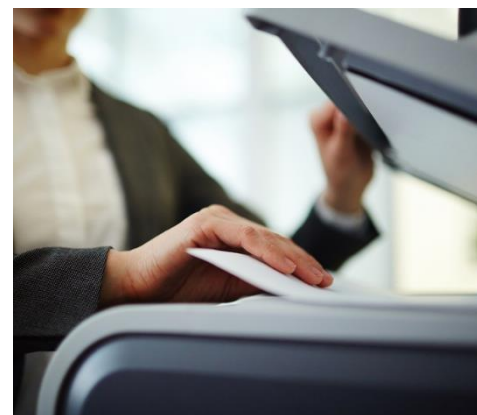
3

Craft an appropriate e-mail to the university staff on behalf of your boss.



Is my job safe?

Do these professionals worry about being **replaced** by robots? Although technology has sped up office procedures, like the distribution of memos, the human touch of a bright, efficient admin assistant cannot be **automated**. David's boss says that the office wouldn't run without him. He arranges the entire team's appointments and also **implemented** a calendar system for his boss, which is far more efficient than the messy diary that his boss previously used. Overall, he is **crucial** for making sure that everything in the office **runs smoothly**.





Is my job safe?



Discuss the question of automating administrative work. Will these jobs be necessary in the future, or are secretaries going to eventually become obsolete?



Reflecting and wrapping up

Have you ever worked in an administrative role? If so, what was the experience like?



**If not, would you like to work in administration?
Explain your answer.**



Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

yes

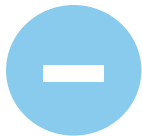
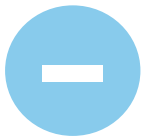
no





Reflect on this lesson

Think about everything you have seen in this lesson.
What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?



If you have time, go over
the most difficult slides again



Answer key

Exercise p. 8

personal assistant, confidential, professional, schedule, coordinate

Exercise p. 11

1c, 2a, 3b, 4d

Exercise p. 15

1) Because correspondence is a big part of the job.

2) There are many tips mentioned in the text: make sure you proofread your e-mails; be concise when writing e-mails to the whole office; organise e-mails so everyone can understand it; keep the subject line short and clear; and avoid using casual language, emojis and too many exclamation marks.

3) They should be short and clear.

4) Casual language, emojis and too many exclamation marks.

Exercise p. 16

Possible suggestions for improvements include:

More relevant subject line, more formal tone, avoiding emojis and exclamation marks, clearer layout (e.g. bullet point list) for itinerary.



Transcription 1

Exercise p. 10

Transcription 1: I'm Chloe. I'm 25 years old and work as a personal assistant for Enid James, a television executive in London. The best thing about my job is... well, there are two things really. Firstly, I love being in this industry. I'm a small part of the good shows that get made. It's exciting to watch TV and remember taking notes in a meeting when that show was just an idea. Secondly, I'm never bored. I'm occupied all day: taking notes, answering calls, arranging meetings, working on events or taking care of stuff for Enid, like responding to e-mails for her or scheduling her appointments. I guess the downside is that whenever Enid is working, so am I, and she's an extremely busy person who works long hours.

Transcription 2: I'm Josh and I work as the PA for Lester Harper, the Editor-in-Chief at a publishing house. Lester is a great boss. On my first day, I started out by calling him Mr Harper, but he laughed and told me to call him Lester, since we were working together so closely. I'll complain first: I run around a lot and can't really control my schedule. I'm thinking about applying for other jobs in publishing where I'll have more flexibility. Lester is really busy and travels a lot, and I coordinate his schedule and also manage the schedules for our bestselling authors. It's a lot of work, but one big perk is that I get to travel with Lester to all the big book fairs in Europe.



Transcription 2

Exercise p. 19

Hi! I'm not going to be in the office tomorrow, so I wanted to leave you this message in advance. We have some professors from Japan coming to visit the university on Wednesday afternoon. I need you to remind the staff of their visit. They'll be touring the university and meeting with different departments: HR at 2 p.m., finance at 3 p.m., library staff at 4 p.m. and academic staff at 5 p.m.

Then at 6 p.m. there will be a casual meet and greet which staff from all departments can attend. Could you also remind everyone of this please? Thank you! See you on Tuesday.





Find the match

1. Scheduling a meeting means...

a. the ability to handle enquiries.

2. Coordinating a workplace event means...

b. finding a time and location that it will take place.

3. Implementing a new calendar system means...

c. you may be asked to write an e-mail on their behalf.

4. Proofreading a memo before you send it is a good idea because...

d. putting a calendar system into practice in the workplace.

5. Your boss is too busy to write a company-wide message about a potential merger so...

e. a potential client phoning about services provided.

6. An enquiry at a law firm might be...

f. taking care of all the details, such as who is attending and where it takes place.

7. The ability to respond to callers, transfer calls and use professional language is...

g. you should check for errors before sharing it with others.



Complete the sentences

Complete the following sentences about secretarial work based on what you have learnt during this lesson and on your own experience in the working world.

1. You can summarise the role of a secretary as...
2. We do/don't need a secretary in my office because...
3. One job that definitely requires a PA is _____ because...
4. To me, the best thing about being a secretary would be...
5. The top three skills an administrative assistant needs are...



Homework answer key

Exercise p. 29

1b, 2f, 3d, 4g, 5c, 6e, 7a



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