

Reading Comprehension



DO NOT BE EMBARRASSED! WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE!

A few years ago, my brother came to Austin, Texas, to visit me. We went to a diner and ordered pancakes for breakfast. He rolled up one of the pancakes, filled it up with as much syrup as he could and, using his hands, he pushed the pancake into his mouth. A trickle of syrup ran down his chin. My brother, who, at the time, was not very fluent in English, called the waiter and said: "Excuse me. Could you please bring me a *kidnap*?". Both the waiter and I started laughing: "He means a *napkin*, sorry", I said. To my brother, the words "kidnap" and "napkin" sounded somewhat alike. Clearly, however, their meaning is very different. The verb "to kidnap" means "to take someone somewhere illegally by force, often in order to get money for returning them" (Longman Dictionary online; available at <http://www.idoceanonline.com/>). A "napkin", by contrast, is a piece of paper or cloth that you use to clean your hands and lips while eating.

When we go abroad to a non-Spanish speaking country, we often have to use English to communicate, and regardless of how well we have mastered the language, funny or confusing situations like the one described above can happen to all of us. Far from the somewhat artificial space that is the English classroom, when we travel, we come face-to-face with the reality of using another language. It is then and there that we realize that handling even the most basic situations in another language can sometimes be tricky. We can get lost, lose our wallet, our cellphone, we may need to make an urgent phone call, find the cheapest hotel in the area, locate our missing luggage, among many other things. In some of these cases, most of us have felt the helplessness of being incapable of fully expressing ourselves in English, and of fully understanding what somebody who seems very interesting is telling us. Other times, even though we are not aware of it, we can come off as impolite due to cultural barriers that are unknown to us. For example, my dearest friend Beatrix went to a coffee shop in England and ordered a cup of American coffee. The waiter asked: "Do you want room for your milk?". *Room* for my milk? What on earth is that? —Beatrix thought—, so she answered: "What?". The waiter told her that saying "what?" as a way to have somebody repeat what they have just said was very impolite. The correct way, the waiter said, is "excuse me?" or "pardon?".

Likewise, most of us have probably made use of false friends, also called false cognates, that is, a word in one language that has a very different meaning from a similar-sounding word in another language (e.g. "actually" does not mean "actualmente"). False friends can make for some humorous miscommunications between Spanish and English speakers. A good example is the following: you just arrived to the US and you have a cold, so you decide to go the pharmacy and buy something, but you have no idea what to buy. You wonder, "Would they know what *Frenadol* is?". You soon realize that the easiest way is to tell the pharmacist what your symptoms are: "Hi, I am *constipated*. What should

I take?" The pharmacist is surely going to give you a drug that will help you with your constipation: a laxative!

Mispronunciation is also a source of confusion. Do you like the TV show called *Modern Family*? Go to YouTube and type this: "the many, many, many mispronunciations of Gloria". You are going to crack up! I especially enjoyed the way she pronounces *we live in a dog-eat-dog world* as *we live in a "doggie dog" world*. Similarly, minimal pairs (i.e. two words that differ only in one phonological element and have very different meanings) like 'sheep' and 'ship', 'thin' and 'thing', 'three' and 'tree', 'big' and 'pig', 'her' and 'hear', 'sink' and 'think', etc., need to be distinguished carefully.¹ That is, speaking with accurate pronunciation is very important in the case of English. Doing so can prevent miscommunication and embarrassment, since it is clearly not the same to say "I went to England on a French *ship*", than "I went to England on a French *sheep*".

Yes, being a tourist can be tough sometimes. But try your best, use your English as much as you can, get immersed in the language, and do not feel embarrassed if you do not get everything right, or if you speak English with a Spanish accent (or any other accent). Remember that we have all been there... and if you make a mistake, there is always the possibility of simply excusing yourself: "I'm sorry, I am not from here".

¹ If you are interested, visit <http://howjsay.com/>, a useful online talking dictionary of English pronunciation. Type the words above to compare the way each is pronounced.



