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Natural gas in the transportation sector

Natural gas has long been considered an alternative fuel for the transportation sector. In fact, natural gas has been used to fuel vehicles since the 1930s!

According to the Natural Gas Vehicle Coalition, there are currently 150,000 Natural Gas Vehicles (NGVs) on the road in the United States today, and more than 5 million NGVs worldwide. In fact, the transportation sector accounts for 3 per cent of all natural gas used in the United States. In recent years, technology has improved to allow for a proliferation of NGVs, particularly for fuel-intensive vehicle fleets, such as taxicabs and public buses. However, virtually all types of NGVs are either in production today for sale to the public or in development, from passenger cars, trucks, buses, vans, and even heavy-duty utility vehicles. Despite these advances, a number of disadvantages of NGVs prevent their mass production. Limited range, trunk space, higher initial cost, and lack of refuelling infrastructure pose impediments to the future spread of NGVs.

Most NGVs operate using compressed natural gas (CNG). This compressed gas is stored in similar fashion to a car's gasoline tank, attached to the rear, top, or undercarriage of the vehicle in a tube-shaped storage tank. A CNG tank can be filled in a similar manner, and in a similar amount of time, to a gasoline tank.

1
There are many reasons why NGVs are increasing in abundance and popularity. New federal and state emissions laws require an improvement in vehicle emissions over the foreseeable future. For example, the state of California has some of the most stringent environmental standards, many of which are currently unattainable with conventionally fueled vehicles. Natural gas, being the cleanest-burning alternative transportation fuel available today, offers an opportunity to meet these stringent environmental emissions standards. In addition, natural gas is very safe. Being lighter than air, in the event of an accident, natural gas simply dissipates into the air, instead of forming a dangerous, flammable pool on the ground like other liquid fuels. This also prevents the pollution of ground water in the event of a spill. Natural-gas fuel storage tanks on current NGVs are stronger and sturdier than gasoline tanks.

Natural gas is also an economical alternative to gasoline and other transportation fuels.

Traditionally, NGVs have been around 30 per cent cheaper than gasoline vehicles to refuel, and in many cases the maintenance costs for NGVs are lower than traditional gasoline vehicles. In addition to being economical, many proponents of NGVs argue that a transportation sector more reliant on domestically abundant natural gas will decrease the US dependence on foreign oil—allowing for a more secure, safer energy supply for the country.

2
One of the primary reasons for pursuing alternative-fueled vehicle technology is to decrease environmentally harmful emissions. It is estimated that vehicles on the road account for 60 per cent of carbon monoxide pollution, 29 per cent of hydrocarbon emissions, and 31 per cent of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions in the United States. All of these emissions released into the atmosphere contribute to smog pollution, and increase the levels of dangerous ground-level ozone. Vehicles also account for the emission of over half of all dangerous air pollutants, and around 30 per cent of total carbon emissions in the US, contributing to the presence of "greenhouse gases" in the atmosphere. The environmental effects of NGVs are much less detrimental than traditionally fueled vehicles.

NGVs are much cleaner burning than traditionally fueled vehicles due to the chemical composition of natural gas. While natural gas is primarily methane, gasoline and diesel fuels contain numerous other harmful compounds that are released into the environment through vehicle exhaust. While natural gas may emit small amounts of ethane, propane, and butane when used as a vehicular fuel, it does not emit many of the other, more harmful substances emitted by the combustion of gasoline or diesel. These compounds include volatile organic compounds, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides (which combine in the atmosphere to produce ground-level ozone), benzene, arsenic, nickel, and over 40 other substances classified as toxic by the EPA.

Dedicated NGVs also produce, on average, 70 per cent less carbon monoxide, 87 per cent less non-methane organic gas, and 87 per cent less NOx than traditional gasoline-powered vehicles.

3
NGVs as they exist today are best suited for large fleets of vehicles that drive many miles a day. Taxicabs, transit and school buses, airport shuttles, construction vehicles, garbage trucks, delivery vehicles, and public-works vehicles are all well suited to natural-gas fueling. Because these vehicles are centrally maintained and fueled, it is economical and beneficial to convert to natural gas.

The primary impediments to the public proliferation of NGVs include the high initial cost, limited refueling infrastructure, and automobile performance characteristics. NGVs, despite being cheaper to refuel and maintain, are more expensive initially than their gasoline-powered counterparts. However, as the technology becomes more advanced, the cost of manufacturing these vehicles should drop, which may then be passed along to the consumers.

