

# 4 Modern technology

**READING SKILLS** Identifying the main message – topic sentences

**WRITING SKILLS** Organizing ideas (1) • Linking ideas (2) • A discursive essay

**VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT** Avoiding repetition (1)

## READING Innovations

1 Skim the articles and letters on page 23. Answer the questions.

- 1 Where would you expect to find a page like this?
- 2 How many articles are there?
- 3 What is the topic of each article?
- 4 How many letters are there?
- 5 What piece of technology is each letter about?

2 **Read Study Skill** Scan the text *The Silent Plane* and the readers' letters opposite. Pay attention to topic sentences only. Are the statements true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Maybe one day planes won't make a noise. T
- 2 Noise is being reduced in two ways.
- 3 The project to build the plane hasn't begun yet.
- 4 Mr Campbell is happy with his computer.
- 5 The writer of the third letter wants help.
- 6 Paula Adams' opinion is the same as an earlier letter writers.

### STUDY SKILL

#### Identifying the main message – topic sentences

Students are often required to do a large amount of reading. To save time and to select the best text(s) for your needs, it is important to identify the main message as quickly as possible.

To do this:

- look at the title.
- quickly skim the text to find the topic sentences. They are usually the first sentence in each paragraph. They summarize what the paragraph is about.

3 Read the summaries a–d of the paragraphs in the article *The Car that Drives Itself*. Match them with topic sentences 1–4. Do not read the article.

#### Summaries

- a describing how the car works
- b predicting future developments
- c outlining some problems
- d introducing the subject

#### Topic sentences

- 1  A car manufacturer has designed and built a car that drives itself.
- 2  Despite these disadvantages, car manufacturers see driverless cars as the future.
- 3  However, there are still two main drawbacks.
- 4  The car works using two main devices.

4 Skim the article to match topic sentences from exercise 3 to paragraphs A–D. Use the summaries to help.

## INNOVATIONS

### THE SILENT PLANE

Annoyance from aeroplane noise could be a thing of the past as plans are announced to design a silent aircraft. The aim is to reduce the noise from a plane so that city-dwellers will no longer hear it passing overhead once it has left the airport.

This noise reduction will be achieved in three main ways. Firstly, the plane is being designed as a single, wide wing. Secondly, the engines will be placed above the wing, inside the plane, rather than under the wings and outside, and thirdly the airplane will be flown differently, for example at a reduced speed when it is near the airport.

The aircraft is just a design concept at the moment and many technological challenges will have to be met before we have silent planes overhead.



### THE CAR THAT DRIVES ITSELF

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ It can steer itself and control its speed. This is the latest development in the long history of the automobile industry.

**B** \_\_\_\_\_ The first is a radar sensor in the front of the car. It scans the road in front of the car, looking for other vehicles. It then speeds the car up or slows it down according to the traffic conditions. The second device is a camera below the rear-view mirror which watches the white lines in the road. It uses these lines as a guide to steering the car.

**C** \_\_\_\_\_ Firstly, the system can only work on motorways, and secondly, they still need a driver. If the driver doesn't touch the steering wheel every 10 seconds, the devices can stop working.

**D** \_\_\_\_\_ They are already working on new models that will be able to drive on city roads. So, perhaps one day soon, we will be able to jump into our cars and sleep or read a book as we are driven to work!



## Opinions and Questions: the Readers Write!

Sir,

*Is anyone else fed up with their home computer? I bought one to make my life easier and it has done exactly the opposite! Everyone told me that it would be easy to set up. 'A child could do it!' they said. So, I tried and it has been a disaster. It crashes constantly and instead of saving me time, I seem to spend all my free time trying to make it work. If this is an example of modern technology, give me an old-fashioned typewriter anytime!*

Yours

W.F. Campbell (Mr)

Dear Sir,

*I strongly disagree with the previous correspondent about the quality of photographs from digital cameras. Perhaps for the professional photographer, an old-fashioned camera is better, but for most of us a digital camera is ideal. You can preview your photos, edit them, and then only download the ones you want. What's more, you can send them to your family and friends at once. Brilliant!*

Yours faithfully,

Paula Adams

Sir,

*I am writing to ask for some advice about memory sticks. I use mine to keep a copy of my data, in case something goes wrong with my computer. However, I was told that memory sticks are unreliable and are easily damaged by anything magnetic, or by going through scanners, at airports, for example. Could you please clarify for me whether this is true? I have a new job that requires me to travel regularly, and I was hoping to take my memory stick on trips.*

Yours,

A. Jefcoate