Exercises (see answers on page 301)

Exercise 1:

Here is a list of easy-to-remember, useful travel expressions. Match each of them with their corresponding translation.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) Excuse me, where can I find a bus/taxi? | a) ¿Aceptan tarjetas de crédito? |
| 2) Where is the nearest grocery store? | b) Estoy perdido, -a. |
| 3) Can you take me to the airport, please? | c) Viajo solo, -a. |
| 4) How much does this cost? | d) Disculpe, ¿cómo puedo llegar a la puerta de embarque...? |
| 5) Do you take credit cards? | e) Disculpe, ¿dónde puedo encontrar un autobús/taxi? |
| 6) Where is the bathroom? | f) ¿Podría escribírmelo, por favor? |
| 7) Where can I get something to eat? | g) ¿Podría repetírmelo, por favor? |
| 8) Can you show me on the map how to get there? | h) Necesito encontrar un cajero. |
| 9) Could you please write that down for me? | i) ¿Dónde está la oficina de información? |
| 10) I have been in an accident. I need help. | j) ¿Dónde está el supermercado más cercano? |
| 11) I'm lost. | k) Mi equipaje se ha perdido, ¿podría ayudarme, por favor? |
| 12) Where is the nearest hospital? | l) ¿Cuánto cuesta? |
| 13) I'm allergic to... | m) ¿Dónde puedo encontrar algo para comer? |
| 14) Could you repeat that, please? | n) ¿Dónde está el lavabo? |
| 15) Where is the information office? | o) He tenido un accidente. Necesito ayuda. |
| 16) I need to find an ATM. | p) ¿Puede llevarme al aeropuerto, por favor? |
| 17) I'm traveling alone. | q) Soy alérgico, -a... |
| 18) Where can I rent a car? | r) ¿Dónde puedo alquilar un coche? |
| 19) My luggage is missing. Could you help me, please? | s) ¿Dónde está el hospital más cercano? |
| 20) Excuse me. How do I get to gate...? | t) ¿Puede mostrarme en el mapa cómo llegar ahí? |



Exercise 2:

This is a list of some of the most common false cognates. In this exercise, you have to fill in the gaps in the table below. Look at the first example to see how it is done: column 1 lists a false cognate (whose meaning is provided in column 2). The false cognate could be mistaken for the word in column 3, whose translation is given in column 4.

Use the following dictionaries if you need help:

<http://dictionary.reverso.net/English-cobuild/> and/or
<http://www.wordreference.com/>

FALSE COGNATE	it means but not which is ...
<i>actually</i>	en realidad, de hecho	actualmente	<i>nowadays</i>
<i>argument</i>		argumento	<i>plot</i>
	alfombra	carpeta	<i>file</i>
<i>college</i>	universidad	colegio	
<i>to be constipated</i>		estar acatarrado	<i>to have a cold</i>
<i>contest</i>	concurso	contestar	
	postre	desierto	
	avergonzado	embarazada	
<i>fabric</i>		fábrica	
	cuerno	horno	
<i>library</i>		librería	<i>bookshop</i>
<i>molest</i>	abusar sexualmente	molestar	
<i>sensible</i>	sensato	sensible	



Notes



Glossary

embarrassed	adj.	avergonzado, -a
diner	n.	café-restaurante
to fill (sth.) up [with (sth.)]	vtr phrasal.	llenar (algo) de/con
trickle	n.	hilo (de líquido)
chin	n.	barbilla, mentón
to kidnap	v.	secuestrar, raptar
napkin	n.	servilleta
alike	adj.	parecido, -a
to go abroad	v expr.	viajar al extranjero
regardless (of)	prep.	independientemente de
to come face to face with	v expr.	enfrentarse a (una situación)
to realize	v.	darse cuenta
to handle	v.	manejarse, lidiar
tricky	adj.	complicado, -a
luggage	n.	equipaje
helplessness	n.	impotencia
to come off as	vi phrasal.	resultar
impolite	adj.	maleducado, -a
cultural barrier	n.	barrera cultural
room	n.	espacio
what on earth...? (informal)	interj.	¿qué demonios...?
miscommunication	n.	error de comunicación
to have a cold	v expr.	estar o tener un resfriado
to wonder	v.	preguntarse
constipated	adj.	estreñido, -a
drug	n.	medicamento
mispronunciation	n.	pronunciación incorrecta
to crack up (slang)	vi phrasal.	partirse de la risa
dog-eat-dog (figurative)	adj.	jungla (figurado)
accurate	adj.	preciso, -a
embarrassment	n.	bochorno, vergüenza
tough	adj.	duro, -a; difícil



