Listening Comprehension

Guide to Listening Comprehension

The first section of the test consists of four separate parts. Each has its own directions and format:

Part 1: Sentences About Photographs	10 items	
Part 2: Stimuli—Responses	30 items	
Part 3: Short Conversations (10 conversations with 3 questions each)	30 items	
Part 4: Short Talks (10 talks with 3 questions each)	30 items	
	Total:	100 items

This section tests your ability to understand informal spoken English, but only Part 2 is a "pure" test of listening. Part 1 also tests your ability to quickly interpret photographs, and Parts 3 and 4 test your reading skills, since you must read the questions and answer choices before you can answer.

You can make quite a few errors on this section and still get a good score. Errors count less against your total score than errors in the Reading section do. (See the Score Conversion Chart on page 247.)

Concentration is very important to success in this section. You need to focus your attention on the audio program, on the test booklet (except in Part 2), and on your answer sheet. In Parts 1 and 2, particularly, you need a very close, almost word-for-word understanding of the items on the audio program, and you will have to be able to distinguish between words with similar sounds.

The Listening section of the *Guide* is divided into four lessons, each corresponding to one of the parts of the test. Each lesson provides familiarity and practice for that part of the test.

Using the Audio Program

The audio portions of the four lessons in this section are on the cassette tapes/audio CDs that accompany this book. The audio symbol shown above indicates that you should turn on the audio program whenever it appears throughout the *Guide*. Almost all the exercises in this section are also on the audio program. However, directions for the exercises are not recorded. You should read the directions before you begin to work on an exercise. The audio portion of the Practice TOEIC® Tests is also recorded on the audio program.

The Audio Script and Answer Key for *Complete Guide to the TOEIC® Test* provides a written version of the material on the audio program, as well as answers for the exercises and tests. If you have trouble with an exercise, listen to it again before you look at the script and the answer. Don't stop the audio program in the middle of an exercise; always complete each exercise before listening again or looking at the audio script.

Lesson 1 Sentences About Photographs

Lesson Outline

Format   Part 1

The first part of the test consists of ten numbered photographs that are in your test book. For each photograph, you will hear on the audio program four sentences that refer to it. You must decide which of the sentences best describes something you can see in each photograph.

The photographs are pictures of ordinary situations. Some of the photographs involve a person or people; others involve an object or a scene without people.

The sentences are short and grammatically simple. They generally deal with the most important aspects of the photographs, but some focus on small details or on objects or people in the background.

Each item is introduced by a statement that tells you to look at the next numbered photograph. The pacing for this part is fast: There is only a five-second pause between items, and there is no pause between sentences (A), (B), (C), and (D).

Tactics   Part 1

1. Always complete each item as quickly as possible so that you can preview the photograph for the next item. Don't wait for the statement that says, "Now look at photograph number ____."

2. If you are previewing a photograph that involves a person or people, look for aspects of the photographs that are often mentioned in the sentences:
   - What are the people doing?
   - Where are they?
   - Who are they? (Is there a uniform or piece of equipment or anything else that indicates their profession or role?)
   - What distinguishes them? (Is there a hat, a mustache, a purse, a pair of glasses, a tie, or anything else that differentiates the people?)
   - What do the people's expressions tell you? (Do they look happy? Unhappy? Excited? Bored? Upset?)

3. If you are previewing a photograph of an object, focus on these aspects:
   - What is it?
   - What is it made of?
   - What — if anything — is it doing?
   - Where is it?

4. If you are previewing a photograph of a scene, focus on these aspects:
   - Where is it?

- What is in the foreground (the "front" of the picture)?
- What — if anything — is happening?
- What is in the background (the "distant" part of the picture)?

5. Don't mark an answer until you have heard all four choices. When you hear a choice that you think is correct, rest your pencil on that oval on your answer sheet. If you change your mind and hear a sentence that you think is better, move your pencil to that choice. Once you have heard all four sentences, mark the oval that your pencil is resting on. (This technique helps you remember which choice you think is best.)

6. Try to eliminate choices with problems in *meaning*, *sound*, and *sound + meaning*. (There is more information about recognizing these problems in the main part of this lesson.)

7. Most correct answers involve verbs in the simple present ("The furniture looks new.") or present progressive tense ("The woman is riding a bicycle."). Be suspicious of answer choices involving any other tenses.

8. Never leave any blanks. Always guess before going on to the next item.

9. As soon as you have finished marking the answer, stop looking at and thinking about that photograph and move on to the next item.

Preview Test Part 1

Start the audio program and read along as the directions are read.

Directions: For each item, there is a photograph in the book and four short sentences about it on the audio program. The sentences are not written out, so you must listen carefully.

