

**Technical English for Engineers**  
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**Lecture – 05**  
**Reading (Identifying Main Ideas) and Listening**

Good morning. So these are the topics for today Reading and Listening. All of us do a lot of reading and listening in our day-to-day life. What we are going to look at in today's and subsequent lectures is how to pay attention to know answers of reading and listening specially in classroom and academics setups.

Now, you know that what is reading comprehension; reading comprehension is the level of understanding a text or a message. It involves two levels of processing that is shallow level or that is also called low level and deep or rather higher level of processing information. Now, deep level happens when we as readers, convert the meaning of the words or the text and relate to similar text or words. We should be able to understand the context. Shallow level, involves on the other hand understanding the structure of the passage; somebody understands the structure we have been talking about the structure of sentences, word pattern etcetera.

So, at this level, it goes without saying that you are expected to learn or practice higher or deeper level of reading. Reading different types of text requires the use of different reading strategies and approaches. Now this is important to understand all of us have certain strategies and certain approaches to understand a written text. Now it all depends on us, what strategies we use and how we use. The best way to practice academic reading is to understand the text and also develop the skill of speed reading, because after all in academic context also at the level certain competitive exams, we do not have all the time in the world to read and process the text. So, it is always useful to develop the skill of speed reading, which comes with certain amount of practice.

Reading an active process can help the reader for better understanding of the text; and if have to give you some tips about how to do a practices speed reading, you should know certain terms here that is predicting, connecting, inferring, analyzing and critiquing the text. So, it is always better to predict what comes next. So, prediction is also kind of a

skill that should be practiced and that should be developed. Connecting sentences understanding the connection between **sentences**; inferring the meaning of sentence; all these are important. At the same, we should be able to mentally process analyse critic or critic rather what is happening here, and at the end be able to summarise, to sum up whatever we have been reading.

A good reader practices these skills; it does not happen overnight; it is always advisable to read higher order or advanced level of reading that, here I am not just talking about reading higher order literature, but it is also advisable to read a good English newspaper and or good scientific journals and magazines. For example, **National Geographic** and **Nature** magazine as many of you would be interested in. It is always better to practice your reading and develop your reading skills, and you will soon realize that reading such kinds of magazines, journals and books, they also help in developing your vocabulary especially your scientific vocabulary which you would be requiring in your academics as well **as in** your profession and career.

Now, one of the key or one of the initial steps rather in practicing reading skills is to identify the main idea, what is this passage or text all about. At the beginner's level, it is always advisable to break a text into paragraph. So, here I would like to give you tip that **we** as writers, we have not still moved onto developing written skills or writing skills, but paragraphing is extremely important to understand or to be practitioner of good writing. So, you have to be able to write good paragraphs. And while writing you have to break your paragraphs into according to the main ideas, the central idea they contain. So, each paragraph should have an idea. We will come to that later on, but let us understand reading and how to identify its main idea, the main **ideas** in a passage.

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## Identify the Main Idea

- Facebook, Inc. is a social networking service and website. It aims to make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with their friends and family, to discover what is going on in the world around them, and to share and express what matters to them to the people they care about. The company offers advertisers a unique combination of reach, relevance, social context, and engagement to enhance the value of their ads. (<http://www.forbes.com/companies/facebook/>)

