

Multitasking and monitoring: applied practice: open practice pack

20 untimed questions across 4 authored sections.

Detail	Value
Pack	applied-practice-multitasking-monitoring
Source	applied-practice
Pack version	v1
Worksheet items	20
Authored hints	0
Worked explanations	20

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Learner worksheet

Each item describes several things happening at once and asks what deserves your attention, or what a monitoring arrangement is doing to the person watching it. Choose the most defensible answer, then read the explanation. Nothing here is timed.

Choose one answer for each item. On a judgement item, more than one option is often defensible. Pick the one you would rate most effective, then check the worked explanation for why the runner-up is weaker.

Watching several streams at once

Warm up on allocating attention. A trend usually tells you more than a snapshot, however alarming the snapshot looks.

1. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q01

Four gauges are in view. Three sit comfortably within limits and are steady. The fourth is still inside its limit but has been drifting towards it for twenty minutes.

- A. Attend to the drifting gauge now: a consistent trend predicts an exceedance, whereas a steady value is only a snapshot
- B. Wait until it actually crosses the limit, then act
- C. Attend to whichever gauge shows the highest absolute reading
- D. Log all four readings and continue the scan

Your answer: _____

2. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q02

You are responsible for two displays that cannot both be in your field of view at once.

- A. Watch the more important one continuously and check the other rarely
- B. Alternate between them at random so neither is neglected predictably
- C. Watch whichever one changed most recently
- D. Adopt a fixed scan interval, and where possible put an audible alert on the display that is out of view

Your answer: _____

3. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q03

Which is the harder monitoring task to sustain: a display that changes constantly, or one that changes perhaps twice a shift?

- A. The constantly changing one, because more information means more work
- B. The rarely changing one: detection performance falls sharply when the events being watched for are rare
- C. They are equally demanding over a full shift
- D. It depends only on how large the display is

Your answer: _____

4. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q04

A monitoring task is to be staffed continuously for a six-hour period.

- A. Performance will hold up provided the operator is motivated and alert
- B. Performance will improve through the shift as familiarity builds
- C. Detection performance declines measurably within the first half hour, so breaks, rotation, or automated detection have to be designed in
- D. Performance declines only in the final hour or two

Your answer: _____

5. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q05

Two independent instruments reporting the same quantity disagree with each other.

- A. Believe the newer instrument
- B. Believe whichever reading matches what you expected
- C. Take the average of the two
- D. Treat the disagreement itself as a fault condition, and get an independent third check before acting on either reading

Your answer: _____

Alarms, thresholds, and false positives

An alarm system is a design decision about somebody else's attention. These items are about what that decision costs.

6. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q01

One alarm has fired forty times this week. Every single occurrence was investigated and every one was spurious.

- A. Instruct operators to keep investigating each occurrence properly
- B. Treat the false-alarm rate as a defect in its own right and fix or re-threshold it, because an alarm that

cries wolf will be ignored, including the time it is real

- C. Disable the alarm
- D. Reduce its volume so it is less disruptive

Your answer: _____

7. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q02

How should the threshold for an alarm be chosen?

- A. As sensitive as the instrument allows, so nothing is ever missed
- B. At whatever level produces no false alarms at all
- C. By the trade it makes: any threshold exchanges missed detections for false alarms, so it is set by the relative cost of the two errors
- D. At the average of the values seen in normal operation

Your answer: _____

8. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q03

During an upset, eleven alarms fire within ninety seconds.

- A. Look for a single upstream cause: correlated alarms are usually one event propagating through connected systems
- B. Deal with them strictly in the order they arrived
- C. Deal with the highest-priority one and clear the rest afterwards
- D. Silence them all and restart the affected system

Your answer: _____

9. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q04

Reviewing an alarm list, you find one alarm that requires no operator action at all.

- A. Keep it; more information is better than less
- B. Keep it, but move it to a lower priority level
- C. Keep it so that it appears in the event record
- D. It should not be an alarm: reclassify it as an indication, because a non-actionable alarm spends the attention a real one needs

Your answer: _____

10. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q05

You silence an alarm so that you can concentrate on diagnosing it.

- A. That is fine: the sound was the distraction, and it has been removed
- B. An alarm should never be silenced before it is cleared
- C. Silencing removes the sound and not the condition: acknowledge it in the system and keep the condition visible, or it will be forgotten
- D. Silence it and reset it so the system is clean for the next event

Your answer: _____

Switching, interruption, and resumption

Harder items about what happens between tasks. Almost every option that sounds efficient is paying a switching cost somewhere.

11. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q01

Can a person genuinely perform two attention-demanding tasks at the same time?

- A. Yes, with enough practice at the specific pair of tasks
- B. Yes, provided the two tasks use different senses
- C. Yes, for short periods before fatigue sets in
- D. No: what feels like doing both is rapid switching, and every switch costs time and raises the error rate

Your answer: _____

12. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q02

You are interrupted partway through a task you will have to come back to.

- A. Before you turn away, note where you are and what the next action is
- B. Finish the sentence or step you are on, then turn to the interruption
- C. Rely on memory; the task is familiar enough
- D. Decline the interruption until the task is complete

Your answer: _____

13. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q03

Which pair of tasks can realistically be carried out together?

