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## PC keyboards dirtier than toilet seats

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## THE ARTICLE

A British computer magazine has discovered our computer keyboards could be bad for our health. "Which? Computing" asked a laboratory to check 30 keyboards in its London office for bacteria. The results were shocking, and disgusting. The lab scientists said five of the keyboards they tested put people at risk of illness. One keyboard contained 150 times more bacteria than health officials say is safe. Its test results showed it was five times dirtier than a toilet seat. The researchers said the germs they found could easily cause symptoms similar to food poisoning, such as diarrhoea and upset stomachs. They named these illnesses "QWERTY tummy," after the first six letters on the keyboard. The magazine recommended people clean their keyboards regularly to stay healthy and avoid stomach bugs.

The magazine said almost half the people they interviewed cleaned their keyboard less than once a month. Ten percent of people said they never cleaned it. Editor, Sarah Kidner, warned: "Most people don't give much thought to the [dirt] that builds up on their PC....But if you don't clean your computer, you might as well eat your lunch off the toilet." The main causes of germs and bacteria are crumbs and other small pieces of food that drop onto the keys while workers eat at their desks. Oily fingers from eating potato chips and fries also attract bacteria. Joanne Baxter, a secretary from West London, said she was shocked at this news. "I had no idea that my keyboard could make me ill. I'm afraid to find out what nasty things there are hiding under my keys." she said.

# WARM-UPS

**1. BACTERIA:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about bacteria. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*magazines / laboratory / disgusting / bacteria / toilet seats / food poisoning / bugs / cleaning keyboards / dirt / germs / crumbs / desks / oily fingers / potato chips / nasty*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. COMPUTER DANGERS:** How dangerous are computers? What can we do to reduce the dangers? Complete this table with your partner. Change partners and share your ideas.

Things	Dangers	How to reduce the dangers
keyboard		
mouse		
screen		
radio waves		
software		
Internet		

**4. HYGIENE:** Do you always think about where nasty bacteria might be hiding? Rank the things in the table for their danger to hygiene levels: 10 = lots of nasties hiding here; 0 = totally bacteria free. Change partners and share your rankings.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| _____ my keyboard                        | _____ the coins in the change you get      |
| _____ my toilet seat                     | _____ a cafeteria spoon / chopstick / fork |
| _____ the door handle of a public toilet | _____ a small child's toy                  |
| _____ the hand rail of an escalator      | _____ the door handle of a fridge          |

**5. HEADLINE PREDICTION:** With your partner(s), use the words in the "Chat" activity above to predict what the news article will be about. Once you have your story, change partners and share them. Who was closest to the real story?

**6. KEYBOARD:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'keyboard'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Computer keyboards can be unhygienic and make us ill. T / F
- b. Toilet seats are 150 times more hygienic than the average keyboard. T / F
- c. Many germs found on keyboards can cause food poisoning. T / F
- d. Typing QWERTY (the first six keyboard letters) helps keep germs away. T / F
- e. Around fifty per cent of people clean their keyboards each month. T / F
- f. An editor said eating your lunch in the toilet is safer than at your desk. T / F
- g. Eating fries while using a keyboard can attract bacteria and germs. T / F
- h. A secretary couldn't wait to find the bacteria hiding in her keyboard. T / F

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. discovered  | a. lab        |
| 2. laboratory  | b. stomach    |
| 3. disgusting  | c. sick       |
| 4. symptoms    | d. nasty      |
| 5. tummy       | e. questioned |
| 6. interviewed | f. greasy     |
| 7. dirt        | g. found      |
| 8. builds up   | h. filth      |
| 9. oily        | i. collects   |
| 10. ill        | j. signs      |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. keyboards could be bad                       | a. to food poisoning     |
| 2. people at risk                               | b. lunch off the toilet  |
| 3. 150 times more bacteria than health          | c. of illness            |
| 4. cause symptoms similar                       | d. under my keys         |
| 5. ... to stay healthy and                      | e. officials say is safe |
| 6. ... cleaned their keyboard less              | f. up on their PC        |
| 7. the [dirt] that builds                       | g. avoid stomach bugs    |
| 8. you might as well eat your                   | h. bacteria              |
| 9. potato chips and fries also attract          | i. for our health        |
| 10. find out what nasty things there are hiding | j. than once a month     |

# WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A British computer magazine has \_\_\_\_\_ our computer keyboards could be bad for our health. "Which? Computing" asked a laboratory to \_\_\_\_\_ 30 keyboards in its London office for bacteria. The results were \_\_\_\_\_, and disgusting. The lab scientists said five of the keyboards they tested put people at \_\_\_\_\_ of illness. One keyboard contained 150 times more bacteria than health officials say is safe. Its test results showed it was five times \_\_\_\_\_ than a toilet seat. The researchers said the germs they found could easily \_\_\_\_\_ symptoms similar to food poisoning, such as diarrhoea and upset stomachs. They named these illnesses "QWERTY tummy," \_\_\_\_\_ the first six letters on the keyboard. The magazine recommended people clean their keyboards regularly to stay healthy and \_\_\_\_\_ stomach bugs.

