

Task 1. You are going to read the text aloud. You have 1.5 minutes to read the text silently, and then be ready to read it aloud. Remember that you will not have more than 2 minutes for reading aloud.

People have always wanted to discover new things and new worlds. We have built spaceships to go to other planets and are planning to visit other galaxies one day. Meanwhile, we know very little about our own planet. The oceans, which cover 70 percent of the planet, are an unknown world to us. The Pacific Ocean is the largest one. The lowest point on the Earth is also there. It is called Challenger Deep and it was discovered in 1875. The Pacific Ocean stretches from the Arctic Ocean to the coast of Antarctica, but most of its water is in the warm tropics, which makes it warm. A lot of fish and animals live in the Pacific Ocean. The place is still waiting for researchers to discover its secrets for us.

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Without the energy from the Sun, the Earth would have no life at all. Nowadays everyone knows that the Sun is a star. Like all stars, the Sun is a great burning ball of gases. To us, it seems large and red. The other stars look white or light blue because they are much farther from us than the Sun. In the past, many people believed that the Earth was the centre of the universe. They thought that the Sun and the stars went round it. Only in 1543, a great Polish scientist published a book in which he tried to prove a different point of view. According to him, the Earth and the other planets moved round the Sun. Those people who supported the scientist were often imprisoned and even killed.

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Since 2007 high-speed trains have become a common type of transport in Europe. They make it possible to cut travel times by hours. The trains travel at 350 kilometres an hour, and this is not the limit! The only problem for the engineers is the loud noise the trains produce. People living in the areas the trains travel through suffer from the noise greatly. For the passengers, the situation is different. For their comfort, all the

carriages are made sound-proof from the inside. Travelling on high-speed trains is comfortable and pleasant. In the future, a high-speed railroad network could cover most of Europe. For example, a trip from Paris to Rome could take only 3 hours!

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Netball is played by over 20 million people in more than 70 countries of the world. It was invented in 1892 as women's basketball. However, netball is different from basketball in many ways. For example, the ball and the basket are smaller and the court is bigger. The players cannot run with the ball. They are not allowed to touch the players who they are playing with. Netball has seven players in each team (not five as in basketball). During the 20th century, the game became very popular in English-speaking countries. Traditionally, only girls and women played netball. Nowadays, netball is the number one women's sport in the world but boys and men are starting to play it too.

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Studies of the atmosphere first received technical support in 1912. Equipment to measure temperature and pressure was invented in Germany. But the question was how to raise it high into the air. In 1921, Russian engineers suggested using planes. The special equipment was put on planes that made regular flights. Thanks to this, scientists got a lot of new information about the structure of the atmosphere. Nowadays scientists use modern flying laboratories to study the structure of clouds at different levels. Unlike the first planes, these laboratories can work in any weather and are able to predict climate changes.

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Most people enjoy watching the night sky. And the brightest object in the sky is the Moon. Every night the Moon rises in the East and sets in the West. It takes about 27 days to go around the Earth, and it's an interesting fact that we always see the same

side of the Moon. The Moon is the closest object to the Earth. It would take us only thirteen hours to get to the Moon by rocket. If we were able to travel at the speed of light, it would take a bit less than two seconds.

There is a very thin atmosphere on the Moon. Life is not possible there. In spite of this, the Moon can be used as a base for space exploration and even for space tourism. Some space companies say that they will be able to take tourists to the Moon as soon as in 2023.

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The mobile phone has become an important part of our everyday life. We can't imagine our lives without it now. Thanks to the mobile phone we can keep in contact with our relatives and friends at any time. We use them to text and to send emails, to share photos and videos. We can use the Internet and listen to music and do lots of other things. However, according to surveys, mobile phone users mostly spend their time on games and social networking. Around 80 percent of the world's population has a mobile phone. The mobile phone industry is the fastest growing industry in the world. From 1983 to 2016, worldwide mobile phone subscriptions grew to over seven billion.

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Table tennis is the third most played sport in the world after football and cricket. It is considered to be an indoor version of Lawn Tennis. However, they have a lot of differences. Table tennis has a different scoring system, a smaller ball, smaller rackets, and a smaller playing area. Modern table tennis was invented at the end of the 19th century in England. Very soon the new sport became popular all over the world. In 1901, competitions with over 300 participants were already being held. According to numerous studies, table tennis has great effects on human health. It keeps the brain sharp and improves the player's coordination.

