STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

Hello. I'm Margot Politis. Welcome to Study English, IELTS preparation.

Today we're going to look at a story about trees in Melbourne. Trees have certain functions. They provide shade and shelter, they give scale to the tall buildings and they demonstrate the changing seasons.

English is no different! It has a range of *functions*, or purposes. When you reach a certain stage in your language development, you'll need to focus more on the meaning and functions of English at the sentence level, and also how to connect sentences. With practice, your *fluency* and *competence* in both spoken and written English will develop.

John Hawker, who is a horticulturalist with Heritage Victoria, is concerned that the old trees planted in Melbourne in the 1850s are nearing the end of their lives. Listen to John discussing the problem of managing trees in urban areas.

Trees are very much a part of our urban fabric. People enjoy them for their size, variety and colour and form, so we'd just be left with nothing, which would be disastrous.

There's a need to assess the health and the condition of these trees and embark upon a removal and a replacement program.

We'll be helping the City of Melbourne doing that assessment and we'll be identifying where, what trees should be replanted.

John is discussing the problems of old trees in Melbourne.

He begins with a statement of *fact*:

"People enjoy trees for their size, variety, colour and form."

He follows this statement with an *opinion:*

"To allow these old trees to die and not replace them would be disastrous."

Can you see the purpose or function of these two sentences? John is building a *persuasive argument* about trees. He begins with a *fact*, and then adds an *opinion*.

Now he goes on to list some of the problems faced by these trees. The function of this sentence will be to support his argument with *reasons*.

STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

Listen to the causes of the problem.

Well, there are quite a few problems with some of the trees.

Firstly, the trees, some are very old and nearing the end of their life. That's been hastened to some extent by recent very dry conditions in Melbourne and other environmental factors.

John begins by identifying the reasons for the problem.

The 'trees are old' and nearing the end of their life. This natural ageing process has been made worse by 'recent dry conditions' in Melbourne, and 'other environmental factors'.

His argument is more convincing because he explains the reasons for the problem. This is one of the important functions of English you'll need to learn – to *order* your thoughts in a logical pattern, and *support* them with reasons and examples.

So to make a good, persuasive argument, John has given the *facts* of the problem and given us *opinions*, *reasons* and *examples*. Then John explains a *solution* to the problem.

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John's solution is to 'assess the trees', and then 'remove older trees' and 'replace them with younger trees'.

The argument is further developed by another tree expert, Ian Shears, who works for the City of Melbourne.

With replacement of elms, such as in St Kilda Road, for example, we want to be putting in trees which are of a significant size. So if you do it on a short term basis, you just can't go out to a nursery and get something of any stature at all.

Ian makes a *suggestion* – to 'plant large size elm trees'.

He adds the *fact* that large trees are 'not available from nurseries' in the short term.

His un-stated *conclusion* is so strong we understand it implicitly: we 'must plan long term' for this to succeed.

STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

So you can see how both trees and English have certain functions. Like the different parts of a tree all help to make it complete, English sentences have different functions that combine to make effective communication.

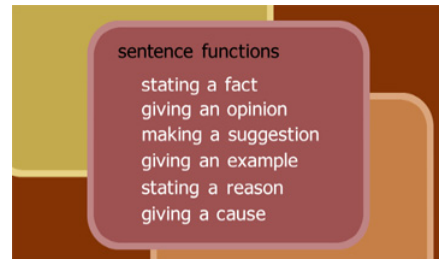Sentences serve several *purposes* or *functions*. These can be:

'stating a fact',

'giving an opinion',

'making a suggestion',

'giving an example',

'stating a reason',

or 'giving a cause.

sentence functions
stating a fact
giving an opinion
making a suggestion
giving an example
stating a reason
giving a cause

See if you can identify different functions.

"The world's population is increasing."
Is that an 'opinion', a 'fact', or a 'solution'?
It's a 'fact'.

"Fines for drink driving are unacceptable."
Is that an 'opinion', a 'suggestion', or a 'cause'?
It's an 'opinion'.

"Poverty is rising due to unemployment rising."
Is that an 'example', a 'suggestion', or a
'cause'?
It's a 'cause'.

Fines for drink driving
are unacceptable.

opinion suggestion cause

In an essay, 'opinions and arguments' are supported by:

'reasons and explanations',

'causes and examples',

'facts and statements',

'proposals and predictions',

'results and solutions'.

STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

Let's construct a short *paragraph*. Note how it is constructed, beginning with a *topic sentence*, followed by a series of *supporting* and *developing* sentences with different functions.

"Music has many benefits."
fact

"It provides a common language, …"
benefit

"… which breaks down barriers. "
explanation

"The Beatles are popular around the world".
example

"Music helps people relax."
benefit

"Dance music is used for exercise, …"
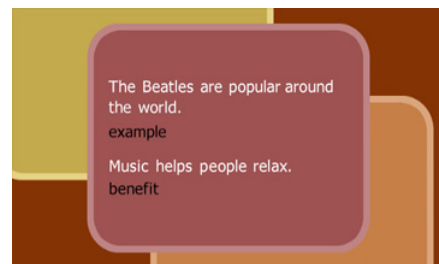fact

"… because it promotes movement."
reason

"Some people prefer reggae."
fact

"They seem very relaxed."
opinion

Listen to John Hawker again construct his argument.

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We'll be helping the City of Melbourne doing that assessment and we'll be identifying where, what trees should be replanted.

Well, there are quite a few problems with some of the trees. Firstly, the trees, some are very old and nearing the end of their life. That's been hastened to some extent by recent very dry conditions in Melbourne and other environmental factors.

STUDY ENGLISH

To stay with our tree analogy, you can see how the argument is steadily built up with different functions: the opening *topic sentence* is like the seedling. Once the *idea* is planted, it grows through *benefits* and *facts*, is strengthened with *reason*, coloured with *opinion*, and develops interesting offshoots with *suggestions* and *proposals*. *Explanations* and *examples* fill out the foliage, and the end result is a beautiful and original creation!
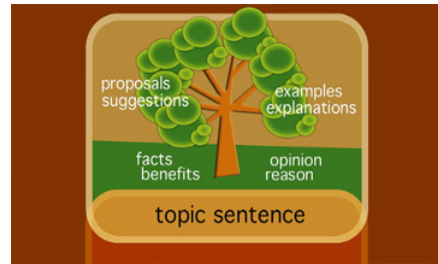
So now that we understand the functions of sentences, let's construct an *argument paragraph*.

"Trees are lovely."
opinion

"They make oxygen,"
fact

"which is necessary for life."
benefit

"We should all plant one."
suggestion

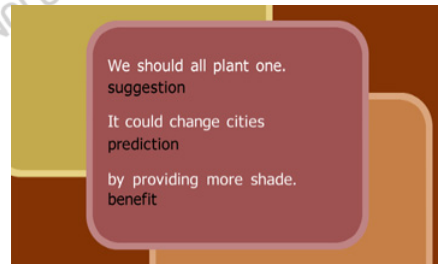"It could change cities…"
prediction

"…by providing more shade."
benefit

"Melbourne is planting trees…"
example

"…to replace its old ones."
reason

And that's all for Study English today. We've looked at a variety of different *functions* in a text. You can find out more about the different functions of sentences by going to our Study English website.

I'll see you next time on Study English. Bye bye.