



60 MINUTES

Reading an
informational
text

How Does Technology Affect Today's Labor Market?

Students read an article and consider the positive and negative effects of technology on the workplace across labor sectors. This can be used as practice for reading the kinds of informational texts used on the TASC exam.

MATERIALS

- *Technology Opinionaire*
- *Technology in the Workplace* reading

INTRODUCE

- 1 Distribute the *Technology Opinionaire*. Ask students to read each statement, and circle whether they agree or disagree. Then they should choose one of the statements to explain (in writing) their reasoning.

- 2 Write on the board:

How has technology changed the labor market?

- 3 Distribute *Technology in the Workplace*, and ask students to read and annotate it, making sure to take notes about how technology has changed how people look for jobs, what kinds of jobs are available, and what their lives are like at work.
- 4 Put students in groups. Tell them to turn over the article (so they're not looking at it), and make a list of all the ways they can remember from the article how technology has changed the world of work. Groups share findings with the class.
- 5 When the groups are finished, ask them to look back at the article, and see if they missed anything. If they did, they can add to their lists.
- 6 Point students back to their opinionaires. Ask if anyone has changed their mind. For example, did anyone who started out feeling positively about technology start to feel more negatively, or the other way around?



Technology Opinionaire

For each of the statements below, circle whether you agree or disagree.

- 1 Overall, technology is improving our world today more than technology is hurting our world.

Agree / Disagree

- 2 Technology these days makes it easier to find a job.

Agree / Disagree

- 3 I would rather be looking for a job in today's job market than I would 20 years ago.

Agree / Disagree

Choose one of the above statements, and explain why you agreed or disagreed:



TECHNOLOGY AND TODAY'S LABOR MARKET

Complete this short opinionaire by circling whether you agree or disagree.

1. Overall, technology is improving our world today more than technology is hurting our world. Y N
2. Technology these days makes it easier to find a job. Y N
3. I would rather be looking for a job in today's job market than I would 20 years ago. Y N

Now, choose one of the above statements and explain why you agreed or disagreed:

Now, read the article, ***“Technology in the Workplace.”***

- Take notes about how technology has changed how people look for jobs, what kinds of jobs are available, and what their lives are like at work.
- Working with your group, make a list of all of the ways you can remember from the article how technology has changed the world of work. Your teacher will ask you to share with the class.
- Now, retake the opinionaire:

1. Overall, technology is improving our world today more than technology is hurting our world. Y N
2. Technology these days makes it easier to find a job. Y N
3. I would rather be looking for a job in today's job market than I would 20 years ago. Y N

Did you change your mind (for example, did you start out feeling negative and now feel positive, or vice versa? Explain.



Technology in the Workplace

Technology has affected the world of work since the rise of factories in the 19th Century. For example, a machine called the cotton gin, that removes seeds from cotton after it is picked, made cotton manufacturing quicker and easier. When we talk about technology today, we usually mean hardware, such as hard drives and monitors; software, such as word processing programs; the internet; or networks, which allow computers to communicate with one another. Technology also refers to data collection, analysis and storage. It affects today's labor market in many ways: the way we find work, the types of jobs we do, the education and skills we need, the way we do work, and the way companies operate.

1. The way we find work

Long ago, people often looked for jobs in local newspapers, but today they use technology. Job search websites such as Monster, Indeed.com and Glass Door have become popular. People use social media sites like LinkedIn and Facebook to make themselves known, connect to others and find opportunities. Employers use these sites too, to find employees and research job applicants.

2. The type of jobs we do

Advances in technology have made some jobs disappear and others appear. For example, because companies like Netflix can offer movies on the internet, there are fewer video rental stores. We used to see a travel agent, baggage collector, porter and ticket agent when we traveled by plane or train. There are fewer of those jobs now that we use websites to book our tickets, and electronic machines to get our tickets and to check our bags. Advances in technology create new jobs too, like 'app developers', social media specialists, and health information managers.

3. The education and skills we need

A lot of work relies on technology. We use it to do simple tasks like answering phone calls. More and more employers rely on people to do more difficult work that requires innovative thinking, flexibility, creativity, and social skills. You need a person to plan the layout of products in a store so customers can find them easily and you need a person to provide hands-on care for sick patients. You need technology, for cashiers to use during transactions and to store medical information of patients. In this technology driven labor market, individuals who want to get, keep and advance in a good job need to make sure

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Source:



CUNY Graduate Center
365 Fifth Ave, Rm 6202
New York, NY 10016
www.gc.cuny.edu/lmis



that they have the education and skills that employers are looking for. This means knowing how to use technology and learning the skills that must be done by people.

4. **The way we do work**

Technology has also changed the way we work, by:

- **Making workers more productive**—Using technology can help you do your job better. You can complete more tasks, do them faster and sometimes more accurately. For example, with programs like Word, you can create and edit a letter more quickly than if you were to do it by hand or on a typewriter.
- **Reducing the tasks workers do themselves**—Some tasks that workers used to do themselves are now done by technology. For example, lawyers can use computer programs to search through thousands of documents to find certain information. This allows them to spend more time doing work computers can't do, such as developing arguments for the courtroom.
- **Replacing some workers**—More and more, we rely on machines to do work without any help from humans. This is called automation. Many people wonder if machines or even robots will one day replace workers. Right now, machines can assemble car parts, answer customer calls and check passengers in at airports. Robots can work together to fulfill warehouse orders. Experts disagree on what kind of impact automation will have on work in the future.
- **Making some workers more mobile**—Mobile phones, computers and the internet have allowed employees to do work from almost anywhere at almost any time. For example, some office workers can work from home for a local company or for a company based in another country. And, they can check email after the official end of the workday. Because of videoconferencing, we can even have meetings with people who are in different places around the world.
- **Directly connecting people who need goods or services to people who can offer it**—Businesses like Uber, Airbnb and Ebay allow sellers to connect with customers in moments. They offer transportation, accommodations and products to potential buyers through the internet.

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5. The way companies operate

With technology, organizations can produce goods and provide services more quickly, more accurately, on a larger scale and in new and improved ways. They can reach more customers. And, they can use huge amounts of information about individuals—known as ‘big data’—to help them sell more to customers. For many organizations, the way they use technology is what sets them apart from the rest.

Technology has changed the world of work in these five ways, but not all types of technology have the same impact. Some technologies totally transform the way people and organizations work. The internet is a good example; it changed everything. Other technologies that may transform our lives include driverless cars and advanced robots that can work alongside or replace employees altogether. And, some jobs seem to be effected by technology more than others. For example, jobs that involve activities such as data entry, assembly line work or routine design work have all become reliant on technology.

Technology has had many positive effects, but it has also had some negative. For example, the internet has allowed a wide range of individuals to access an incredible amount of information quickly, but it has made security and privacy an important issue. Hackers now can get confidential information that they were not intended to have. Governments are catching up to these changes by making new laws and regulations to keep people more safe.

Jobseekers and employees in today’s labor market must make sure they are tech-savvy. This can include:

- knowing how to operate a computerized cash register
- being proficient in Microsoft Office including Word and Excel programs
- operating medical technology that can require ongoing training as the technology evolves

Employees can raise their awareness by staying current with technological trends in their field, by reading online or print materials about their industry. Jobseekers can prepare for interviews doing job research and getting training. Jobseekers who are not tech-savvy may be at a disadvantage to their more tech-savvy peers. •

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