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A zoo, also known as a zoological park or a zoological garden, gives people the opportunity to watch animals from different continents. There are hundreds of zoos all over the world. However, most of them are located in major cities. The first zoo in Russia was opened in 1864, in Moscow. It was a small zoological garden. On the opening day, only 287 animals were on display. Nowadays, the Moscow Zoo is one of the largest in Europe. The unique collection of the Zoo includes over 8000 kinds of animals and birds. Scientists study the animals' behavior and reproduction. They also breed rare animals there to stop them dying out.

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The first vacuum cleaner was designed in 1869. Since then, vacuum cleaners have changed a lot. Nowadays the robot vacuum cleaner is getting more and more popular. This device cleans a house automatically. Following a programme, the robot drives slowly around the house and makes it cleaner. It operates with brushes and a tube. The robot is so flexible that it can get under a table or sofa or reach dust in corners. Some advanced models can also wash floors of all kinds. These functions are provided by a complicated electronic system and sensors inside. The vacuum cleaner looks like a plate and can be kept in the corner. It is friendly to children and animals and works on electricity.

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The Arctic Ocean is the smallest ocean of the world. It covers the northern polar region of the Earth. The Arctic region is a very cold place. The lowest recorded temperature there is minus 68 degrees. In spite of the cold, a lot of animals live on the Arctic ice. The polar bear is one of them. Now, due to global warming, the polar bear is in a serious trouble. The thing is that polar bears hunt seals and they need ice to do this. The bears wait for seals on the ice, hunt them in the water and go back to the shore. If the ice is too thin, it breaks under the bears' heavy bodies and they may drown. The situation is getting worse and some researchers say the ocean may become ice-free as soon as 2050.

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It's hard to find a more popular Russian symbol than the traditional Russian doll, or Matryoshka. It is well-known all over the world. The first set of dolls appeared in Moscow in 1890. It consisted of eight dolls. All of them were children: seven girls, one boy, and a baby. In those times, Matryoshkas were not meant as toys for children as their price was very high. Mostly, adults bought them as presents or home decorations. There was a belief that if you put a note with a wish into Matryoshka, it would come true. At the beginning of the 20th century, Russia started to export their national dolls abroad.

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Great Britain is home to the world's oldest school. *The King's School* was established in 1567 and it is still open. It has a long history. Many famous people have been educated at this old school. Nowadays *The King's School* is an independent secondary school for boys and girls. More than 800 pupils study at the school. Though *The King's School* is located in old buildings, it has up-to-date technical equipment and provides a full modern education. *The King's School* is also famous for its festival of music, drama and arts. It is held during the last week of the summer term and attracts a lot of people from different parts of the country.

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Bicycles or bikes are an important means of transportation in many parts of the world. The first bicycles turned up in Europe in the first half of the 19th century but the word "bicycle" only appeared later, in 1868. There are more bicycles in the world than cars. A lot of people have realized that cycling is an easy way to get around and a great way to cut down on pollution. More and more cities have special places where people can borrow a bike and ride around the city. Over the past few years, a bicycle infrastructure has been created in Moscow. Cycling in the centre of Moscow in summer is one of the most pleasant and quickest ways of seeing the city.

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English is the third most-spoken language in the world after Chinese and Spanish. Over 840 million people speak English as a first or second language. It is an official language of sixty-seven countries. 80 percent of information stored on all computers in the world is in English. The vocabulary of the English language is the biggest in the world. A new word is added into English almost every two hours. The English language is said to be one of the happiest languages in the world. The word *happy* is used more often than the word *sad*! That's a good reason to learn this language, isn't it?

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Human activity creates waste. The problem isn't new and space is no exception to the rule. Dead satellites, rocket stages and other things are littering our planet's orbit. They are getting dangerously close to space stations and there is a great possibility of an accident. Space stations could be completely destroyed by the rubbish. In 1983, a tiny piece of paint from a satellite made a big hole in the side window of a spaceship. There is a great need to "clean up" space and to take away 3,000 tons of space rubbish. To solve the problem, scientists and engineers are designing special spaceships that will collect and recycle space rubbish.