In terms of refueling infrastructure, there are currently around 1,500 natural-gas refueling stations in the US, over half of which are open to the public. Although this is a small fraction of the number of gasoline-fueling stations in the country, as environmental standards and government incentives for NGVs increase, supplying natural gas as a vehicular fuel will become increasingly common.

While driving range, storage space, and initial cost are currently preventing the mass production of dedicated NGVs (which in turn is preventing the expansion of public natural-gas fueling stations), it is expected that with improved technology, research, and infrastructure, the use of NGVs in non-fleet settings will increase in the future. NGVs present an exciting opportunity to reduce the damage of one of our most polluting sectors.

adapted from www.naturalgas.org

7 Choose the best heading for each of the sections in the article in Exercise 6 (1–3). There are two headings you will not need.

- A The advantages of NGVs
- B The need for change
- C Reducing carbon-monoxide emissions
- D Who uses NGVs?
- E An expanding refueling infrastructure

8 Match the words or expressions from the article (1–9) with words or expressions that have a similar meaning (a–i).

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 proliferation | a harmful |
| 2 impediments | b fixed |
| 3 attached | c barriers |
| 4 foreseeable future | d main |
| 5 stringent standards | e great increase |
| 6 unattainable | f out of reach |
| 7 in the event of | g soon |
| 8 detrimental | h if this happens |
| 9 primary | i strict requirements |

9 Find six more new expressions from the article that you think are useful and add them to your vocabulary book.

Note

You will never be asked to write a question like this in the exam, but writing one yourself will give you a much better understanding of the question form. It's also good reading practice.

Producing a paragraph-heading question

10 a Find a paragraph from a newspaper or magazine that has a heading. Now write three other headings for the paragraph.

b Show your paragraph-heading question to your colleagues. Can they work out which heading was the original one?

Vocabulary builder 2

Energy idioms

1 Match the idiomatic phrases in *italics* (1–7) with their meanings (a–g).

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Robert's <i>a bright spark</i> – he'll know the capital of Mongolia. | a release (nervous) energy |
| 2 Andrea's <i>full of beans</i> this morning. | b time to go at top speed |
| 3 Do you really think we can sell our cars in Japan? It's like <i>taking coal to Newcastle</i> . | c has a lot of energy |
| 4 After a tough day at work in the office, Ruth loves to <i>let off steam</i> with a game of squash. | d working late at night |
| 5 There are six months before my IELTS test, so from now on, it's <i>full steam ahead</i> . | e making a bad situation worse. |
| 6 Steffi has been <i>burning the midnight oil</i> for the last two weeks. | f an intelligent person |
| 7 Derek is already in a bad mood. Don't tell him about the broken photocopier right now. That will just be <i>adding fuel to the fire</i> . | g supplying something where it is not needed |

2 Do you have the same expressions in your language? Can you think of any others?

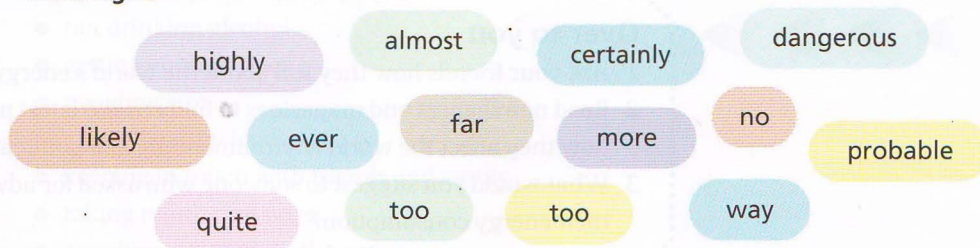
Modifiers and intensifiers

Modifiers and intensifiers are often used with adjectives to qualify the meaning of an expression in some way.

*Looking at the forecasts for the world's energy demands for the future is **pretty** frightening.*

As in the above example, they often serve to convey the opinion of the author.

3 These words occur in pairs including modifiers/intensifiers in the text on page 10. How many pairs can you remember? Now check the text to see if you were right.



Tip

It's a good idea to make a collection of phrases and expressions using modifiers and intensifiers as you read. Firstly, this is useful for practising reading in 'chunks' (see page 26). In addition, we use modifiers or intensifiers to qualify what we are writing or talking about, which can show our attitude towards something. In the IELTS test there are often questions that focus on the author's opinions.

