Red tape

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
INTERMEDIATE | B1-B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Tick the correct category for each word.

Word | Document | Process | Problem | Institution

1 bureaucracy [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
2 application [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
3 regulation [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
4 backlog [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
5 certificate [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
6 agency [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
7 loophole [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
8 compliance [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

2 Correct the mistake in each sentence.

1 They complained about bureaucracy of. _____
2 She submitted application of for the job. _____
3 The new regulation of takes effect soon. _____
4 There is a backlog of of unprocessed cases. _____
5 He received his certificate of approval. _____
6 The agency of handles all requests. _____
7 They found a loophole of in the law. _____
8 The company ensures compliance of with rules. _____

3 Choose the more suitable description.

1 For excessive official rules and procedures, often frustrating: bureaucracy / simplicity.
2 For a formal request submitted to an authority: application / a casual chat.
3 For an official rule set by an authority: regulation / a personal preference.
4 For a build-up of unprocessed work or requests: backlog / an empty inbox.
5 For a government department handling specific administrative tasks: agency / a private club.
6 For a gap in the law that allows people to avoid a rule: loophole / a strict enforcement.

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4 Complete the sentences with words from the box.

agency | application | backlog | bureaucracy | certificate | compliance | loophole | regulation

1 Small business owners often complain about excessive 1 _____ slowing down their work.
2 She submitted her 2 _____ weeks ago but still hasn't heard back.
3 The government introduced a new 3 _____ to protect consumers.
4 The department faced a growing 4 _____ of unprocessed requests.
5 He received a 5 _____ confirming he had completed the course.
6 The 6 _____ responsible for licensing was criticised for slow response times.
7 Lawyers found a 7 _____ that allowed the company to avoid the tax.
8 The firm invested heavily in ensuring 8 _____ with the new rules.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Why bureaucracy frustrates so many people

Public administration researchers note that bureaucracy, the complex system of rules and procedures governing official processes, exists primarily to ensure consistency and fairness, yet it frequently generates significant frustration among the people it is meant to serve. Lengthy application processes, confusing regulations and unpredictable backlogs can make even simple requests feel unnecessarily complicated, particularly when different agencies require overlapping or contradictory paperwork. Some governments have introduced reforms aimed at reducing unnecessary red tape, simplifying forms and digitising processes, though critics note that removing genuine safeguards in the name of efficiency can create new risks, meaning reform requires careful balance rather than simply eliminating rules wholesale.

1 What does bureaucracy exist primarily to ensure, according to the text? _____
2 What does it frequently generate among the people it serves? _____
3 Give three things mentioned that can make requests feel complicated. _____
4 What have some governments introduced reforms aimed at doing? _____
5 What do critics note about removing genuine safeguards in the name of efficiency? _____
6 What does reform require, according to the text? _____

6 Rewrite each phrase using the word in capitals.

1 She filled out and submitted a formal request. APPLICATION _____

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2 There was a large pile of unprocessed cases. BACKLOG _____

3 They found a gap in the law to avoid the rule. LOOPHOLE _____

4 The company made sure it followed all the rules. COMPLIANCE _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 100-120 word account of how bureaucracy has affected a process you or someone you know went through (getting a licence, visa, permit, etc.).

[ ] Use at least ten target expressions. [ ] Include polite, precise wording. [ ] Organise the account clearly.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Categories

1 Problem 2 Document/Process 3 Document 4 Problem 5 Document 6 Institution 7 Problem 8 Process

2 Corrections

1 complained about bureaucracy 2 submitted an application 3 the new regulation takes effect soon
4 a backlog of unprocessed cases 5 received his certificate 6 the agency handles requests
7 found a loophole in the law 8 ensures compliance with rules

3 Suitable descriptions

1 bureaucracy 2 application 3 regulation 4 backlog 5 agency 6 loophole

4 Sentences

1 bureaucracy 2 application 3 regulation 4 backlog 5 certificate 6 agency 7 loophole 8 compliance

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Consistency and fairness.
2 Significant frustration.
3 Lengthy application processes, confusing regulations, unpredictable backlogs.
4 Reducing unnecessary red tape, simplifying forms and digitising processes.
5 That it can create new risks.
6 Careful balance rather than simply eliminating rules wholesale.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 She submitted an application. 2 There was a backlog.
3 They found a loophole. 4 The company ensured compliance.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check range, respectful register and clear organisation.