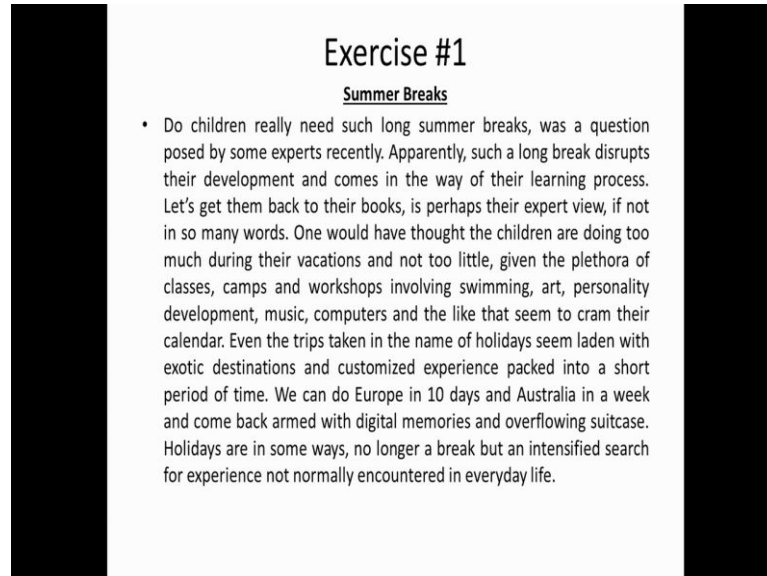
So, let us look at this particular passage, read on. Facebook, incorporated is a social networking service and website. It aims to make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with the friends and family, to discover what is going on in the world around them, and to share and express what matters to them to the people they care about. The company offers advertisers a unique combination of reach, relevance, social context, and engagement to enhance the value of their ads.

Now what is being talked about here, what is the main idea? It tells you, what is Facebook, it defines Facebook. At the beginning, you just look at the topic sentence; topic sentence gives you the key to the passage. **It is** a social networking service and websites. And what does it do and then it goes on to give you a list of various things; it connects people, it helps people in expressing what matter to them, what they care about and then also it is unique platform to advertise **goods**.

So, what is Facebook and what does it do for people? So, **there is** a topic sentence which tells you about, what is it about, what is it defines Facebook and then what does it do? What does it aim to do? What are benefits of Facebook? It is not talking about disadvantages; if at all it is there in this text, it will come at a later stage that you have look **at**. I have given you the link and you can look it up, but one passage tells you these things and that is the central idea and this is the way one needs to develop once writing, and also reading. So, identify the main idea what is the passage all about. So, ask the

question what. So, this is the tip that I want to give you to start practicing reading, what is the passage ask the question, what is the passage all about.

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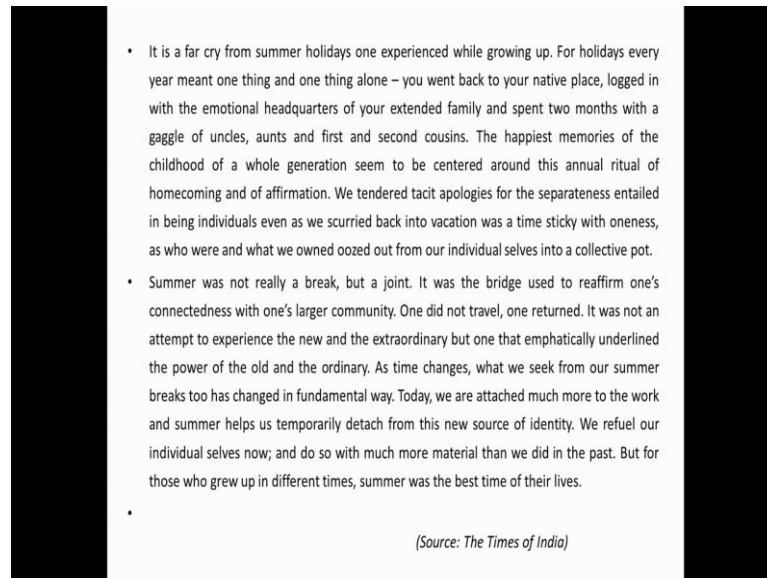
**Exercise #1**

Summer Breaks

- Do children really need such long summer breaks, was a question posed by some experts recently. Apparently, such a long break disrupts their development and comes in the way of their learning process. Let's get them back to their books, is perhaps their expert view, if not in so many words. One would have thought the children are doing too much during their vacations and not too little, given the plethora of classes, camps and workshops involving swimming, art, personality development, music, computers and the like that seem to cram their calendar. Even the trips taken in the name of holidays seem laden with exotic destinations and customized experience packed into a short period of time. We can do Europe in 10 days and Australia in a week and come back armed with digital memories and overflowing suitcase. Holidays are in some ways, no longer a break but an intensified search for experience not normally encountered in everyday life.