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The construction of the longest and the deepest railroad tunnel was finished in Europe. The tunnel runs through the Alps and links the north and south of Europe. The length of the tunnel is 57 kilometres. It runs straight from beginning to end. It will allow passenger trains to travel more quickly through the mountains. Modern technologies ensure safety and security when the trains go through the tunnel. The great project started in 2009 and it took 17 years to complete. It is considered to be one of the most amazing engineering constructions in Europe.

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The rainforest can be described as a thick and very tall jungle. The term rain comes from the great quantity of water that these forests get throughout the year. The rainforests are the world's greatest natural resources. They are called the lungs of our planet. Half of all the kinds of plants and animals that exist on the planet live in the rainforests. Unfortunately, the area with rainforests is being reduced due to global warming. 100 years ago, the rainforests covered 14 percent of the earth's surface. Now, it is only 6 percent. Scientists say that if the process continues at this rate, the rainforests will have disappeared in forty years.

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Global warming is a result of human activity. In 1985 there was a big conference in Austria where 89 climate researchers from different countries took part. After long discussions the scientists declared that the climate of the planet had changed. Indeed, it is warmer now than it was years ago. It can be clearly seen in the north. In the Arctic some places are ice-free now and polar bears have lost the place where they lived. The sea level has risen as well. The situation is getting more and more serious. Global warming is a great problem which needs to be solved in the near future.

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Earth Hour is an event that encourages people around the world to switch off electricity at the same time for one hour. Of course, switching off the lights for an hour makes a small difference to the amount of energy we use. But the aim of the event is not to save energy but to get people to think about the planet they live on. Earth Hour started in Australia in 2007. More and more countries join the ecological movement every year. Now, millions of people from 178 countries switch off their lights for 60 minutes at the end of March. People in Russia participate in this event too — large office buildings and small private houses go dark for Earth Hour.

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Snowdon is the highest mountain in Wales. It is located in a national park. It stands at 1085 metres above sea level, and it is often described as the busiest mountain in Great Britain. Snowdon is very popular with tourists. If you are strong and brave enough to get to the top, you can enjoy wonderful views from there. On a clear day, you can see as far as Ireland! During the summer months there is a café at the top. There, tourists can get a welcome cup of tea, or soup if the weather is cold. If you feel too tired to walk back, you can always take the train down the mountain. The mountain railway was built in 1896. It is safe, and there have never been any accidents on this route.

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Though most people believe that the tomato is a vegetable, this plant is actually a fruit. It is a fruit because it has seeds inside like apples, oranges, lemons, and all other types of fruit. The tomato comes from Central and South America. When tomatoes were brought to England, people thought that they were poisonous and refused to eat them. Only in 1820, Robert Johnson proved that tomatoes were absolutely safe and would not affect people's health. He ate a basket of tomatoes in public. Nowadays, the tomato is widely used in all types of food. There are many different kinds of tomatoes – over 7,500! They differ in size, shape, colour and taste.

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We don't realize how lucky we are to have clean water whenever we want. A lot of people around the world do not have such an opportunity. Did you know that more than 750 million people on the Earth do not have clean water to drink? Meanwhile, a lot of water is wasted and polluted. In 1993 the United Nations decided to celebrate the World Day for Water. Nowadays a lot of special events are organized in different countries. Their aim is to make people understand how important clean water is for their health, environment and agriculture. Water is essential for our life. We should think about saving it, as the fresh water supplies are limited. We need to keep it clean for ourselves and for future generations.

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In 1642 a French student invented the first mechanical calculator. He was only 18 and the counting machine was a present for his father. The father worked as a tax collector and the young man wanted to make his job easier.

The talented inventor made several machines, but nobody was interested. The young man was ahead of his time. Many years passed before people realized how useful these machines could be and started mass producing them.

Today most mechanical calculators have been replaced with electronic models. These small devices can perform a lot of mathematical operations. You just need to enter the numbers by pressing the keys and you'll see the final result on the screen in no time.