The magazine said almost \_\_\_\_\_ the people they interviewed cleaned their keyboard less than once a month. Ten percent of people said they \_\_\_\_\_ cleaned it. Editor, Sarah Kidner, warned: "Most people don't give much thought to the [dirt] that \_\_\_\_\_ up on their PC....But if you don't clean your computer, you might as \_\_\_\_\_ eat your lunch off the toilet." The main causes of germs and bacteria are crumbs and other small pieces of food that drop onto the keys \_\_\_\_\_ workers eat at their desks. Oily fingers from eating potato chips and fries also \_\_\_\_\_ bacteria. Joanne Baxter, a secretary from West London, said she was shocked at this news. "I had no idea that my keyboard could make me ill. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ to find out what \_\_\_\_\_ things there are hiding under my keys." she said.

*cause*  
*risk*  
*check*  
*dirtier*  
*avoid*  
*discovered*  
*after*  
*shocking*

*while*  
*never*  
*nasty*  
*builds*  
*attract*  
*half*  
*afraid*  
*well*

## **LISTENING:** Listen and fill in the spaces.

A British computer magazine has discovered our computer keyboards could \_\_\_\_\_ . "Which? Computing" asked a laboratory to check 30 keyboards in its London \_\_\_\_\_. The results were shocking, and disgusting. The lab scientists said five of the keyboards they tested \_\_\_\_\_ illness. One keyboard contained 150 times more bacteria than health \_\_\_\_\_. Its test results showed it was five \_\_\_\_\_ seat. The researchers said the germs they found could easily cause \_\_\_\_\_ poisoning, such as diarrhoea and upset stomachs. They named these illnesses "QWERTY tummy," \_\_\_\_\_ on the keyboard. The magazine recommended people clean their keyboards regularly to stay healthy \_\_\_\_\_ .

The magazine said \_\_\_\_\_ they interviewed cleaned their keyboard \_\_\_\_\_ month. Ten percent of people said they never cleaned it. Editor, Sarah Kidner, warned: "Most people don't \_\_\_\_\_ the [dirt] that builds up on their PC....But if you don't clean your computer, \_\_\_\_\_ your lunch off the toilet." The main causes of germs and bacteria are crumbs \_\_\_\_\_ food that drop onto the keys \_\_\_\_\_ their desks. Oily fingers from eating potato chips and fries also attract bacteria. Joanne Baxter, a secretary from West London, said she was shocked at this news. "I had no idea that my keyboard could make me ill. \_\_\_\_\_ nasty things there are hiding under my keys." she said.

# AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'key' and 'board'.

key	board

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• discovered</li><li>• check</li><li>• risk</li><li>• five</li><li>• named</li><li>• avoid</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• half</li><li>• never</li><li>• builds up</li><li>• might</li><li>• oily</li><li>• afraid</li></ul>
--	--

# STUDENT HYGIENE SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about hygiene in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.



# COMPUTER KEYBOARD DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'keyboard'?
- c) How often do you clean your keyboard?
- d) What do you think scientists might find hiding under your keyboard?
- e) Do you think computers are bad for our health?
- f) What do you think of the idea of toilet seats being cleaner than computer keyboards?
- g) Do you think it's possible your keyboard or mouse has ever given you an upset tummy?
- h) Have you ever had food poisoning?
- i) Do you think we should wash our hands before and after using a keyboard?
- j) Will you think twice from now about using someone else's computer, or a computer in an Internet café?

*PC keyboards dirtier than toilet seats - 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2008*  
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# COMPUTER KEYBOARD DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you like your keyboard?
- c) If you changed your keyboard, what would you change it for?
- d) Do you think our voice will replace keyboards in the future and then we'll be healthier?
- e) Should parents limit the amount of time children spend playing video games so their children can exercise?
- f) Do you ever think about the dirt that builds up inside your keyboard?
- g) Do you think it's a bad idea to eat while working at your computer?
- h) Will you clean your keyboard properly after this lesson?
- i) What questions would you like to ask the lab workers who checked the keyboards?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

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# LANGUAGE

A British computer magazine has (1) \_\_\_\_ our computer keyboards could be bad for our health. "Which? Computing" asked a (2) \_\_\_\_ to check 30 keyboards in its London office for bacteria. The results were shocking, and disgusting. The lab scientists said five of the keyboards they tested (3) \_\_\_\_ people at risk of illness. One keyboard contained 150 times more bacteria than health officials say is (4) \_\_\_\_\_. Its test results showed it was five times dirtier than a toilet seat. The researchers said the germs they found could easily (5) \_\_\_\_ symptoms similar to food poisoning, such as diarrhoea and upset stomachs. They named these illnesses "QWERTY tummy," (6) \_\_\_\_ the first six letters on the keyboard. The magazine recommended people clean their keyboards regularly to stay healthy and avoid stomach bugs.