Now look at this exercise and then we will go onto solve certain questions. Questions are given at the end of this passage. So, rather lengthy passage, read it carefully. Do children really need such long summer breaks, was a question posed by some experts recently. Apparently, such a long break disrupts their development and comes in the way of their learning process. Let us get them back to their books, is perhaps their expert view, if not in so many words. One would have thought the children are doing too much during their vacations and not too little, given the plethora of classes, camps and workshops involving swimming, art, personality development, music, computers and like that seems to cram their calendar. Even the trips taken in the name of holidays seem laden with exotic destinations and customized experience packed into a short period of time. We can do Europe in 10 days and Australia in a week and come back armed with digital memories and overflowing suitcase. Holidays are in some ways, no longer a break but an intensified search for experience not normally encountered in everyday life.

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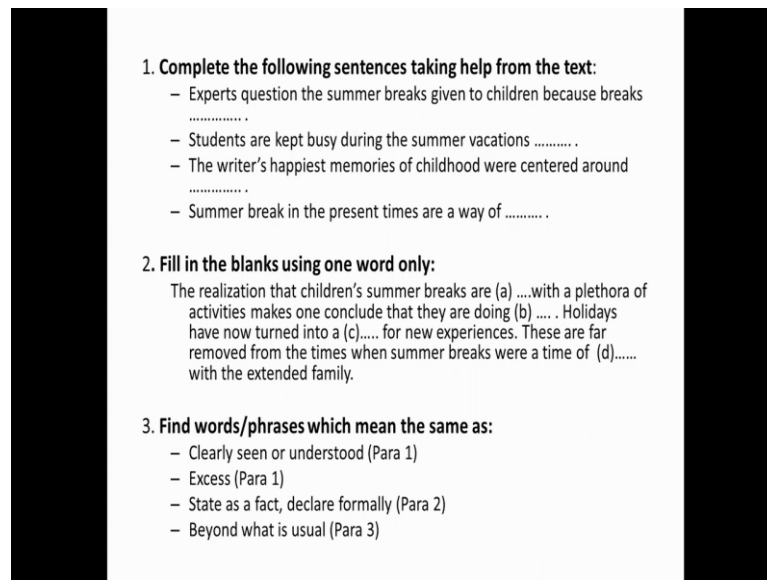
- It is a far cry from summer holidays one experienced while growing up. For holidays every year meant one thing and one thing alone – you went back to your native place, logged in with the emotional headquarters of your extended family and spent two months with a gaggle of uncles, aunts and first and second cousins. The happiest memories of the childhood of a whole generation seem to be centered around this annual ritual of homecoming and of affirmation. We tendered tacit apologies for the separateness entailed in being individuals even as we scurried back into vacation was a time sticky with oneness, as who were and what we owned oozed out from our individual selves into a collective pot.
- Summer was not really a break, but a joint. It was the bridge used to reaffirm one's connectedness with one's larger community. One did not travel, one returned. It was not an attempt to experience the new and the extraordinary but one that emphatically underlined the power of the old and the ordinary. As time changes, what we seek from our summer breaks too has changed in fundamental way. Today, we are attached much more to the work and summer helps us temporarily detach from this new source of identity. We refuel our individual selves now; and do so with much more material than we did in the past. But for those who grew up in different times, summer was the best time of their lives.

*(Source: The Times of India)*

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Summer was not really a break, but a joint. It was the bridge used to reaffirm one's connectedness with one's large community. One did not travel, one returned. It was not an attempt to experience the new and the extraordinary but one that emphatically underlined the power of the old and the ordinary. As time changes, what we seek from our summer breaks too has changed in fundamental way. Today, we are attached much more to the work and summer helps us temporarily detach from this new source of identity. We refuel our individual selves now; and do so with much more material than we did in the past. But for those who grew up in different times, summer was the best time of their lives.

