Recording script M7: Preparation for a talk on desalination

Tutor: So, Fahad, let's talk about your presentation. Um, you've done a rough outline, so, er, let's go over it and then you can go away and write it all up.

Fahad: Sure.

Tutor: I asked you to choose a topic related to water, and you've chosen desalination - removing salt from seawater. Now, why did you choose that?

Fahad: Well, I come from the United Arab Emirates, and we have the world's largest desalination plant.

Tutor: Right, that's very relevant, and I think should include that - you know, your personal, er, reasons - at the start.

Fahad: Say why I decided on this topic?

Tutor: Yes - just give a sentence or two, that'll do.

Fahad: OK - I mean, I thought I should keep the introduction brief ...

Tutor: Yes, but you can say why you like the topic ... it's a good choice of topic - very interesting — and then I can follow the introduction easily.

Fahad: OK.

Tutor: Now, let's go on to the historical background.

Fahad: Mm, I want to make it clear that seawater purification isn't a new idea.

Tutor: No - indeed, that's a good point to make.

Fahad: So I'm going to describe some of the 'older' methods from the past.

Tutor: Mmm. I got a bit lost reading your notes here.

Fahad: Ah-ha. Is it too long?

Tutor: Well, I think the real problem is that the information isn't in any logical order.

Fahad: I see ... well, it is just notes.

Tutor: Well, you start in the 18th century, then move to the present day, then go back to the 20th century.

Fahad: So it needs reorganizing.

Tutor: Yes, that would help.

Fahad: OK - I'll make it clearer. What about the description of the process?

Tutor: Ah, yes, that looks pretty good to me, but we'll go over it in more detail in a moment.

Fahad: OK. I may need to cut it down.

Tutor: Yes, definitely — it goes on for a long time and gets a bit technical.

Fahad: Sure, er... OK. After the process, I want to talk about the pros and cons of desalination, because that seems to be the big debate.

Tutor: I totally agree. But you need to sort this section out.

Fahad: Yes, it is a bit confusing.

Tutor: I think you should present the main points one at a time.

Fahad: OK - what, er, the advantages and disadvantages?

Tutor: Yes, and talk about each one individually.

Fahad: OK - rather than presenting them all together?

Tutor: Mmm — it's hard for your listeners to take in all that. It's all a bit unclear at the moment.

Fahad: I see.

Tutor: So, lastly, you conclude that we need to look for alternative ways to remove salt from sea water.

Fahad: Well, yes. Do you think that's the wrong conclusion?

Tutor: No, no — not at all. However, you should tell your audience exactly why you think this.

Fahad: I will in the previous section.

Tutor: Mmm, but you need to summarize the reasons again in the final part of your presentation.

Fahad: Oh, I see. Right … I'll mention them briefly, then.

Tutor: Just a list will do. That'll make the conclusion a better length as well.

Fahad: OK - thanks very much, Dr. Tyler.

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Tutor: OK, so let's have a closer look at the section on the process of desalination.

Fahad: Well, I just need to outline the principle of the process, don't I?

Tutor: Uh-huh. Yes, yes. You need to explain first what desalination means.

Fahad: Well, I want to start by referring to a natural form of desalination … Um, and to say that a sea bird filters salt out of sea water in its throat.

Tutor: OK, that's interesting … so they just spit the salt out, do they?

Fahad: Yes.

Tutor: Right, that's a good introduction. Then you can go on to describe the mechanical process.

Fahad: Yes — well, the first stage is the collection … um … it involves a large plant that collects the water — actually, it goes through a canal and that passes the water into the plant, which treats it, you know …

Tutor: Removes all the rubbish.

Fahad: Yes.

Tutor: So the treatment's the second stage. What happens next?

Fahad: Well, the next stage is that it goes through a lot of pipes until it reaches the point where the salt is removed.

Tutor: OK — so that's the next point on your chart …

Fahad: Yes — I can talk about this quite a lot … the salt's separated from fresh water.

Tutor: Right … the water passes through a membrane …

Fahad: Mmm — not exactly. That's the whole thing. The sea water has to be forced … er, pumped … and a lot of pressure is involved.

Tutor: Mmm — you need to make that point — explain that the water doesn't go freely.

Fahad: No, because the salt is heavy. This is the really expensive part of the process.

Tutor: OK … so after that, what happens?

Fahad: Well, there's some more treatment after the high-pressure filtering process, but eventually the system produces fresh water.

Tutor: OK — it might be good to mention what's left over.

Fahad: Salt, and that's a really big problem …

Tutor: Where does it go?

Fahad: After the desalination process, the substance that remains — it's called brine — it's a very salty substance and it goes back - usually into the sea.

Tutor: Mmm.

Fahad: It's not good for fish, though … it damages marine life.

Tutor: Well — you can discuss that in the next section of your presentation.

Fahad: Yup. So anyway … a lot of the fresh water that's produced is used for human consumption.

Tutor: Uh-huh, yes, and …

Fahad: It's also used for irrigation … for watering farmland.

Tutor: Great! Well, you've mentioned some of the disadvantages …