- A. Any two tasks, provided both are familiar
- B. Two tasks that each require decisions, if they are simple ones
- C. One well-practised, largely automatic task alongside one demanding task, provided they do not compete for the same input or output channel
- D. No two tasks can ever be genuinely combined

Your answer: _____

14. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q04

You come back to a checking task after a long interruption and cannot recall exactly where you had reached.

- A. Carry on from where the work appears to have stopped
- B. Go back to the last point you can positively verify and redo forward from there
- C. Start the whole task again from the beginning
- D. Ask a colleague what they saw you doing

Your answer: _____

15. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q05

A colleague asks you a quick question while you are partway through entering a record.

- A. Finish the current record, then give them your full attention
- B. Answer straight away; it is only a moment
- C. Ignore them until the whole batch is complete

- D. Answer while continuing to type

Your answer: _____

Changing conditions and handover

Finish with what happens when the picture changes, and how it is passed to the next person.

16. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q01

Conditions have changed enough that the priority order you set at the start of the shift is now wrong.

- A. Continue with the agreed plan; consistency is worth something
- B. Re-order your work quietly to fit the new picture
- C. Re-rank explicitly against the new conditions, and tell the people who were relying on the previous order
- D. Escalate and wait for a decision on the new priorities

Your answer: _____

17. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q02

A monitored parameter has sat just outside its stated limit for an hour. Nothing else appears to be wrong.

- A. Widen the limit, since the process is evidently coping
- B. Report it and have it assessed: normalising an exceedance is how limits stop meaning anything
- C. Keep watching and act only if something else changes
- D. Reset the instrument, which is the likelier fault

Your answer: _____

18. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q03

You are handing over a live monitoring position at the end of your shift.

- A. Tell the incoming operator that everything is normal, if it is
- B. Leave a written log; the record is what matters
- C. Brief them verbally; a conversation carries more than a form
- D. Hand over the current state, what changed on your shift, outstanding items with owners, and the things you are still unsure about: in person where possible, with the log as the record

Your answer: _____

19. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q04

You realise you missed a brief alarm two hours ago. Nothing appears to have come of it.

- A. Report it now with the time and what you were doing, because a late report still allows recovery and the gap is itself useful information
- B. Make a private note of it and watch for a recurrence
- C. Mention it at the next handover
- D. Say nothing, since no consequence followed

Your answer: _____

20. multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q05

Automation has been introduced that handles most of the routine monitoring.

- A. Operator attention can be reduced in proportion to the work removed
- B. The job becomes supervising the automation and being able to take over, which is harder to sustain and needs deliberate practice on the manual task
- C. Handovers become unnecessary, since the system holds the state
- D. Alarm thresholds can be relaxed because the system reacts faster

Your answer: _____

Authored hints

This applied practice source does not publish separate authored hints: the rationale is attached to each item as a worked explanation instead. Every item is therefore listed as missing a hint, and no hint text is generated or inferred.

20 worksheet items do not have an authored hint. No hint text was generated for them.

Answer key

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Multitasking and monitoring: applied practice: open practice pack answer key

Item	Choice	Answer
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q01	A	Attend to the drifting gauge now: a consistent trend predicts an exceedance, whereas a steady value is only a snapshot
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q02	D	Adopt a fixed scan interval, and where possible put an audible alert on the display that is out of view
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q03	B	The rarely changing one: detection performance falls sharply when the events being watched for are rare
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q04	C	Detection performance declines measurably within the first half hour, so breaks, rotation, or automated detection have to be designed in
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q05	D	Treat the disagreement itself as a fault condition, and get an independent third check before acting on either reading
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q01	B	Treat the false-alarm rate as a defect in its own right and fix or re-threshold it, because an alarm that cries wolf will be ignored, including the time it is real
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q02	C	By the trade it makes: any threshold exchanges missed detections for false alarms, so it is set by the relative cost of the two errors
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q03	A	Look for a single upstream cause: correlated alarms are usually one event propagating through connected systems
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q04	D	It should not be an alarm: reclassify it as an indication, because a non-actionable alarm spends the attention a real one needs

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q05	C	Silencing removes the sound and not the condition: acknowledge it in the system and keep the condition visible, or it will be forgotten
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q01	D	No: what feels like doing both is rapid switching, and every switch costs time and raises the error rate
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q02	A	Before you turn away, note where you are and what the next action is
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q03	C	One well-practised, largely automatic task alongside one demanding task, provided they do not compete for the same input or output channel
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q04	B	Go back to the last point you can positively verify and redo forward from there
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q05	A	Finish the current record, then give them your full attention
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q01	C	Re-rank explicitly against the new conditions, and tell the people who were relying on the previous order
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q02	B	Report it and have it assessed: normalising an exceedance is how limits stop meaning anything
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q03	D	Hand over the current state, what changed on your shift, outstanding items with owners, and the things you are still unsure about: in person where possible, with the log as the record
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q04	A	Report it now with the time and what you were doing, because a late report still allows recovery and the gap is itself useful information
multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q05	B	The job becomes supervising the automation and being able to take over, which is harder to sustain and needs deliberate practice on the manual task