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**1. Complete the following sentences taking help from the text:**

- Experts question the summer breaks given to children because breaks .....
- Students are kept busy during the summer vacations .....
- The writer's happiest memories of childhood were centered around .....
- Summer break in the present times are a way of .....

**2. Fill in the blanks using one word only:**

The realization that children's summer breaks are (a) ....with a plethora of activities makes one conclude that they are doing (b) .... Holidays have now turned into a (c).... for new experiences. These are far removed from the times when summer breaks were a time of (d)..... with the extended family.

**3. Find words/phrases which mean the same as:**

- Clearly seen or understood (Para 1)
- Excess (Para 1)
- State as a fact, declare formally (Para 2)
- Beyond what is usual (Para 3)

Now, here are the questions, look at the questions and then go back the passage, it is a very well written passage, and it has ideas in every paragraph. You can identify the main ideas as well, but first let us look at the exercises. So, section one, Experts question the summer breaks given to children because breaks. Students are kept busy during the summer vacations. The writer's happiest memories of childhood were centered around, and summer break in the present times are a way of. Look at these questions look, just do the first section and come back.

Now let us look at the second section. Fill in the blanks using one word only and from the passage given. The realization that children's summer breaks are dash with a plethora of activities makes one conclude that they are doing dash. Holidays have now turned into a dash for new experiences. These are far removed from the times when summer breaks were a time of blank with the extended family. In the third section, find words or phrases which mean the same as clearly seen or understood, excess both are or both can be identified in paragraph one is and third definition or meaning is state as a fact or declare formally second paragraph; and from the third paragraph, beyond what is usual. So, find the words and phrases, which have the same meaning as the given expressions.

Let us discuss the answers now. So, what I was trying to do in the first section was to identify and understand main parts of the passage. So, the answer to the first question is that according to the experts and we have to complete the sentence. So, what happens

during vacations according to these experts? They disrupt children's development and come in the way of learning process. And then the second statement is students are kept busy during the summer vacations, they are engaged in a variety of courses, classes, camps, workshops and in trips taken in the name of holidays. The third statement, the writer's happiest memories of childhood were centered around the annual ritual of home coming and affirmation; it is given there in the final paragraphs. And summer break in the present times are away of detaching from work and refueling ourselves.

Section two, the realization that children's summer breaks are tagged or crammed that is the answer with a plethora of activities makes one conclude that they are doing much. Holidays have now turned into a search for new experiences. These are far removed from the times when summer breaks were a time of bonding with once family. Now let us look at the third section find words and phrases, which mean the same. So, in first paragraph clearly seen or understood is apparently; apparently it can be clearly seen and understood. Excess, excess of everything that happens in summer vacation, so plethora; and then is state as a fact the third one declares formally formation, and then beyond what is usual beyond what is ordinary is extraordinary. So, this is I gave you this lengthy passage, so that we come or we fall in the habit of reading lengthy passages and the deal with ideas.

Now, let us move onto do little bit of vocabulary. In the passage that you have just read, you must have come across word such as affirmation and temporarily, also emphatically, normally now all these words what are they, these are affirmation is a noun and other three are adverbs, so that is the part of speech. But how do we construct such words and what are we now going to look at.

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So, affirmation and now I am going to give you the root word. So, what is the root word, root word is a form here and -ation or -tion becomes your suffix. Suffixes are those words a group of words that follow a root word and change class of the word. So, to form if affirm to affirm is a verb then by adding tion or ation you change the class it becomes a noun. So, this is something that is very important to understand especially in good writing and speaking. Now temporarily, again the root word is temporary, and then you are adding lly and changing the category; so from adjective, it big turns into an adverb; same emphatic – emphatically, normal - normally. So, you are changing the class of a word by using suffixes. There is another category called prefixes which also we are going to see soon.