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Do you know why it is hot in the summer and cold in the winter? Most people believe that it is because the Earth is closer to the Sun in the summer and farther from it in the winter. But it is not like this at all! In fact, the distance between the Earth and the Sun is largest in July and smallest in January! Scientists suggest that the reason for different summer and winter temperatures is the angle of the Sun's rays. In the summer, the rays reach the Earth almost at a right angle. Due to this, the rays are not spread out and a smaller area of the planet's surface gets the energy. In the winter, the angle changes and the Sun's rays are spread out over a larger area. Besides this, the long nights and short days do not give enough time for the land to warm up.

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A robot is a machine that does work for people. The word "robot" appeared in the 1920s and it was first used in a science fiction story. In real life, the robot was invented later, in 1954. There are different kinds of robots which are used in different industries. Most of them are operated with the help of a computer program. Instead of humans, robots do hard and boring work in unpleasant or dangerous environments.

They usually work faster and more accurately than people. They never get tired and do not make mistakes. Nowadays robots are often used for domestic needs — to clean houses or to look after sick and elderly people. Scientists say that soon robots will become a normal part of our life, like mobiles and computers today.

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Venus is one of the hottest planets in the Solar system. The temperature on its surface is 482 degrees. This unfriendly place looks much the same as the Earth 4 billion years ago. Both planets were formed from the same gas cloud, but Venus lost most of its water and atmosphere. This happened because the planet turns very slowly. As a result, now it has no magnetic field to protect it from the Sun's winds. The planet has turned into a lifeless desert. Most space modules that were sent to Venus could not work on the planet more than two hours. The acidic clouds and high pressure quickly made them absolutely useless.

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We are always told that we should clean our teeth regularly to keep them healthy and to have fresh breath. It is believed that people started using a kind of paste to clean their teeth around 5000 years ago. However, the ingredients of these tooth powders were very different from ours. For example, the people of ancient Egypt used salt, mint, dried flowers and pepper to create tooth powder. Later, in the 18th century, in some countries in Europe, people brushed their teeth with burnt bread. The first toothpaste appeared in 1890, in Great Britain. At first it was sold in jars. Then special tubes were designed to make the toothpaste more comfortable to use.

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The Channel Tunnel is a rail tunnel beneath the English Channel which links Great Britain and France. It is considered to be one of the most amazing engineering constructions in Europe. The second longest undersea tunnel in the world was opened

in 1994. It is said that 13,000 workers and engineers participated in the construction project. The Channel Tunnel contains three tunnels. The south tunnel is for people who are travelling from France to the UK, the north tunnel takes passengers from the UK to France. Nowadays it takes 35 minutes to go from Paris to London in the Channel Tunnel. The third tunnel is a service tunnel. It is not used by passengers.

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The word “tsunami” can be translated from Japanese as “big wave”. It describes a natural process that can be dangerous for people and their homes. Most of the huge waves appear after earthquakes. Most waves are born in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans where volcanoes are active. The mass of water rises from the bottom of the ocean and moves to the shore. It moves at a speed of a plane and can be up to 40 meters high. The wave is very powerful and dangerous. In 2004, a tsunami happened in the Indian Ocean. It was one of most terrible natural disasters in history. Thousands of people were killed or went missing.

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Wombats are exotic animals that only live in Australia. They have become an unofficial symbol of the country. In 1974 a wombat appeared on an Australian stamp for the first time. Since then it has been regularly used on different Australian stamps and coins. Wombats look like little bears and prefer grass to meat. They also love eating berries, plant roots and mushrooms. Like camels, wombats drink little water because there is enough water in fresh grass. Wombats spend most of their life in holes under the ground. With their strong arms and long nails they are able to dig very long and complex tunnels. Fortunately, wombats have few enemies in the animal world. Most wombats live around 15 years.

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The Caspian Sea is one of the world’s natural wonders. It shares the characteristics of

both a sea and a lake. In the past it was called a sea because of its great size and salty water. However, the Caspian Sea is listed as the largest lake in the world. There are about 130 rivers which bring their water to the Caspian Sea. But it is not a freshwater lake — its water is very salty. The Caspian Sea is famous for its wildlife. More than 850 kinds of animals can be found in this unique sea. The Caspian Sea region is also one of the oldest oil-producing areas in the world. It is also rich in other natural resources.