Use of English

Modal verbs

1. TENSE MARKERS

Remember: Modal verbs are auxiliaries and appear before infinitive verbs.

a) Will: Future

They will be my parents-in-law soon.
(will + infinitive)

b) Would: Conditional

I would like a cup of coffee.
(would + infinitive)

Modal Verb Forms & Contractions

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I will be your friend.	I will not be a stranger.	Will you marry me?
I'll answer your letters.	I won't lie to you.	Will you live with me?
I would buy a car.	I would not have any problems.	Would you work at home?
I'd sell my house.	I wouldn't change my job.	Would you have kids?





Exercises (see answers on page 302)

Exercise 1:

Put the verbs into the correct form using ***will*** and ONE of the following verbs: ***travel, earn, serve, adore, meet, anticipate, be, not be, happen, not have***.

Susan asked a fortune teller about her future. Here is what she was told:

- 1) You _____ a lot of money.
- 2) You _____ around the world.
- 3) You _____ lots of interesting people.
- 4) Everybody _____ you.
- 5) You _____ any problems.
- 6) Many people _____ you.
- 7) Your friends _____ your wishes.
- 8) There _____ anything left to wish for.
- 9) Everything _____ perfect.
- 10) But all these things _____ if you get married.

Exercise 2:

Put the verbs into the correct form using conditional ***would*** and ONE of the following verbs: ***help, wake, not wait, give, not do, not say, watch, go, tell, walk***.

- 1) They _____ to the station.
- 2) He _____ you the truth.
- 3) I _____ home.
- 4) They _____ a scary movie.
- 5) You _____ that.
- 6) She _____ this.
- 7) _____ you _____ him this letter?
- 8) I _____ any longer.
- 9) _____ she _____ me up at six o'clock?
- 10) _____ they _____ him in the garden?

Exercise 3:

Put the verbs into the correct form using ***will, won't, would or wouldn't, when needed***.

When I have enough money I (1) _____ go to Europe to visit some friends. I (2) _____ waste time booking cheap flights. If I went to Germany, I (3) _____ stay with my friend Janet. I am sure we (4) _____ spend a few days at her parents' house if they were in Dublin. If we wanted to visit her grandparents in Konstanz we (5) _____ travel by train there.

2. MODAL VERBS WITH DIFFERENT MEANINGS

Remember: Some modal verbs incorporate some additional meaning to the verbs they precede such as: ability, possibility, obligation or lack of obligation.

a) Ability: can

Affirmative: I can speak English.
Negative: No, I cannot / can't speak German.
Interrogative: Can you speak German?
Typical responses: Certainly. Yes, certainly. Of course. Of course, you can. Sure (informal), etc.

b) Possibility: can / may

One may (not) win money in the lottery.
Summers can (not) be very hot in London.

c) Obligation: must / have to

You must be in time to get the job.
You have to drink sufficient water on a daily basis.
Note: The verb "must" is used to indicate the sense of 'compulsion' whereas the verb "have to" is used to indicate "necessity".

d) Prohibition: mustn't

You mustn't smoke in public places.

e) Lack of obligation: don't have to

You don't have to pay for school supplies in Spanish public schools.

f) Suggestion or advice: should

Example:
You should pay more attention to your teacher.

Pay attention: Modal verbs cannot appear together preceding another verb.

*I must have to pay. → I must pay my taxes. / You have to pay yours.

BUT TENSE MAKERS CAN:

You will have to pay for your retirement.



Exercises (see answers on pages 302-304)

Exercise 4:

Put the correct modal verb (*can* or *can't*) in each case.

- 1) My daughter _____ ride a bike.
 - 2) We _____ cook in our new kitchen.
 - 3) My friend _____ visit me this week.
 - 4) A child _____ lift 100 kilos.
 - 5) A baby _____ eat meat.
 - 6) _____ you help me?
 - 7) _____ you tell me the way to the museum?
 - 8) _____ you come here a minute please?
 - 9) _____ I use your cell phone?
 - 10) _____ I smoke here?

Exercise 5:

Choose the modal verb (*have to, must, or mustn't*) to fill in the gaps in the following sentences.