You must choose the one sentence — (A), (B), (C), or (D) — that best describes what can be seen in the photograph, then mark the correct answer.

Look at the example
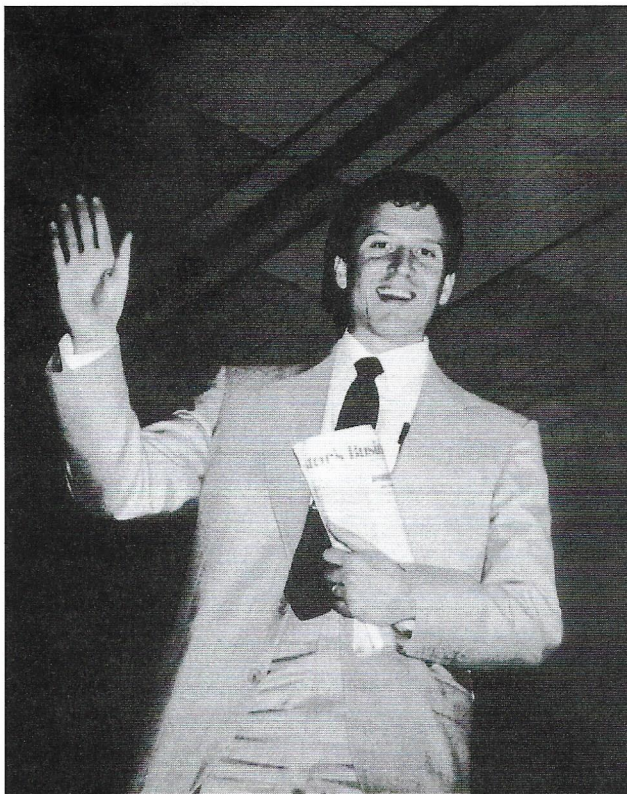
You see this photograph:
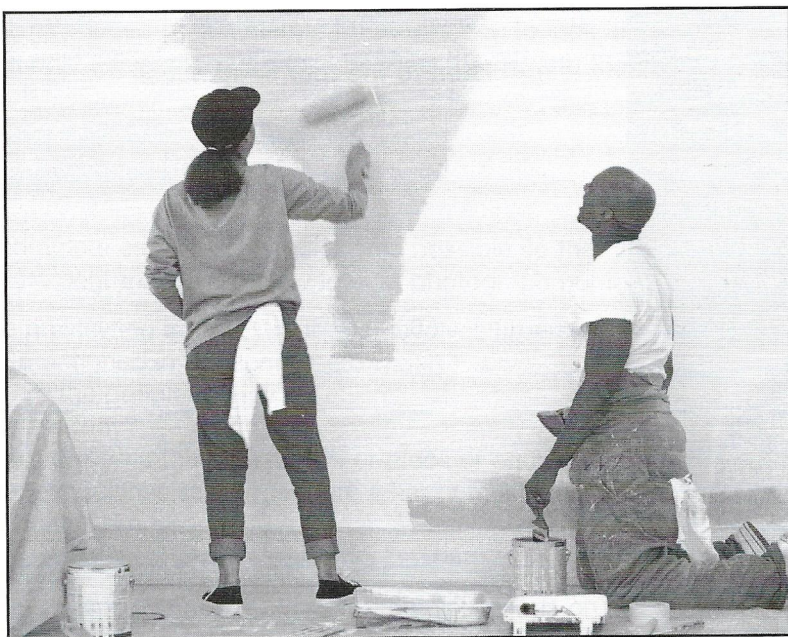
Listen to the four sentences:

(A) (B) ● (D)

