

## Step 3: Example of Contextual Task Analysis

Below is an example of a contextual task analysis document, it describes the current task flow and its weaknesses for the processing property in the local police station of a metropolitan police department<sup>1</sup>.

### Stationhouse Task Analysis

#### Analysis of Current Work and Tasks

**Broad range of task complexity:** The complexity of the property processing task can vary significantly. One police officer told us she once had to complete twelve separate property forms for a single incident; another time she saw an officer come into the police station with fifteen large bags of narcotics and related materials associated with a single incident, all of which had to be logged on property forms. By contrast, we watched another police officer come in with no prisoners and a single piece of property to process: a spent shell from a handgun. Certain property types, such as automobiles, guns, and cash, always entail quite a few complex forms, while others involve only simple paperwork.

**High degree of interrupts during tasks:** The property processing tasks are subject to a high level of interruptions. In the case of the police officer, the source of interruption may be prisoners, other police officers in the arrest room, other aspects of processing an arrest besides property, or having to leave the arrest room to gather data for the property forms, for example, to check an auto for information that needs to be included on the property form.

A software user interface in such an interrupt-driven, noisy, and distracting environment must add minimal cognitive load to the user's job. Thus, the interface needs to be very intuitive and easy to understand and use.

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<sup>1</sup> Mayhew, Deborah J.(1999), The Usability Engineering Lifecycle, p. 112