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Nowadays solar energy is widely used as an alternative form of power. Solar panels transform the energy from the sun into electricity. The first plane that does not need fuel was constructed in France in 2015. It uses only the sun's energy. The panels are placed on the huge wings of the plane. It doesn't fly very fast. Solar energy can make the plane move at only 140 miles an hour. However, the plane is able to travel round the world. It is safe and can successfully cross areas of bad weather. In the future, engineers hope to construct a model that people can fly in. Our dream of environmentally friendly transport may come true very soon. Would you like to take a flight on the solar plane?

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One day a young man who lived near the lake in a small American town asked himself, "Why can't people ski on water if they can ski on snow?" With his brother's help he constructed several models of skis to test his ideas. He experimented on the local lake for a few days and created skis suitable for the water. This happened in 1922. The young man, who was only 18 at that time, didn't patent his invention. However, he performed a lot of shows across the country that made him and the sport of water skiing popular. Later, he was recognized as the creator of a new sport — water skiing.

Water skiing equipment has been greatly improved since that time, and the number of people who enjoy this sport is growing in many countries.

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The carrot is a root vegetable which consists mostly of water and sugar. The carrots that we eat today originated from the wild ones which grew in Europe and Asia. The vegetable tasted sweet and the people began to use it as food.

There are two main types of carrots. There are eastern carrots that have dark purple roots and western carrots with orange roots. In fact, orange carrots first appeared in Europe in 1721. Dutch farmers selected orange carrots because orange is the colour of the Dutch Royal Family. Now orange carrots are widely grown all over the world. In modern households carrots are cooked and eaten in different ways. The vegetable is boiled, fried, baked and eaten raw. People also make juice from it.

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Recycling is a technology that helps protect the environment and cut down on usage of raw materials. The steel, paper and glass industries recycle a lot. The largest recycler is the steel industry. It recovers more than 70 percent of its original materials. For example, since 1988 they have produced the majority of new metal cans from old ones. Metal parts for cars and planes are other examples of recycling steel. Fragments of waste glass are widely used in construction. For producing writing paper and pens, used packing boxes are an ideal material. They are cheap and easy to recycle. Nowadays more and more recycling centres are appearing in our towns and cities.

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Oxford University is the oldest university in the English-speaking world. It is also the second oldest university in the world. The University of Oxford is believed to have started in 1133. It is located in Oxford City on the Thames River, not far from London. Oxford University is one of the world's most impressive centres of education. There are students from different countries there. In fact, there is no building in Oxford called Oxford University. The University includes 38 colleges and related buildings. Over 22,000 students study English language and literature, geography, history, law, modern languages and other subjects there.

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Our planet is the only planet in the Solar System where rainbows are possible. They are not visible in big cities, due to pollution and smog. But if you are travelling after rain has fallen in the countryside or walking on the beach, you have a good chance to see a rainbow. The rainbow is a multi-coloured arc which appears in the sky. When you see a rainbow, the sun is always behind you and it is raining in front of you. It is impossible to get to the end of the rainbow and to touch it. When you move, the rainbow moves too. We have always learned that rainbows have 7 colours. However, until the 17th century, people used to think there were only 5 colours in the rainbow.

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The human brain is the most complex and remarkable organ of the body. It controls everything we do — thinking, learning, and even heart rate. Though the brain makes up only 2 percent of the body's weight, it uses around 20 percent of its energy. It works 24 hours a day. Even when a person is sleeping, the brain is working hard to keep other organs functioning. Most people think that our brain is more active during the daytime because it needs to deal with a great amount of information. In fact, that's not true. The brain is far more active when a person is sleeping! However, scientists don't yet have any explanation for this fact.

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Nowadays people can't imagine their kitchen without a refrigerator. The first refrigerators appeared at the end of the 18th century. They looked different: they were just iceboxes. The refrigerators of the past were just wooden boxes, sometimes lined inside with metal. People put ice into the box and then placed the food inside to keep it cool. The refrigerator, similar to the one that we have now, was produced by *General Electric* in 1911, in France. It was very expensive. In those days, with the same money you could buy two cars. Today, in developed countries almost every family has

enough money to buy a refrigerator for their kitchen. It's hard to imagine how difficult and uncomfortable our lives would be without a refrigerator.