- 1) Today I _____ finish my geography project.
 - 2) She will _____ wait in line like everyone else.
 - 3) All employees _____ be on time for work.
 - 4) We _____ forgot to take the chicken out of the freezer.
 - 5) If you are under 13 you _____ to get your parents' permission.
 - 6) Your daughter may _____ try on a few different sizes.
 - 7) The doctor _____ get here as soon as he can.
 - 8) Do you _____ work next weekend?
 - 9) Bicyclists _____ remember to signal when they turn.
 - 10) Angela, you _____ leave your clothes all over the floor like this.

Exercise 6:

Choose the correct modal (*must* or *should*) for the following sentences.

- 1) Tenants _____ pay their rent.
 - 2) Pedestrians _____ look both ways before they cross the street.
 - 3) Drivers _____ stop for pedestrians at marked crossings.
 - 4) Telephone callers _____ give their names.
 - 5) Homeowners _____ report thefts to the police.
 - 6) All workers _____ pay unemployment insurance.
 - 7) In order to vote you _____ come in person.
 - 8) People who are sick _____ stay home from work.
 - 9) Construction workers _____ wear hard hats.
 - 10) Waiters _____ be pleasant to customers.



Exercise 7:

Choose the correct modal verb (*must*, *have to*, *should*, *can*) for the gaps in the following dialogues. More than one modal verb is possible in some cases.

Dialogue 1

- A:** What do you think I (1) _____ see in London first?

B: Well, historical places, I think. You (2) _____ go to Westminster Abbey, and if you (3) _____ go to the Houses of Parliament and the National Gallery.

A: And what about the British Museum? I was told one (4) _____ see it.

B: I suppose you (5) _____ go there. There you (6) _____ find masterpieces of the world's best artists.

A: How (7) _____ I get to the center?

B: I think you (8) _____ go by steamer down the Thames from Westminster to Tower Bridge. That's a very pleasant way to travel, and you (9) _____ see London bridges and quite a number of buildings on the way.

Dialogue 2

- A: I (10) _____ prepare the visit to the museum tomorrow.
B: What (11) _____ you do?
A: I (12) _____ create some activities for the visitors and make copies.
B: (13) _____ you do that tonight? (14) _____ you wait until morning?
A: No, I (15) _____ do it tonight. I (16) _____ finish before 9 p.m. because the copy shop will close by 10 p.m.
B: I hope you don't (17) _____ do too much!



Notes



Oral Skills

READ AND LISTEN TO THIS CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO LADIES, JANE AND ELIZABETH, VISITING LONDON

JANE: What are our plans for today?

ELIZABETH: We have to visit Kensington Palace.

JANE: Should we take a taxi?

ELIZABETH: Oh, no it's too expensive. Why don't we take the tube?

JANE: We are at Leicester Square. How would we get to the Kensington area?

ELIZABETH: Let's have a look at the map. Yes, there's a station near the palace called Kensington High Street. Do you see it?

JANE: Yes, we can take the Piccadilly Line as far as Gloucester Road, transfer there and take the Circle Line, which will take us straight to Kensington High Street.

ELIZABETH: See... it's easier than we thought. And afterwards we can go to Portobello Road.

JANE: Is it very far from Kensington?

ELIZABETH: According to Google Maps, it's a nice thirty minutes' walk. It's a lovely spring day to wander the streets of London!

JANE: Why do you want to go to Portobello?

ELIZABETH: Because I'm dying to see the exotic shops there. They are famous all over the world. George Orwell's house is also on that very street!

JANE: Listen, if we go to Portobello we'll spend the whole afternoon there and I'd like to go sightseeing today as the weather is so nice. We could go tomorrow and do some shopping.

ELIZABETH: All right. Why don't we go to the Temple today? It's a city within the city.

JANE: Is it far from Kensington?

ELIZABETH: A bit. But we can take both the District and Circle lines and get there in fifteen minutes. It's worth seeing!

JANE: The Temple is near Covent Garden, you see. We could walk by the Strand to the old market and have dinner there.

ELIZABETH: I'm always ready for a good dinner in an English pub. What about going to the Haymarket later and getting tickets for the theatre?

JANE: Sounds good! What shall we see?

ELIZABETH: I've heard about some Noel Coward. We can buy a newspaper and have a look at the theatre guide while we have dinner.

JANE: Just check it out on the Internet and buy the tickets online.

