READING POWER
Third Edition
Extensive Reading • Vocabulary Building • Comprehension Skills • Thinking Skills

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### Introduction to *Basic Reading Power 1*

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What Is a Topic?

A topic is a word or phrase (a few words) that tells what something is about. For example, a friend might ask you, “What’s this book about?” Your friend doesn’t want to know everything about the book. He or she just wants to know the topic. You would answer your friend with something like, “It’s about mountain climbing,” or “It’s about the Second World War.”

In this unit, you’ll learn to look for the topic when you read. The topic is the key to understanding what you read. It also helps you remember. A good reader always asks, “What is this about? What is the topic?”

Finding the Topic

In the groups of words in the following examples, one of the words is the topic for all the other words. You will choose which word is the topic. You may not know the meaning of all the words, but don’t use a dictionary when you work on these exercises. Work with another student and try to guess the meaning of any new words. After you finish each exercise, you may look in the dictionary to get the meaning of words you couldn’t guess.

Example a:

Sometimes the topic is the name of a group of things.

*Which word is the topic? Circle the topic and write it on the line. Don’t use the dictionary.*

1. The topic is **sports**. (The other words are names of sports.)
   - football  baseball  tennis  **sports**  skiing
2. The topic is ____________________.
   - carrots  peas  potatoes  vegetables  onions  beans

Example b:

Sometimes the topic is the name of something with many parts.

*Which word is the topic? Circle the topic and write it on the line. Don’t use the dictionary.*

1. The topic is **Europe**. (The other words are parts of Europe.)
   - France  Germany  Italy  **Europe**  Belgium  Austria
2. The topic is ____________________.
   - nose  ears  eyes  mouth  head  chin
EXERCISE 1

Circle the topic in each group of words. Then write the topic on the line. Work with another student. Don’t use the dictionary.

1. Topic: ________________
   mother sister uncle brother aunt family
2. Topic: ________________
   nine sixteen number eighty thirty-two seventy-seven
3. Topic: ________________
   dog elephant lion animal horse mouse
4. Topic: ________________
   bedroom bathroom house dining room kitchen living room
5. Topic: ________________
   refrigerator oven microwave kitchen stove sink
6. Topic: ________________
   Paris Moscow Tokyo Beijing Los Angeles City
7. Topic: ________________
   bread fruit vegetables food cheese meat
8. Topic: ________________
   music food people games party laughing
9. Topic: ________________
   table furniture chair chest sofa bed
10. Topic: ________________
    shirt skirt suit clothes dress socks

Check the dictionary for any words that you couldn’t guess.

EXERCISE 2

Circle the topic in each group of words. Then write the topic on the line. Work with another student. Don’t use the dictionary.

1. Topic: ________________
   milk orange juice coffee drink water tea
2. Topic: ________________
   dollar euro yen ruble money peso
3. Topic: ________________
   bus airplane train travel boat ship
4. Topic: ________________
   engine windows doors car brakes tires
5. Topic: ________________
   river lake water ocean sea pond
6. Topic: ________________
   teacher students books classroom pencils desks
7. Topic: ________________
   doctor nurse hospital beds patients medicine
8. Topic: ________________
   happy sad feeling excited angry bored
9. Topic: ________________
   keyboard hard drive monitor computer mouse software
10. Topic: ________________
    oxygen nitrogen helium neon hydrogen gas

*Check the dictionary for any words that you couldn’t guess.*

**Thinking of the Topic**

In the following exercises, the topic is not included in the group of words. You must think of a topic for the words.

**EXERCISE 3**

*Read all the words in each group. What is the topic? Write it on the line. Work with another student. Don’t use the dictionary.*

**Example:**

Topic: **Things for eating and drinking**

knife spoon cup bowl fork chopsticks

1. Topic: ________________________________
   subway metro bicycle car train bus
2. Topic: ________________________________
   hospital factory library restaurant hotel bank
3. Topic: ________________________________
   table of contents index title page chapters cover pages
4. Topic: ________________________________
   red purple pink green blue yellow
5. Topic: ________________________________
   physics chemistry astronomy biology geology biochemistry
6. Topic: ________________________________
   cheese  milk  ice cream  butter  cream  yogurt
7. Topic: ________________________________
   morning  afternoon  noon  midnight  dusk  evening
8. Topic: ________________________________
   bicycling  running  swimming  skating  skiing  gymnastics

*Check the dictionary for any words that you couldn't guess.*

**Exercise 4**

*Read all the words in each group. What is the topic? Write it on the line. Work with another student. Don’t use the dictionary.*