4 Choose the best word to complete these sentences.

- Working in a coal mine is a(n) *totally* / *extremely* dangerous job.
- People who work on oil rigs are generally *so* / *very* well paid, but they do work *incredibly* / *definitely* hard.
- Many people in Germany are *totally* / *ever* opposed to nuclear power.
- Putting solar panels on the roof of your house is *wholly* / *relatively* easy.
- If you live in a cool country and don't insulate your house properly, your energy bills are likely to be *extremely* / *absolutely* high.
- I *certainly* / *quite* want to get a good grade in the IELTS test.

CLASSROOM WORKOUT

Defending one kind of energy supply

- Work in groups. Each group chooses a different fuel source and thinks of as many advantages of its chosen fuel source as possible in five minutes.
- Make notes – and try to include key words and expressions from the different texts in this unit.
- After the five minutes, take turns to stand up and tell the rest of the class the advantages that you came up with. Use your notes, but don't read from them. This will be followed by two minutes of questions from your fellow students, so be ready for some tricky questions.

CHECK YOURSELF

- Make a list of 10–15 collocations or expressions that you could use in a discussion on the topic of energy.
- Write down five facts you know about energy as a result of reading the texts in this unit.

SUMMARY

In this unit, you:

- discussed the range of energy sources available and their effect on the environment. What conclusions did you come to?
- looked at collocations connected with energy. How many have you written down in a notebook?
- studied and practised **multiple-choice questions**. What are the key things to remember about them?
- read about energy supply in the Czech Republic. Is the Czech Republic in a better or worse situation compared to your country?
- read about a potential energy crisis. Do think there will be an energy crisis, or will we be able to make a smooth transition to sustainable resources?
- started building up your bank of words, phrases and paraphrases. You should check back on your list regularly, adding new words whenever you can.
- studied **paragraph-heading questions** and practised them. Do you feel that you can cope with this kind of question in the test now?
- practised writing your own paragraph-heading questions. How difficult was it to create plausible distractors?

Over to you

- 1 Ask your friends how they feel about the world's energy resources.
- 2 Read newspapers and magazines to find out the latest news on energy issues and how they affect the world environmentally and politically.
- 3 What would you suggest to someone who asked for advice about how to reduce their energy consumption?

UNIT 2

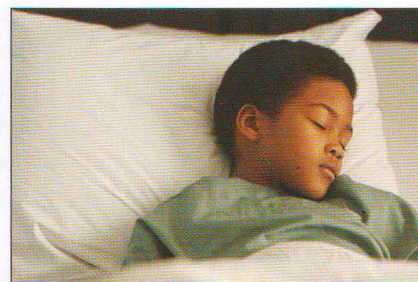
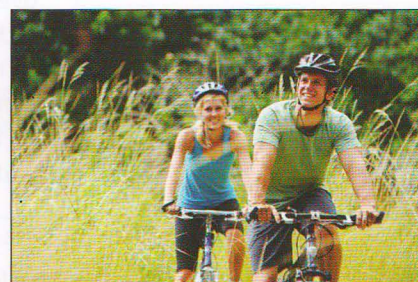
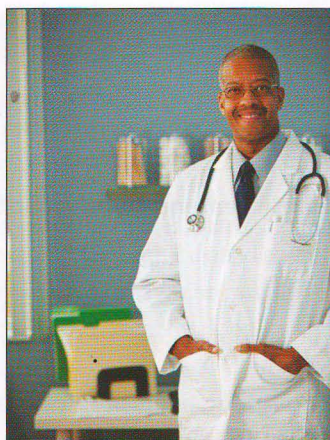
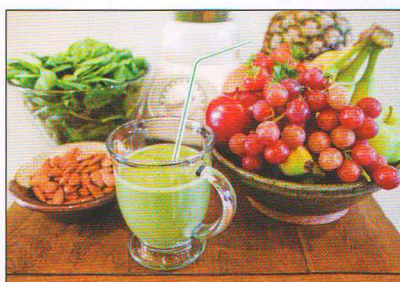
Health, wealth and happiness

In this unit, you will:

- practise skimming, scanning and speed-reading techniques
- study and practise **sentence completion**
- read different types of text.

Getting started

1 These photos show important factors for staying healthy. Discuss the questions below.



- 1 To what extent is cost a factor in these things?
- 2 Which of these factors most often occur(s) in the news in your country? Why?