Choice (C) — "He's waving to someone" — is the best description of what can be seen in the photograph.
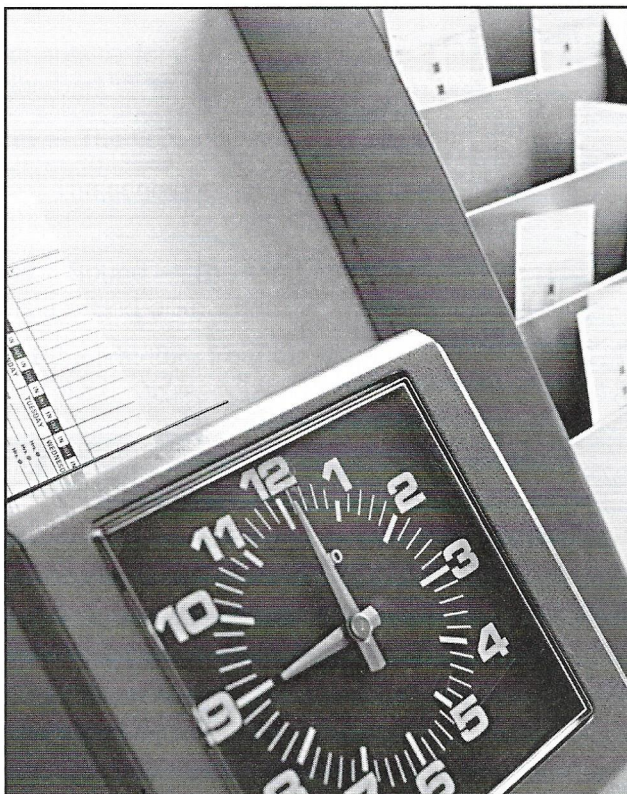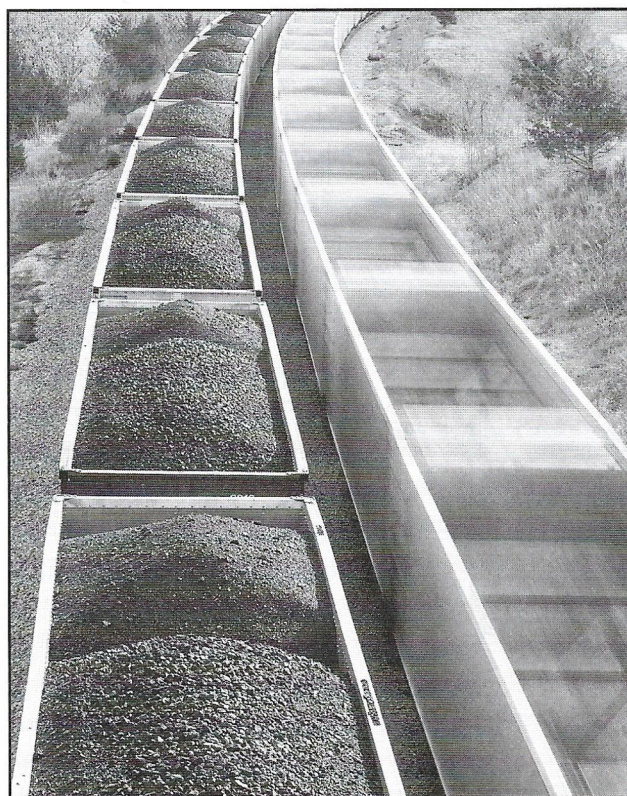
1.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ   Ⓒ   Ⓓ

2.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ   Ⓒ   Ⓓ

3.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ   Ⓒ   Ⓓ

4.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ   Ⓒ   Ⓓ

5.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ   Ⓒ   Ⓓ

6.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ   Ⓒ   Ⓓ

Testing Points and Skill-Building Exercises

The correct answer for a Part 1 item is one that correctly describes what can be seen in the photograph. The distractors — incorrect answers — are incorrect for one of the following reasons:

A. Meaning — The sentence does not correctly describe what is shown in the photograph.

B. Sound — The sentence contains a word that sounds like — but is not the same as — something visible in the photograph.

C. Meaning + Sound — The sentence not only is an incorrect description of what is shown in the photograph but also contains a sound-alike word.

Let's look at the first item from the Preview Test to see examples of each type of distractor.

Sample Item

(A) She's holding the fruit.

(B) She's playing a game.

(C) She's preparing some food.

(D) She's playing music on the flute.

Choice (A) involves a **sound** problem — the girl is holding a flute, not a fruit. Choice (B) is a problem of **meaning**. She's not playing a game, she's playing a musical instrument. Choice (C) involves a **meaning + sound** problem: The girl is not preparing some food; she is playing a flute. (Flute and food sound somewhat alike.) Choice (D) best describes what is pictured in the photograph.

Exercise   1.1

Focus: Identifying types of distractors for Part 1 items.

Directions: There are five photographs taken from the Sample Test section. The sentences spoken about them are printed next to the photographs. Identify each sentence according to the following system:

M	=	**Meaning** problem
S	=	**Sound** problem
M + S	=	**Meaning + sound** problem
C	=	Correct answer

Now start the audio program.

