



● **quality control** N-UNCOUNT
quality assurance N-UNCOUNT

In an organization that produces goods or provides services, **quality control** or **quality assurance** is the activity of checking that the goods or services are of an acceptable standard.

*One of the ways to ensure that finished homes are perfect products is to tighten up **quality control**.
...**quality control** checks.
The report also calls for national standards of **quality assurance** for all x-ray units.*

● **subcontract** (subcontracts, subcontracting, subcontracted)

1 VERB
If one firm **subcontracts** part of its work to another firm, it pays the other firm to do part of the work that it has been employed to do.

*The company is **subcontracting** production of most of the parts.
They cut costs by **subcontracting** work out to other local firms.*

2 N-COUNT
A **subcontract** is a contract between a firm which is being employed to do a job and another firm which agrees to do part of that job.

*Contracts and **subcontracts** for the reconstruction of Kuwait have begun to flow in.
European companies expected to win major **subcontracts** include Thorn EMI.*

● **quality circle** (quality circles) N-COUNT

A **quality circle** is a small group of workers and managers who meet to solve problems and improve the quality of the organization's products or services.

*Riddick's first move was to form a **quality circle**.
Quality circles may work well in Japan, but have not been quite as successful in factories in the United States.*

● **benchmarking** N-UNCOUNT

Benchmarking is a process in which a company compares its products and methods with those of the most successful companies in its field, in order to try to improve its own performance.

***Benchmarking** is important. You need to know where you stand compared with your global competitors.
The reviews will include **benchmarking** against other countries to ensure that UK customers are getting a deal at least as good as those abroad.*

● **TQM** N-UNCOUNT

TQM is a set of management principles aimed at improving performance throughout a company, especially by involving employees in decision-making. **TQM** is an abbreviation for 'total quality management'.

*One of the main themes of **TQM** is employee involvement.
Under **TQM** principles the search for quality is continuous.*

● **monitor** (monitors, monitoring, monitored) VERB
monitoring N-UNCOUNT

If you **monitor** something, you regularly check its development or progress, and sometimes comment on it. **Monitoring** is the process of checking the development or progress of something.

*Our prices are determined by local markets and we **monitor** prices on and off the motorway.
Dr Phillips called for greater **monitoring** of home conversions by local authorities.*

● **routine check** (routine checks) N-COUNT

If someone carries out a **routine check** on a product, place, or piece of equipment, they examine it as part of a regular checking procedure in order to see if there are any problems with it.

*He carried out **routine checks** on the integrity of the circuits, and replaced faulty valves in the tape recorders.
The museum said that it came across the asbestos during **routine checks** on its premises.*

● **inspect** (inspects, inspecting, inspected) VERB
inspection (inspections) N-VAR

When officials **inspect** a place or a group of people, they visit it and check it carefully, for example in order to find out whether regulations are being obeyed. An **inspection** is an instance of inspecting a place or a group of people. **Inspection** is the act of inspecting a place or a group of people.

*The Public Utilities Commission **inspects** us once a year.
Each hotel is **inspected** and, if it fulfils certain criteria, is recommended.
The plant never had a safety **inspection** in the 11 years it was in operation.
A truly independent system of **inspection** by specialist teams should be introduced.*

○ **outsourcing**: Topic 1.1; **outsourcing**: Topic 1.1; **focus group**: Topic 5.2; **R & D**: Topic 5.2; **market research**: Topic 9.1; **guarantee**: Topic 11.2; **warranty**: Topic 11.2



PRACTISE YOUR VOCABULARY

1 Choose one of the terms to complete each definition.

total quality management quality control benchmarking subcontract quality assurance routine checks

- a The collection of management techniques known as _____ aims to improve the company's performance, and is based on the principle that it is cheaper in the long term to do the job right the first time round, rather than making mistakes and fixing them afterwards.
- b Companies using TQM believe that quality is the responsibility of every department and every worker. This is very different from the traditional view in which _____ is a process in the chain of production, and is the sole responsibility of a quality controller. He or she may carry out _____ and inspections.
- c Many companies consult their customers about their views on quality, and use market research to find out what their customers think. This kind of consultation forms part of the _____ process.
- d A distribution company used to employ its own mechanics to repair and maintain their vehicles. Recently, however, they stopped this and now _____ this work to another firm.
- e _____ is the practice of comparing business practices between companies.

2 Match each statement on the left with one on the right.

- a Our company is starting a quality assurance programme.
- b Our R & D department will adopt a benchmarking strategy.
- c We will set up quality circles.
- d We will take a total quality management approach.
- i We will be examining the leading competitor in our field and trying to meet or improve on their standards.
- ii We will get members of staff to meet and resolve problems we have with particular products.
- iii We will be focusing on quality with a view to increasing our effectiveness, flexibility and competitiveness.
- iv We hope to involve all employees in making decisions about quality control.

3 When assessing the quality of a product, which of these factors should be considered?

- a physical appearance
- b after-sales service
- c reliability
- d durability
- e image
- f reputation
- g suitability
- h price

4 The following are all quality control techniques. Which ones are features of traditional quality control (QC) and which ones are specific to total quality management (TQM)? Tick (✓) the appropriate column.

| | QC | TQM |
|---|----|-----|
| a making everyone in the company take responsibility for quality | | |
| b making quality the responsibility of the quality control department | | |
| c constant monitoring and routine checks of the whole business | | |
| d using a quality controller to check finished work for defects | | |
| e the use of quality circles to generate discussion about the cause of quality problems and their solutions | | |
| f being committed to one's customers and knowing about their needs and expectations | | |
| g assuming customers are happy unless they complain about the quality of goods | | |