Worked explanations

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q01: A steady drift is the only one of the four readings that contains information about the future, and acting before the limit is what leaves time to act at all. Waiting for the crossing is the procedurally defensible option and throws away the warning: the alarm confirms what the trend already told you, twenty minutes later.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q02: A fixed interval bounds how long any change can go unnoticed, and an audible alert converts the out-of-view display from a visual task into one that interrupts you. Watching the important one continuously is the intuitive allocation and gives the second display an unbounded detection delay, which is where the incident will come from.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q03: Rare events give attention nothing to hold on to, and detection rates for infrequent signals fall steeply within the first part of a watch. The busy display feels harder because it is more effortful moment to moment, and effort is not the same thing as reliability. The busy display keeps re-engaging you, which is what the quiet one cannot do.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q04: The decline in vigilance is quick and largely independent of motivation, which is why it is treated as a design constraint rather than a discipline problem. Assuming a motivated operator holds up is the comfortable answer and is the assumption behind most monitoring failures: it makes the fix an instruction rather than a rota.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s01-q05: You currently know one thing for certain, that at least one

instrument is wrong, and acting on either number without resolving that is acting on unknown data. Believing the reading that matches expectation is the most dangerous option precisely because it feels like judgement: it is confirmation bias with an instrument attached.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q01: Forty false alarms have already trained everyone that this signal means nothing, so the system is now less safe than if the alarm did not exist. Instructing people to keep investigating is the conscientious-sounding answer and is unenforceable: no amount of instruction survives a fortieth false positive.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q02: Sensitivity and false alarms move together; there is no setting that reduces both, so the question is always which error you can better afford. 'As sensitive as possible' is the safety-flavoured answer and produces the alarm flood of the previous item, which converts a low miss rate on paper into a high one in practice.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q03: Eleven simultaneous faults are far less likely than one fault with ten consequences, so the first move is to find the event rather than to work the list. Taking them in order of arrival is the disciplined-looking approach and can leave you addressing symptoms in sequence while the cause continues.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q04: An alarm is a demand for action; anything that does not demand action belongs on a display or in a log where it can be consulted rather than responded to. Keeping it at low priority is the compromise that most alarm systems actually make, and it is how lists grow to hundreds of entries that operators learn to scroll past.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s02-q05: Silencing is legitimate and incomplete: the state has to stay on screen, because the sound was the only thing still reminding you it existed. Resetting it is the tidier-looking action and is the genuinely dangerous one. It clears the record of a condition that has not been dealt with.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q01: Two tasks that both demand decisions compete for the same limited control resource, so they interleave rather than overlap, and the reassembly cost at each switch is real. 'Different senses' is the most technical-sounding wrong answer and only helps with the input bottleneck; the decision bottleneck is where the competition actually is.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q02: Resumption errors come from losing your place, not from losing your knowledge, and a two-second note is what preserves the place. Finishing the current step is the sensible-sounding version and does not help: you still return with no record of what the step after it was, which is exactly the information that goes missing.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q03: Automatic tasks consume little of the resource the demanding task needs, which is why walking and talking works and reading and talking does not. 'Any two familiar tasks' is the near-miss: familiarity helps, but a familiar task that still requires decisions competes just as hard as an unfamiliar one.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q04: Redoing a short verified stretch is cheap; a skipped item in a checking task is exactly the failure the task exists to prevent. Carrying on from where it looks like you stopped is the efficient-seeming choice and relies on the one judgement you have just established you cannot make.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s03-q05: A record is the natural unit to finish because the interrupted state is small at its boundary and large in its middle. Answering immediately is the courteous option and is where transposed and omitted fields come from. The interruption lands inside the record rather than between two of them.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q01: Re-ranking is the right response and telling the dependants is what stops your change from breaking their plans. Re-ordering quietly is the efficient half of the answer and is how somebody else discovers at the deadline that the thing they were promised moved three hours ago.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q02: A limit encodes a judgement about a consequence you may not be able to see from the control room, and an hour outside it is a reportable condition regardless of whether

anything visible has happened. Widening the limit is the most damaging option because it is self-justifying: every exceedance becomes evidence that the limit was too tight.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q03: State, changes, open items, and open uncertainties is the set that lets the next person carry on rather than start again, and doing it in person lets them ask. A verbal briefing alone is the strongest wrong answer because it does carry more nuance, and it leaves nothing that a third person, or an investigation, can consult afterwards.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q04: Two hours is still early enough to check whether anything downstream was affected, and the circumstances of the miss tell the designers something about the workload at that moment. Waiting for handover is the plausible middle option and delays both the check and the information by hours, for no gain at all.

multitasking-monitoring-applied-s04-q05: Automating the routine leaves a human with a rare-event vigilance task and a manual skill they no longer use daily, the two things people are worst at, so practice has to be scheduled rather than assumed. Reducing attention in proportion is the intuitive reading of the change and inverts it: the remaining work is a smaller amount of much harder monitoring.

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