2 Rank these factors from 1 to 10 in terms of importance for your health (1 = most important).

- not smoking
- not drinking alcohol
- getting enough sleep
- avoiding stress
- eating healthy food
- keeping in touch with friends and family
- taking regular exercise
- avoiding exposure to the sun
- avoiding polluted areas
- getting immunised against preventable diseases

3 Discuss these questions.

- 1 Why do some people find it difficult to do the right thing for their health and well-being?
- 2 Do you think enough is done to promote campaigns for/against any of the factors in Exercise 2?
- 3 Which of these things should be controlled by the government, and which should be left to the individual?



Health and happiness collocations

1 Make as many collocations connected with health and happiness as you can by combining words and phrases from box A with those from box B.

A

chill
cut down on
feel-good
fit as a
on cloud
out of
over the
sedentary
splitting
stop
be in high
watch

B

condition
factor
fiddle
headache
lifestyle
modified starch
moon
nine
out
smoking
spirits
your weight

2 Complete these sentences with collocations from Exercise 1.

- 1 Victoria has been *in high spirits* ever since she got into Cambridge University.
- 2 The diet magazine says that a good way to lose weight is to
- 3 When Petra got her exam results, she was She passed with flying colours.
- 4 I put in such long hours at work that when I get home I just
- 5 My grandfather's 93, but he's as
- 6 It is common for footballers to say they are when they are asked how they feel about winning a big match.
- 7 Our dependence on computers has meant that many of us lead a
- 8 That noise is giving me a
- 9 The single most important thing anyone can do to improve their health is
- 10 Physical exercise releases endorphins into your blood, and that gives you a
- 11 I can't have any chocolate. It's not an allergy – I'm just
- 12 I'm going to start jogging again because I'm

3 Discuss to what extent you agree with these comments, and explain why.

Health and happiness are connected. You can't be happy if you're not healthy.

You have to work at being healthy, but being happy is something you can't really control.

You can decide to be happy, whatever your circumstances.



Skimming and scanning

While you can go into the IELTS test with a lot of confidence and even enthusiasm, one thing you don't have a lot of in the exam is time. Your ability to read quickly and to process the information effectively is of paramount importance. Each text that you have to read will be up to 900 words long, so you need to develop the ability to read quickly. Two key techniques that can help you do this are skimming and scanning.

Skimming strategies

Skimming involves running your eyes quickly over the text to find out the main ideas contained within it.

It is useful to:

- read the questions first to know what you are looking for
- read the title of the text and any subheadings
- read the first paragraph to see where the article is heading
- read the first line of each subsequent paragraph
- read the last paragraph, which may include a summary and/or conclusion
- see how any diagrams or pictures could relate to the article.

While skimming, you should:

- try to read three or four times faster than normal
- get a good idea of what the article is about without checking new words in the dictionary
- underline key words, e.g. dates, places, figures
- focus on key words like nouns, verbs, adjectives.

Scanning strategies

When you look for someone's name in a telephone directory or look a word up in a dictionary, you don't read every line. You can scan through the text to find the information that you are looking for. For this to be successful, you need to know what you are looking for. That means you should read the question first and identify key words in it to guide you.

It is useful to:

- read the questions so you know what you are looking for
- find the relevant part of the text as quickly as possible
- avoid reading the text line by line
- avoid mouthing the words as you read
- be aware of key words in the distractors that may also occur in the text. They may wrongly make you think you have the right part of the text.

While scanning, you should:

- look for key words in the text – nouns that reflect the questions, and words like *problem, solution, idea, goal, improvement, danger*
- look for key words that help you interpret the text and the writer's opinion – verbs like *must, can, help, ensure, increase, offer, measure, change* and adjectives and adverbials like *probably, without doubt, definitely, possible, much worse*
- think of paraphrases for key words from the question and look for them in the text.

The two strategies – skimming and scanning – work together. If you have skimmed the text effectively, then you will have a better idea of where to find the information you are looking for. You may have underlined an important fact, date, figure or key word. While scanning, you may notice other key words which you can underline.

Five ways to practise skimming and scanning

- 1 Get into the habit of reading longer texts and articles in English regularly.
- 2 Pay particular attention to the first and last paragraphs of an article.
- 3 To get the key ideas of a text, before you read, ask yourself: who, where, what, why, when and how? Try to find the answers to those questions as you read through an article.
- 4 Don't focus on new vocabulary, and don't use a dictionary on your first reading of a text.
- 5 Don't try to vocalize the text as you read – use your eyes, not your voice.