1.
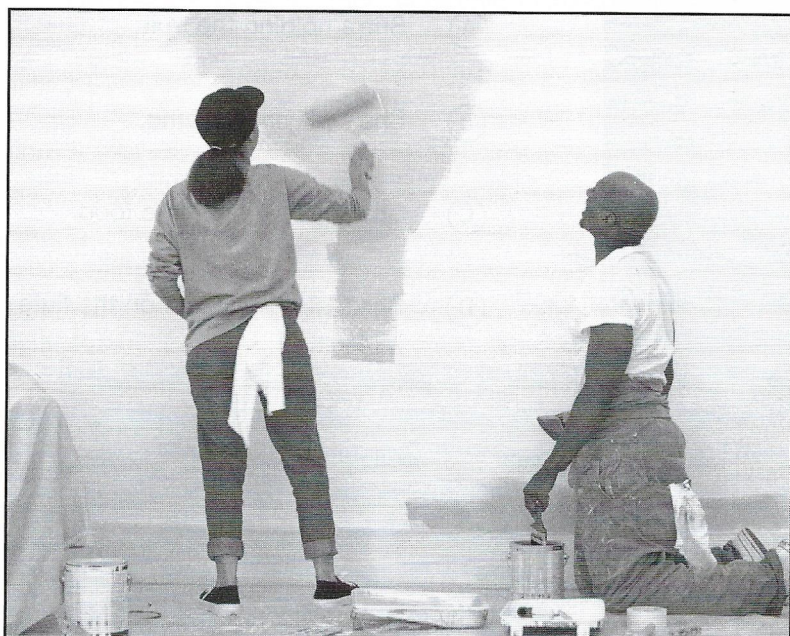
____ (A) The couple is painting the wall.

____ (B) The woman is pushing a stroller.

____ (C) They're hanging a painting on the wall.

____ (D) They're planting a garden.

2.
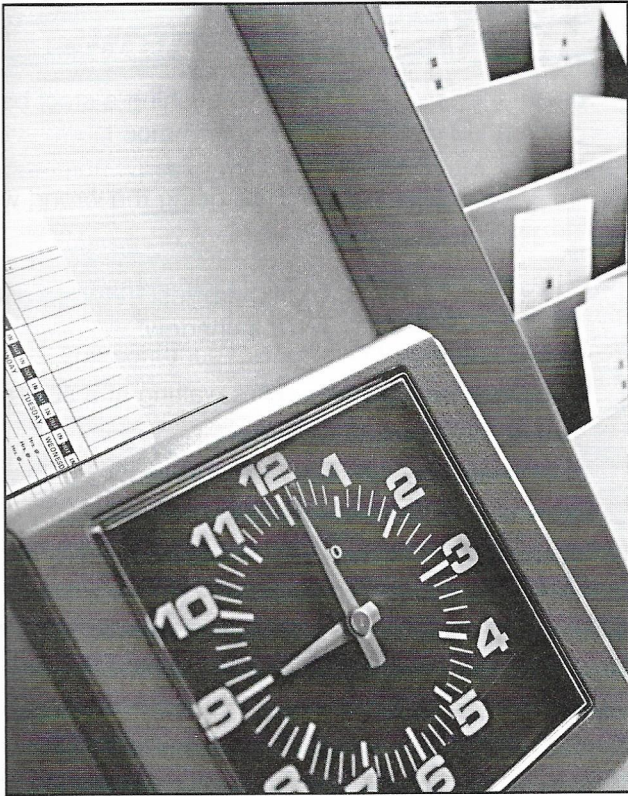
_____ (A) There is a lock on the door.

_____ (B) There are some cards on a rock.

_____ (C) There is a card in the time clock.

_____ (D) There are several cars lined up.

3.

_____ (A) The trains are passing through a tunnel.

_____ (B) An empty train is passing a loaded one.

_____ (C) One train is far ahead of the other one.

_____ (D) Both trains are loaded with coal.

4.

— (A) He's pushing a steel barre[l]

— (B) He's going the wrong way.

— (C) He has just stepped out of the shadow.

— (D) He's waiting at a stop sign.

5.

— (A) The man is holding the bo[ok] open.

— (B) They're standing by themselves.

— (C) The books are all of differe[nt] sizes.

— (D) The woman is pointing at the page.

A. *Sentences with Meaning Problems*

This is the most common type of distractor. Sentences of this type in some way contradict what is seen in the photograph. Some common types of meaning problems are listed below, but many other types are heard during the test.

