

# THE EFFECTS OF COMPUTERS ON HOW PEOPLE WORK



Information Technology (IT) has changed the sort of work we do. Some jobs have disappeared, others have been created. Many tasks which were once done by people are now carried out by computer controlled machines. Cars are welded together and sprayed with paint by robots. Beer is canned by machines. Most of the jobs in telephone exchanges, water pumping stations and lighthouses are no longer carried out by human beings. This has led to a great deal of unemployment in these older industries. It has been estimated that in 1985/86 over 87,000 jobs disappeared in British firms involved in making things.

However, IT has also created new jobs. Workers are needed to make computer hardware such as screens, printers and keyboards. Software programs have to be designed and tested. IT specialists are needed to help businesses use this software. Work has been created making new products such as compact disks, videos, microwaves and satellite dishes. These all rely upon computer technology. Increasing numbers of workers are needed to sell and repair all this equipment.

Some older jobs have not disappeared but how the work is done has changed. Once the drawings and designs for the packaging of products were done by hand, now they are produced on a computer. Even the creation of cartoons for the film industry is done on a screen. Many office workers now do their own typing, even though they were not trained to type. Word processors can easily correct mistakes so this is not so much of a problem.

Computers mean that office workers can carry out the routine jobs such as filing, recording orders and delivering internal mail much more quickly. Even typing will be less common once voice controlled computers become widely available. This new technology is constantly changing. Workers will need to retrain throughout their working lives to keep pace with these changes.

IT has made it possible for increasing numbers of people to work from home. Through their computer, a modem and the telephone system they can now be connected to millions of people and organisations throughout the world. Their company's head office may be in New York but the home worker will probably never need to travel there.

## Exercises

1. Finish this sentence "IT has meant some jobs..."
2. Write a list of some of the jobs which have largely disappeared as a result of the use of computers.
3. Between 1985-86 87,000 jobs were lost in British firms. Were these firms involved in a) farming b) dealing with the public or c) making things?
4. Write a list of new jobs which have been created by IT that are mentioned in the passage.
5. How have the jobs of office workers been changed by the new technology?
6. How have computers led to an increase in people working from home?
7. Draw a diagram showing how the home worker is linked to the rest of the world.
8. What job would you like to do when you leave school? How do you think IT will affect this?
9. Write a paragraph describing how the home has been changed in the last 30 years by the microchip. E.g, automatic washing machines.

JOBS  
NOT COMPUTERS