1. Topic: ________________________________
   apples  bananas  papayas  oranges  plums  pears
2. Topic: ________________________________
   Mercury  Venus  Saturn  Mars  Jupiter  Uranus
3. Topic: ________________________________
   dollar  quarter  penny  dime  nickel  silver dollar
4. Topic: ________________________________
   driveway  expressway  highway  street  turnpike  avenue
5. Topic: ________________________________
   Nevada  California  Arizona  Wyoming  New Mexico  Montana
6. Topic: ________________________________
   homesickness  joy  anger  sadness  pride  fear
7. Topic: ________________________________
   Kennedy  Washington  Clinton  Carter  Bush  Lincoln
8. Topic: ________________________________
   war  hunger  sickness  many poor people  few jobs  crime

*Check the dictionary for any words that you couldn't guess.*
Exercise 5

Read the words in each group. One word does not belong with the others. Cross out the word that does not belong. Then write the topic on the line. Work with another student. Don’t use the dictionary.

Example:

Topic: Cities in the United States
Boston  New York  Chicago  Paris  San Francisco  Los Angeles

1. Topic: __________________________
   ice cream  cake  carrots  cookies  chocolate  pudding

2. Topic: __________________________
   Amazon  Ganges  Danube  Atlantic  Nile  Yangtze

3. Topic: __________________________
   hat  gloves  swimsuit  scarf  mittens  jacket

4. Topic: __________________________
   February  April  March  June  January  Tuesday

5. Topic: __________________________
   television  radio  piano  CD player  MP3 player  boom box

6. Topic: __________________________
   teacher  scientist  lawyer  husband  doctor  taxi driver

7. Topic: __________________________
   box  bag  pocket  table  backpack  basket

8. Topic: __________________________
   roof  wall  chair  window  door  floor

Check the dictionary for any words that you couldn’t guess.
Finding Two Topics

**Exercise 6**

*Divide each group of words into the two topics given. Then write the words under the topics. Work with another student.*

**Example:**

<table>
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<th>concert</th>
<th>sports</th>
<th>movie</th>
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<td>stairs</td>
<td>elevator</td>
<td>quiz show</td>
<td>escalator</td>
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**Topic A** Ways to go up

**Topic B** Things to watch on TV

1. Zimbabwe, Buddhist, Ethiopia, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Nigeria, Christian, Zambia, Kenya

**Topic A** African countries

**Topic B** World religions

2. mountains, ocean, lake, forest, prairie, desert, river, stream, field, sea

**Topic A** Bodies of water

**Topic B** Geography
3. **Topic A** Spanish-speaking countries

Mexico, Honduras, Australia, Scotland, Guatemala, England, Ireland, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Canada

**Topic B** English-speaking countries


4. **Topic A** Ways to measure time

hour, baggage claim, check-in, month, year, waiting area, minute, gate

**Topic B** Parts of an airport


5. **Topic A** Weather

cold, rectangle, wind, octagon, triangle, ice, rain, square, circle, snow

**Topic B** Geometric shapes


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Comprehension Skills
**EXERCISE 7**

*Divide each group of words into two topics. Write the two topics. Then write the words under the topics. Work with another student.*

1. armchair  table  book  bookcase  magazine  
   newspaper  lamp  sofa  letter  map  

   **Topic A** __________________________   **Topic B** __________________________

   ____________________________________  ____________________________________

   ____________________________________  ____________________________________

   ____________________________________  ____________________________________

   ____________________________________  ____________________________________

2. scream  loud  talk  easy  shout  
   good  tell  beautiful  difficult  whisper  

   **Topic A** __________________________   **Topic B** __________________________

   ____________________________________  ____________________________________

   ____________________________________  ____________________________________

   ____________________________________  ____________________________________

3. foot  arm  stomach  leg  heart  
   liver  kidneys  lungs  hand  neck  

   **Topic A** __________________________   **Topic B** __________________________

   ____________________________________  ____________________________________

   ____________________________________  ____________________________________

   ____________________________________  ____________________________________
4. | actors | telephone | file cabinet | camera operators | musicians |
   | computer | director   | producer     | chair            | desk      |

**Topic A**

**Topic B**

5. | jazz | classical | drum | accordion | folk |
   | trumpet | guitar | rock | blues | piano |

**Topic A**

**Topic B**

**Working with Topics**

Now you will write the words for some topics. You may use a dictionary for this exercise.

**Exercise 8**

*Think of words for these topics. Write the words on the lines below. Then talk to another student about his or her words. Are they the same as yours?*

1. Topic: Interesting jobs

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2. Topic: Parts of a bus

3. Topic: Reasons for learning English

4. Topic: 
   (Now you write the topic.)