

Read the text and answer the questions that follow.

“SNIFFERS” ON THE JOB

- I It may sound strange, but large corporations actually hire people to hack into – or illegally enter – their computer systems as well as to try to physically enter restricted office areas. These security industry specialists in “penetration testing” are known informally as “sniffers”. Their job is to “sniff out” – in other words to discover the weaknesses in computer and physical security systems. To succeed, they need sophisticated computer programming skills and a sense of adventure. They work in secret, with their identity known to only a handful of top executives.
- II Penetration testing of a computer system involves hacking into it and then trying to break through the internal security. The sniffer’s goal is to find and adjust any security problems before hackers manage to damage or retrieve information from a computer system.
- III Even when computers are secure, poor physical security means that thieves can still obtain valuable information by stealing “hard copies” of the data. Ironically, companies that invest huge sums of money in computer security often fail to protect paper records and back-up discs of computer data.
- IV Sniffers testing physical security use the same methods that a clever thief might use. This rarely involves breaking into an office. Instead, they gain access to restricted areas by, for instance, wearing a repair-service uniform or presenting false identity. Then, free to wander, they look for security problems, including ineffective locks and alarms and lax office procedures such as failing to shred confidential documents before discarding them.
- V Sniffers are constantly amazed at how often they easily find confidential information. For example, one large bank’s sniffer found details of highly secret business deals in an unlocked filing cabinet. And all he had to do to locate that filing cabinet was call a clerk from an internal bank phone and pretend to be one of the top executives.
- VI As with computers, physical security is not foolproof. But with sniffers on the job, security in both areas will continue to improve.

1 Complete the sentences using the information given in the text. Use your own words as far as possible.

- When sniffers are hired, only a handful of top executives
- The same methods that a clever thief might use....
- One sniffer located a particular filing cabinet by.....

2 Are the following statements T (true) or F (false)? Find evidence in the text to support your answers.

- 1. Penetration testing of computer systems is usually done after hackers manage to hack into it.
.....
- 2. Companies with good security on their computer systems always invest in good physical security as well.
.....

3 Answer the questions according to the information in the text.

- What is essential in becoming a good sniffer?
.....
- What always surprises sniffers?
.....

4 Find words or phrases in the text that mean:

- very few (paragraph I)
- repair (paragraph II)
- walk slowly (paragraph IV)
- careless (paragraph IV)
- guaranteed to function (paragraph VI)

5 Write a composition of about 100-120 words. Choose one option

- In your opinion, is it justified to hire a sniffer without the knowledge of the other employees in that workplace? Why / Why not?
- Write a letter to a sniffer you want to hire to test the security of your home or school. Explain what you want him or her to test, and why.