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## Suffixes

- ant: that is or does something
- ary/ory: connected with (sensory, disciplinary)
- ate: having the quality of (bifurcate, promulgate, explicate)
- crat: a member of something
- er: a person or thing

Now look at this slide and note down some common forms of suffixes. The -ant type words ending in -ant; -ant does that is or does something. The -ary or -ory type connected with, the meaning is to connect with, sensory senses and disciplinary connected with discipline. You have the -ate type, which is such as having the quality of so bifurcate, explicate, promulgate. Then you have -crat that is a member of something democrat, plutocrat, aristocrat. You have the -er type a person or thing. So, let us think of some examples using -er; a driver you know person or something who does something, who does a job. So, -er from drive, you get driver.

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- ese: of country
- in/ian: an activity in which many people take part
- ist: a person who practises something
- age: postage, parentage, shortage
- ure: annexure, exposure, architecture
- ment: action or process of doing something : abridgement, argument

You have -ese type, it is generally used to suggest the nationality or country China-Chinese, Japan-Japanese. You also have -ish type, again you can use it to suggest the nationality Swede-Swedish, Dane-Danish. Now, another category -in or -an in which **such** do suggest an activity in which many people take part, so sect-sectarian; then you have the -ist form to suggest a person who practices something. You have the -ure and -age, so -age again it changes the category of the word or the root words, so from post you get postage; from parent you get parentage; from short you get short; we are short of something, in short supply they shortage of something. So, it changes it gives you more variety, more color to your language.

You also have the -ure type, for example, annex becomes annexure, expose becomes exposure, so you are using the suffix -ure, architect-architecture. -Ment type, which is an action or process doing something for example, abridgement, argument. So, all these you also have the -ion type, discuss-discussion. So, those are some of the very few examples of suffixes which are extremely important.

Now, let us do some listening. At the begging of this class today, session today I told you that I will like you to practice some listening also. Here, I am going to read out a couple of paragraphs. But before I do that, I am going to give you the questions. So, you will be able to listen to the passage and then **I will** just take down the questions, and then listen to me I am not going to show the slides here, I am going to read out the passage you have to just look at these questions.

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Questions on the passage

1. What are the names of the 3 doctors?
2. How is the machine described as?
3. What did Mitty ask for?
4. He pulled a -----out of the machine and inserted the pen in its place.

So, please look at this slide with questions. Question 1 is what are the names of the 3 doctors? Second, how is the machine described as? Third, what did Mitty ask for? Fourth question he pulled a dash, so there are two words dash, dash out of the machine and inserted the pen in its place.

I am going to now read out the passage, and you start solving these or writing answers for these questions. You will not be shown the passage this time; this is a test of listening and not a test of reading. This passage is taken from a short story called The Secret Life of Walter Mitty.

So, here it goes. In the operating room, there were whispered introductions, Dr. Remington, Dr. Mitty, Dr. Pritchard Mitford. Dr. Mitty, I have read your book on Streptothricosis said Pritchard Mitford shaking hands, a brilliant performance sir. Thank you said Walter Mitty. Didn't you know you were in the states Mitty, grumbled Remington coals to new castle bringing Mitford and me up here for a tertiary; you are very kind said Mitty. A huge complicated machine connected to the operating tables with many tubes and wires began at this moment to go pocketa, pocketa, pocketa. The new anesthetizer is giving away shouted an intern in turn. There is no one in the east who knows how to fix it; quiet man said Mitty in a low cool voice. He sprang to the machine which was now going pocketa, pocketa, queep, pocketa, queep. He began fingering delicately a row of glistening dials.

Give me a fountain pen, he pulled, he snapped someone handed him a fountain pen, he pulled a faulty piston out of the machine and inserted the pen in its place; that will hold for 10 minutes he said get on with the operation. A nurse hurried over and whispered to Renshaw and Mitty saw the man turn pale.