ELIZABETH: Alright! But I'm afraid I forgot my credit card. What about you?

JANE: Oh, my!

READ AND LISTEN TO THIS CONVERSATION BETWEEN A TRAVEL AGENT AND A CLIENT

CLIENT: Good morning, my husband and I would like to spend our summer holidays away from New York City. What would you suggest?

TRAVEL AGENT: Have you ever been to Scotland?

CLIENT: Never. Actually my maiden name is MacLeod. So I've always felt very close to the country.

TRAVEL AGENT: No doubt, Scotland is an excellent choice. This small country still remains unknown to hundreds of thousands of people.

CLIENT: That sounds exciting! Can we fly from JFK to Edinburgh?

TRAVEL AGENT: Certainly, madam. Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland and the airport is very close to the city centre.

CLIENT: What are the most important landmarks in the city?

TRAVEL AGENT: The past and the present mix together. The castle, situated on a rock high above, was the house of Mary Queen of Scots and also the location for the famous military parades which take place during the Edinburgh Festival.

CLIENT: Mary Stuart! That's ancient history! What about the modern city?

TRAVEL AGENT: It's great too! Its historic monuments and narrow cobbled streets blend with the modern office blocks and shopping malls of the dynamic Prince's Street.

CLIENT: I've heard wonderful things about Glasgow.

TRAVEL AGENT: Absolutely! You can't miss its twelfth-century cathedral and Mackintosh's buildings. Its football clubs and the wide variety of entertainments provide visitors with excitement.

CLIENT: A friend told me it's wild in the north!

TRAVEL AGENT: Just an hour from Glasgow you can have a picnic on the banks of Loch Lomond. Or you can sail down the River Clyde, or explore the Highlands, or visit the cottage

where the famous poet Robbie Burns was born in Alloway.

CLIENT: Does Nessie live far from there?

TRAVEL AGENT: Oh! The mysterious monster lives further north, in Loch Ness, just thirty miles away from Inverness.

CLIENT: My husband once told me he was interested in the whisky industry. Could we possibly visit a distillery?

TRAVEL AGENT: There are so many interspersed with the beautiful castles! Whisky is blended and distilled in the Highlands of Scotland, and then exported all over the world.

CLIENT: Sure, he'll enjoy a glass of *Grouse*!



Definitions

Kensington Palace: a residence of the British Royal Family since the 17th century in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Leicester Square: a pedestrianized square in the West End of London which holds a number of important cinemas.

Kensington High Street: one of the western London's most popular shopping streets.

Piccadilly Line: a line of the London Underground that is coloured dark blue on the Tube map.

Circle Line: a line of the London Underground which is coloured yellow on the Tube Map.

Portobello Road: a street in the Notting Hill district of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. On Saturdays, it is home to the Portobello Road Market, known for its second-hand clothes and antiques.

George Orwell: (1903-1950) English novelist, essayist and critic, best known for his novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*.

The Temple: an area in central London that contains many barristers' chambers and solicitors' offices. It is named after a church belonging to the Knights Templar in the 12th century.

District Line: a line of the London Underground that is coloured green on the Tube map.

Covent Garden: a borough in the West of London famous for its shops, entertainment and street performances.

Haymarket: a street in the St James's area of the City of Westminster in London famous for its restaurants, cinemas and theatres.

Noel Coward: (1899-1973) English playwright. Many of his works such as *Hay Fever* or *Private Lives* have





remained in the regular theatre repertoire.

JFK: the John Fitzgerald Kennedy's airport located in New York.

Mary Queen of Scots: (1542-1587), also known as Mary Stuart or Mary I of Scotland, reigned in Scotland from 1542 to 1567. Mary was found guilty of plotting to assassinate her cousin Elizabeth I of England, and was beheaded.

Edinburgh Festival: the largest arts festival in the world which takes place every August for three weeks in Edinburgh.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh: (1868-1928) a Scottish architect, designer, water colourist and artist.

Loch Lomond: the largest inland stretch of freshwater in Great Britain situated in the Highlands.

River Clyde: the eighth-longest river in the United Kingdom, and the second longest in Scotland.

The Highlands: a historic region of Scotland that includes the highest mountain in the British Isles, Ben Nevis.