The magazine said (7) \_\_\_\_ half the people they interviewed cleaned their keyboard less than once a month. Ten percent of people said they never cleaned it. Editor, Sarah Kidner, (8) \_\_\_\_: "Most people don't give much (9) \_\_\_\_ to the [dirt] that builds up on their PC....But if you don't clean your computer, you (10) \_\_\_\_ as well eat your lunch off the toilet." The main causes of germs and bacteria are crumbs and other small pieces of food that drop onto the keys while workers eat (11) \_\_\_\_ their desks. Oily fingers from eating potato chips and fries also attract bacteria. Joanne Baxter, a secretary from West London, said she was shocked at this news. "I had no idea that my keyboard could make me ill. I'm afraid to find (12) \_\_\_\_ what nasty things there are hiding under my keys." she said.

**Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.**

- |     |                 |                |                 |                  |
|-----|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1.  | (a) discovering | (b) discover   | (c) discovery   | (d) discovered   |
| 2.  | (a) lavatory    | (b) laboratory | (c) observatory | (d) conservatory |
| 3.  | (a) put         | (b) pushed     | (c) pulled      | (d) punched      |
| 4.  | (a) safety      | (b) safest     | (c) safe        | (d) safer        |
| 5.  | (a) coz         | (b) course     | (c) cause       | (d) 'cause       |
| 6.  | (a) near        | (b) after      | (c) between     | (d) before       |
| 7.  | (a) almost      | (b) all        | (c) whole       | (d) most         |
| 8.  | (a) warnings    | (b) warn       | (c) warning     | (d) warned       |
| 9.  | (a) think       | (b) thought    | (c) thoughts    | (d) thinking     |
| 10. | (a) should      | (b) need       | (c) can         | (d) might        |
| 11. | (a) for         | (b) in         | (c) at          | (d) on           |
| 12. | (a) out         | (b) over       | (c) on          | (d) off          |



# HOMework

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out about the health hazards of computers. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. HYGIENE:** Make a poster about all the things you can do to stay healthy while at the computer. Think about the different parts of your body. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. KEYBOARD NASTY:** Write a magazine article about a man who became very ill after using a computer keyboard in an Internet cafe. Include imaginary interviews with the man and the café owner.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to a keyboard manufacturer. Give them three pieces of advice on what they should do to make keyboards more hygienic. Ask them three questions about the company and its keyboards. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

**6. DIARY / JOURNAL:** You are a key on a keyboard. Choose which key you are. Write your diary entry for one day in your keyboard life. Include your thoughts on the other keys on the keyboard and on the humans who use you. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson.

# ANSWERS

## TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T      b. F      c. F      d. F      e. T      f. F      g. T      h. F

## SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. discovered  | a. found      |
| 2. laboratory  | b. lab        |
| 3. disgusting  | c. nasty      |
| 4. symptoms    | d. signs      |
| 5. tummy       | e. stomach    |
| 6. interviewed | f. questioned |
| 7. dirt        | g. filth      |
| 8. builds up   | h. collects   |
| 9. oily        | i. greasy     |
| 10. ill        | j. sick       |

## PHRASE MATCH:

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. keyboards could be bad                       | a. for our health        |
| 2. people at risk                               | b. of illness            |
| 3. 150 times more bacteria than health          | c. officials say is safe |
| 4. cause symptoms similar                       | d. to food poisoning     |
| 5. ... to stay healthy and                      | e. avoid stomach bugs    |
| 6. ... cleaned their keyboard less              | f. than once a month     |
| 7. the [dirt] that builds                       | g. up on their PC        |
| 8. you might as well eat your                   | h. lunch off the toilet  |
| 9. potato chips and fries also attract          | i. bacteria              |
| 10. find out what nasty things there are hiding | j. under my keys         |

## GAP FILL:

### PC keyboards dirtier than toilet seats

A British computer magazine has **discovered** our computer keyboards could be bad for our health. "Which? Computing" asked a laboratory to **check** 30 keyboards in its London office for bacteria. The results were **shocking**, and disgusting. The lab scientists said five of the keyboards they tested put people at **risk** of illness. One keyboard contained 150 times more bacteria than health officials say is safe. Its test results showed it was five times **dirtier** than a toilet seat. The researchers said the germs they found could easily **cause** symptoms similar to food poisoning, such as diarrhoea and upset stomachs. They named these illnesses "QWERTY tummy," **after** the first six letters on the keyboard. The magazine recommended people clean their keyboards regularly to stay healthy and **avoid** stomach bugs.

The magazine said almost **half** the people they interviewed cleaned their keyboard less than once a month. Ten percent of people said they **never** cleaned it. Editor, Sarah Kidner, warned: "Most people don't give much thought to the [dirt] that **builds** up on their PC...But if you don't clean your computer, you might as **well** eat your lunch off the toilet." The main causes of germs and bacteria are crumbs and other small pieces of food that drop onto the keys **while** workers eat at their desks. Oily fingers from eating potato chips and fries also **attract** bacteria. Joanne Baxter, a secretary from West London, said she was shocked at this news. "I had no idea that my keyboard could make me ill. I'm **afraid** to find out what **nasty** things there are hiding under my keys." she said.

## LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d    2 - b    3 - a    4 - c    5 - c    6 - b    7 - a    8 - d    9 - b    10 - d    11 - c    12 - a