Now, write the answers to the questions that I gave you at the **beginning** **beginning** of the passage. We will discuss the answers soon. So, first question what are the names of the 3 doctors, Dr. Remington, Dr. Mitty, Dr. Pritchard Mitford. Second question, how is the machine described, a huge complicated machine. And what does Mitty asked for he, asked for he says give me fountain pen, he asked for a fountain pen, and the two words in the blank faulty piston. So, now, that we have been talking about machine especially in the operating theater or operation theater.

Let us look at or I will give you example or names of certain instruments and I would like you to take some time and write the definitions of these instruments. So, the first word durometer, second machine ohmmeter - o h m m e t e r, third machine sphygmomanometer; is sphygmomanometer - s p h y g m o m a n o m e t e r. Next is planimeter - p l a n i m e t e r, and the last one is pycnometer - p y c n o m e t e r – pycnometer. Now what are these machines for? So, durometer, it measures hardness of materials. Ohmmeter measures electrical resistance. Sphygmomanometer is for measuring blood pressure. Planimeter measures area, and pycnometer, it measures density of a liquid.

Now in the story that you have just seen or heard a passage from, the hero Walter Mitty, he imagines himself as various professionals, that is his imagination, that is his way surviving his monotonous life. Now here is an exercise and I am giving you list professionals and you have to tell me what to do these people work as or work for.

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So, first word cartographer; second word, seismologist; third word speleologist, next word entomologist, next word antiquary, next word steeplejack, and you have to tell me what do these people do, and the last word is paleontologist. What do these people do? A cartographer makes maps, seismologist measures earthquakes, a speleologist studies caves, and entomologist studies **in** insects and antiquary is a person who is an expert in the relics of the past, steeplejack is an expert who repairs tall buildings, and a structures and a paleontologist is someone who studies rocks.

I would like you to practice these speaking exercises and this is the question, I am giving you a question and I want you to practice work in pairs, work with some friends and see how you can develop. I will also give the link to develop this kind of abilities, where you can get some information. So, it is important that you start talking and discussing topics which would be of academic interest and use and value to you.

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So, the question is what do you know about free market environmentalism? Free market environmentalism, and here is the link, please look at the slide given. This is a link; you can get more details about this topic. Read it and then develop your own ideas. Before we end up this class - today's class, I would like to wind up with idioms. Now what are idioms and how we can use idiom in every day communication? So, what are idioms? Idioms as you would know are expressions, which have a meaning that is not very obvious from the individual words. For example, state of the art it is an expression very commonly use it means something that is built upon latest technology. Why do we use idioms? Why cannot we just use, our latest technology. We use idioms, because they add color and variety to our language.

Now I am going to give you a list of idioms, you have a dictionary and I would like you to practice and use these idioms in your day-to-day communication. It will also help you in your various academic activities. So, this exercise is purely for self learning, hence you have to do it yourself. The first idiom is to pin something down p i n pin, to pin something down; next, to cost an arm and a leg, and arm and a leg; third, to beat around the bush, to beat around the bush; fourth one devil's advocate, devil's advocate; next, to sit on the fence, to sit on the fence; and the last expression, a phrase is Conspiracy theory, Conspiracy theory.

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Look up these words in your dictionary; see how you can use in sentence of your own.

So, thank you very much and with this we end today's class.

### ***Tags***

Reading English, English for Engineers, English words, English Exercise, Exercises in English, Grammar usage, English Grammar, vocabulary, words and phrases, spoken communication, written communication, English writing, English speaking, scientific English, report writing, CV, formal letter, Speech-Preposition, Noun Phrases, Countable and uncountable nouns, singular, plural

Essay writing, word categories, word formation, formal tone, paragraph writing, tone in writing, speaking tone, signal words, Letter writing, understanding essays, Mechanics of Essays, publishable essays, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, propositions, determiners, linking words, 'be' form, linking words, reading, listening