Robbie Burns: (1759-1796) is widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland. His poem "Auld Lang Syne" served for a long time as an unofficial national anthem of the country.

Loch Ness: a freshwater lake in the Scottish Highlands in the southwest of Inverness best known for alleged sightings of the Loch Ness Monster, also known as Nessie.

The Famous Grouse: a famous brand of blended Scotch whisky.



Notes

Writing Skills

Writing: Coherence and Cohesion (CONTRAST)

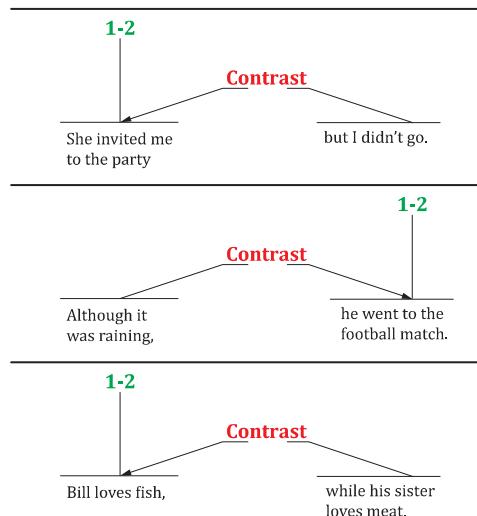
Another discourse relation that can be used within a text is CONTRAST. This relation indicates an opposition between two ideas, facts, situations, actions, etc. For example:

"She invited me to the party **but** I didn't go."

Although it was raining, he went to the football match."

Bill loves fish, **while** his sister loves meat."

These examples could be represented in this way:



Some connectors can be used to indicate a CONTRAST relation. See for example the items in bold in the sentences above.

More connectors of CONTRAST:

1	although
2	but
3	however
4	nevertheless
5	nonetheless
6	though
7	whereas
8	while

Pay attention: The two elements in contrast can be placed in the same sentence or in different sentences. If they are placed in different sentences, the recommended connectors are "however", "nevertheless" and "nonetheless". These connectors must be followed by a comma.

For example:

"She invited me to the party. **However**, I didn't go."

"It was raining. **Nevertheless**, he went to the football match."



Glossary

contrast	n.	contraste
opposition	n.	oposición
idea	n.	idea
fact	n.	hecho
situation	n.	situación
action	n.	acción
but	conj.	pero
although	conj.	aunque
football match	n.	partido de fútbol
fish	n.	pescado
while	conj.	mientras que
meat	n.	carne
however	adv.	sin embargo
nevertheless	adv.	sin embargo, aun así
nonetheless	adv.	no obstante, sin embargo
though	conj.	aunque
whereas	conj.	mientras que



Notes



Exercises (see answers on page 304)

Exercise 1:

Among the options a, b, c and d, select the adequate connector that should be inserted in the blank. Only one option is correct.

- 1) I wanted to go to Paris on holiday _____ in the end I had to stay at home.

 - a) nevertheless
 - b) but
 - c) nonetheless
 - d) however

2) She has visited hundreds of countries. _____, she has never been to France.

 - a) although
 - b) though
 - c) however
 - d) while

3) _____ Thailand is not his favorite place, he went there on his honeymoon because his wife really wanted to go to that country.

 - a) Although
 - b) Nonetheless
 - c) But
 - d) Nevertheless

Exercise 2:

In the following sentences, substitute the **CONTRAST** connector (in bold) with another equivalent connector appropriate for that specific context. You must choose a connector from the following list (only one option is correct; each connector cannot be used more than once).

nonetheless but though although whereas

- 1) **Although** the plane ticket was expensive, he decided to buy it.
 - 2) Mary loves to travel by train. **Nevertheless**, her husband hates it.
 - 3) Tom went to Prague by plane **while** Sally went by car.



Exercise 3:

Match each fragment 1-4 with another fragment a-d to form a sentence with a CONTRAST relation.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) She likes adventure sports | a) However , unfortunately, she has never been there. |
| 2) His sister always talks about the amazing shopping in New York. | b) Nevertheless , until now they have never had the opportunity to do it. |
| 3) My parents have always wanted to go on a cruise. | c) but I don't know how to swim. |
| 4) I love the beach and the sea | d) while he prefers to visit cities with famous museums. |



Notes