

7462-223 / 7465-223 July 2010

Level 2 Certificate for Legal Secretaries / Level 2 Award in Proof-reading in the Legal Environment – Proof-reading Test Answer

FILING IN **THE** LEGAL OFFICE

The word 'filing' conjures up many feelings for staff working in offices. Some enjoy the chore, **believe** it or not, and others absolutely dread the laborious task of filing papers in files. Filing is, however, a very important task and it is vital that **it's** done properly. Filing should be carried out daily and papers put in the **right** file. This is extremely important as valuable evidence, **people's statements**, Wills and property deeds are all stored in legal offices. When the documents need to be **accessed**, the filing clerk or secretary must be able to find and retrieve them quickly.

Letters or documents should have a filing **reference** which usually relates to the file it **is** stored on. Once the file is located, then the document is filed in chronological **order**. The filing reference can be the name of the client and therefore the files are in alphabetical order. If your filing reference is a number, then the numerical **system** will have been adopted, in which case files are stored **numerically**. Both classifications have advantages and **disadvantages**. **(inconsistent space)** The alphabetical system is simple and most people can understand it. However, some **drawers** can become **congested** with popular letters in the alphabet, eg **there** are lots of people with surnames beginning with the letter 'D' but far fewer with the letter **'Z'**. To alleviate the problem of **over-crowded** drawers, files have to be moved from drawer to drawer to **accommodate** the expanding files.

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The numerical system has the advantage that the next **new** file is allocated the next **number** in the sequence and **therefore** the new file is placed after the last file in the **filing** system. The biggest disadvantage of the numerical system is that an alphabetical index is **required** to cross-reference the name and file number.

Often filing is given to the junior **to** do as most people find filing **tedious**. However, this job should be carried out by someone with knowledge of the filing **matter** and a good **knowledge** of the filing system.

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Filing systems vary from office to office. Some use a lateral system whereby files hang in a line in a long **cabinet**. **Others** use suspended files held in drawers in a filing cabinet. Rotary filing systems have files **suspended** in a circular cabinet allowing the filing **clerk** to rotate the files whilst standing still.

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Archiving is another **important** job. This is where files **are** no longer required. Cases are finished but the papers and files **cannot** be thrown **away**. They need to be labelled and stored in a secure area for at least 7 years in case they are needed. This job is often kept until a work **experience** student is **on** placement and they help tie up the **files**, label them and take them to a storage area which is sometimes in the basement or even in another **building**.

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Imagine if papers were filed incorrectly and lost! A solicitor may be looking for a specific, important **document** which is **vital** to the **success** of a case. This is the reason why filing should be done by someone who understands filing and the **filing** system **used**. They must have comprehensive training in filing systems to avoid mistakes occurring.

538 words