1 Practise your skimming and scanning with the article below about happiness. Read it quickly to find out what it says about the following:

- 1 sources of happiness
- 2 the relationship between happiness and politics
- 3 research into happiness
- 4 living standards and happiness
- 5 how to measure happiness
- 6 how different countries promote happiness

How can we measure happiness?

by Philip Johnston

Western leaders are looking beyond traditional indices of economic and social well-being and turning to ways of measuring national happiness.

What makes you happy? The smell of new-mown grass on a spring morning, perhaps; or the laughter of your children. For many of us, happiness is spiritual, individual, difficult to define and ephemeral. A Buddhist monk with no possessions beyond his clothes and an alms bowl might consider himself happier than a City financier with homes on three continents.

Personal happiness is something we all aspire to; so what about national happiness? Can the well-being of a country be measured? Is it possible to aggregate all those individual experiences into a happiness index that can be published quarterly, along with crime statistics, inflation rates and unemployment figures? Some political leaders think it is. They subscribe to the idea that measuring a nation's well-being by its economic output is a policy dead-end. Is this wise?

The consideration of happiness and how to maximise it is hardly a new activity. It has exercised great minds from Socrates to Montaigne and on to Bentham, Mill and the authors of the American Declaration of Independence. But while philosophers tended to deal with how we should lead our lives as individuals, the idea of happiness both as a science and a specific aim of national policy has only taken off in the past decade or so.

It is hardly surprising that the idea appeals to many politicians, especially when most of the economic news is gloomy and government policy is couched in the downbeat language of austerity. In such circumstances, looking beyond the traditional measurements of national well-being is a great temptation, even if it risks being criticized as a gimmick that has no place in the serious business of politics.

Moreover, economists believe that the pursuit of public happiness as a policy goal has merit even when the economy is booming. This is because, as their data have become more comprehensive and sophisticated, they have noticed one apparent paradox: that despite the fact that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased substantially in the industrialized West, the levels of human contentment have remained static.

This realization encouraged Lord Layard, professor at the London School of Economics and adviser to a former prime minister, to urge the last

Labour government to recognize that economic growth need not be an overriding priority. He believed governments should embrace the principle that 'the best society is that where the people are happiest, and the best policy is the one that produces the greatest happiness'.

They found this hard to do because so little was known about what made people happy. But, as Lord Layard points out, 'The first thing we know is that in the past 50 years, average happiness has not increased at all in Britain or in the United States – despite massive increases in living standards.' In better-off countries, in other words, simply raising incomes does not make people any happier.

In truth, Prime Minister David Cameron has been thinking along these lines for a while. Shortly after he became Tory leader in 2005, he said: 'Well-being can't be measured by money or traded in markets. It's about the beauty of our surroundings, the quality of our culture and, above all, the strength of our relationships. Improving our society's sense of well-being is, I believe, the central political challenge of our times.' He added: 'It's time we admitted that there's more to life than money, and it's time we focused not just on GDP but on GWB – general well-being.'

In order to avoid a politically biased view of what constitutes national contentment, it would be essential to have an independent body such as the Office for National Statistics deciding what questions to ask and when to do so. A survey conducted in the middle of a cold, wet January, for instance, might produce significantly gloomier results than one carried out in summer months.

So what might a list of questions contain? Measurements of national well-being are already included in cross-border surveys carried out by the UN or the OECD* and include such indicators as a perceived lack of corruption; low unemployment; high levels of education and income; and the number of older people in the labour market. Using such criteria, polls can try to paint a picture of what a country thinks about itself.

It seems that modern politicians have bought so heavily into the idea that the state can do everything that they have deluded themselves into believing it can deliver the most elusive of all human desires: happiness. They have been persuaded that it is possible to measure life satisfaction and that its achievement on a national scale should be a goal of government. The difficulty is to establish an index that does not remain static or decline. After all, which politician will enjoy being accused of making his fellow citizens less happy than they were?

If measuring happiness is a relatively new phenomenon in the West, it has underpinned the public policy of one country for almost 40 years. The Kingdom of Bhutan has pursued the goal of 'gross national happiness' since 1972. In addition to the promotion of equitable socioeconomic development and the establishment of good governance, it also stresses the importance of the preservation and promotion of cultural values.

It probably helps, too, that there is little in the way of traffic, commuting into major cities does not involve an hour-long journey crushed together like sardines, television was banned until 1999 and the Himalayas provide a visual backdrop to a stunning sub-tropical landscape. No wonder they are happy.

* Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development