



2 Unit

Pharmacy shop



Situation and reading

A day in the life of a pharmacy assistant

Good morning! My name is Elsa McCough and I work as a pharmacy assistant in Seattle, USA.

As a future pharmacy assistant, I am sure that you are curious about what we do on a typical day. I work in the Eastern's Pharmacy, a family owned business next to Harborview Medical Centre. It is a very busy shop because many patients from the hospital come to us for their prescriptions. Our team consists of 1 registered pharmacist, 2 pharmacy technicians and 4 pharmacy assistants.

We open our doors at 8.30 am and we close at 5 pm. The first thing that I do is check the prescriptions that have arrived during the night. I organise them according to the time patients will pick them up and I start preparing them. Pharmacies have become more and more computerized over the last few years, and now we receive most of our prescriptions online. The doctors send them directly to us through the system and when the patient comes, we have already received the information and prepared the units and dosage requested.

Between 10-12 am are the busiest times in the shop. Most of the patients come to pick up their prescriptions or to ask for advice. Today, Mrs. Lonestar has come to ask for some herbal medicine to calm her down. She is very nervous because she was diagnosed with cancer a few months ago and she is awaiting further news. She comes to the shop very often, and since she lives alone, we try to comfort her and give her hope in this difficult process.



At 12 am, I have a lunch break, and today I'm eating at a nearby salad bar. One of the advantages of becoming a pharmacy assistant is that you normally have a good schedule. You sometimes have to work a night shift, but it is not very often.

At 1 pm the van arrives with all the drug orders that we placed yesterday. I check that all the boxes and medicines have arrived and then I put them in their correct place in the storage room. Having an organised and neat pharmacy is essential because it makes it easier to find medicines and it prevents mistakes. Today Mr. Speedy, the van driver, tells me that 2 boxes of Salbutamol were not available, so I order them from another supplier because we are almost out of it!

At 2 pm, I go back to the shop and advise Mrs. Brightskin on a good face cream to prevent wrinkles. She is young and she likes taking care of herself. Selling over-the-counter products is another important aspect of our job. You need to develop good communication skills because patients always come to you for help and comfort in difficult times. They seek a person who listens to them and gives them good advice. They sometimes trust you more than their doctor!

At 3 pm, I go to the drive-through section of the pharmacy where we serve prescriptions to patients directly in their car. It is a very convenient way for patients to pick up their medicines because they can wait in their car while we prepare their order. Even though it is not very common in Europe, here in the USA we use drive-throughs for everything!

After an intense day, 5 pm arrives and we close! Today has been an exhausting but rewarding day. I am pleased that we have been able to assist so many patients and try to help them recover from their diseases or make them feel better with some conversation and advice. I hope to see you soon in the pharmacy as a colleague!

Activity 1. Reading activity. Find 5 words that you don't understand from the text. Write them down and look them up in the dictionary. After that, create a sentence that contains them.

Activity 2. Reading activity. Connect the sentences to the corresponding person.

- a. He/she buys a cosmetic product.
- b. He/she buys some medicine because she is tense.
- c. He/she transports medicines to the pharmacy.
- d. He/she assists the pharmacist in the Eastern's Pharmacy.

Ms. McCough
Mr. Speedy
Mrs. Brightskin
Mrs. Lonestar

Activity 3. Reading activity. According to the text, which of the following sentences are true about Ms. McCough?

- a. She prescribes medicines to patients.
- b. She gives advice and sells over-the-counter drugs.
- c. She draws blood from patients.
- d. She prepares medicines for patients.
- e. She orders necessary medicine from suppliers.
- f. She administers intravenous medicine to patients.
- g. She answers customers' questions.
- h. She organises the pharmacy storage room.

Activity 4. Reading activity. The following sentences explain some of Elsa's activities during the day. Put them in order according to the text.

- a. She has lunch at a restaurant.
- b. She sells a facial cream to Mrs. Brightskin.
- c. She organises the new medications that have arrived.
- d. She attends patients in the shop in the morning.
- e. The pharmacy closes.
- f. She serves drugs to patients that come by car.
- g. She sells some herbal medicine to Mrs. Lonestar.
- h. The pharmacy opens at 8.30 am.
- i. She receives an order of medicine and checks that everything is correct.