Meaning Problem	Example
1. The sentence misrepresents the location.	The photograph shows a man eating in a hospital bed. The sentence says, "He's eating out at a restaurant."
2. The sentence misrepresents the photograph's "environment."	The photograph shows people in light clothing sitting in the sun. The sentence says, "It's cold and rainy today."
3. The sentence misrepresents the spatial arrangement.	The photograph shows a car parked behind a fence. The sentence says, "The car is in front of the fence."
4. The sentence misrepresents a person's activity.	The photograph shows a person writing a note. The sentence says, "She's reading from her notebook."
5. The sentence misrepresents a person's facial expression or "body language."	The photograph shows people in an audience with interested and attentive expressions. The sentence says, "They seem to be bored by what they're seeing."
6. The sentence assigns characteristics of one person or thing to another person or thing.	The photograph shows a tall man wearing a hat and a shorter man with glasses. The sentence says, "The tall man is wearing glasses."
7. The sentence misidentifies an object.	The photograph shows a scientist looking through a microscope. The sentence says, "He's using a telescope."
8. The sentence identifies people in a scene with no people.	The photograph shows an empty swimming pool. The sentence says, "The pool is crowded with swimmers today."
9. The sentence misidentifies the material something is made of.	The photograph shows a woman sitting on a stone wall. The sentence says, "The wall is made of wood."
10. The sentence misidentifies a background detail as a central feature of the photograph.	The photograph shows a man walking through an airport. There is a telephone in the background. The sentence says, "The man is talking on the telephone."

Focus: Identifying distractors involving errors in meaning and recognizing sentences with correct meanings.

Directions: Look at each of the photographs below. You will hear a number of sentences describing each one. Decide if the sentence is true (T) or false (F) according to what you see in the picture. There may be more than one true sentence about each photograph, or there may be no true sentences.

Now start the audio program.

1.

A.	T	F
B.	T	F
C.	T	F
D.	T	F
E.	T	F
F.	T	F

2.

A.   (T)   (F)

B.   (T)   (F)

C.   (T)   (F)

D.   (T)   (F)

3.

A.   (T)   (F)

B.   (T)   (F)

C.   (T)   (F)

D.   (T)   (F)

E.   (T)   (F)

F.   (T)   (F)

4.

A. Ⓣ Ⓕ

B. Ⓣ Ⓕ

C. Ⓣ Ⓕ

D. Ⓣ Ⓕ

E. Ⓣ Ⓕ

F. Ⓣ Ⓕ

5.

A. Ⓣ Ⓕ

B. Ⓣ Ⓕ

C. Ⓣ Ⓕ

D. Ⓣ Ⓕ

E. Ⓣ Ⓕ

6.

A. (T) (F)

B. (T) (F)

C. (T) (F)

D. (T) (F)

E. (T) (F)

7.

A. (T) (F)

B. (T) (F)

C. (T) (F)

D. (T) (F)

E. (T) (F)

F. (T) (F)

G. (T) (F)

8.

A.   T   F

B.   T   F

C.   T   F

D.   T   F

E.   T   F

F.   T   F

9.

A.   T   F
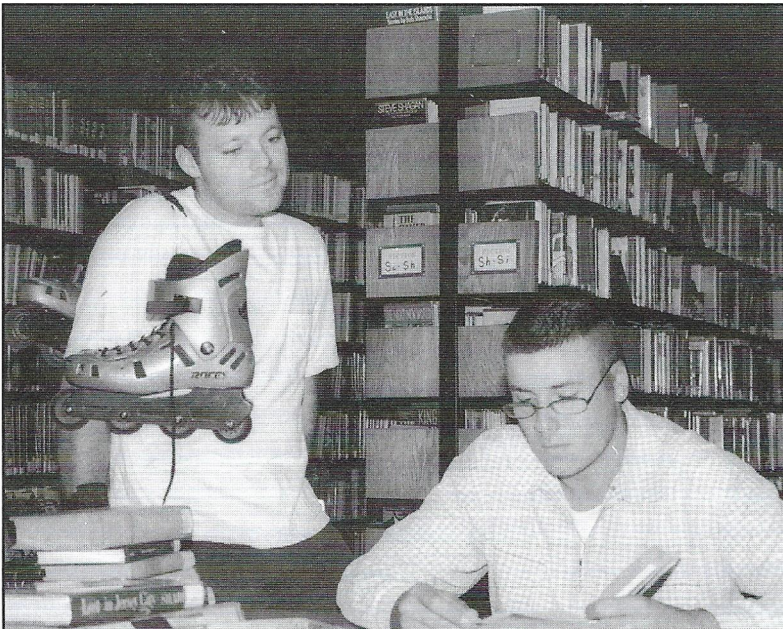
B.   T   F

C.   T   F

D.   T   F

E.   T   F

F.   T   F

10.

A. T   F

B. T   F

C. T   F

D. T   F

E. T   F

F. T   F

11.

A. T   F

B. T   F

C. T   F

D. T   F

E. T   F

12.

A. (T) (F)

B. (T) (F)

C. (T) (F)

D. (T) (F)

E. (T) (F)

13.

A. (T) (F)

B. (T) (F)

C. (T) (F)

D. (T) (F)

E. (T) (F)

F. (T) (F)

14.

A. (T) (F)
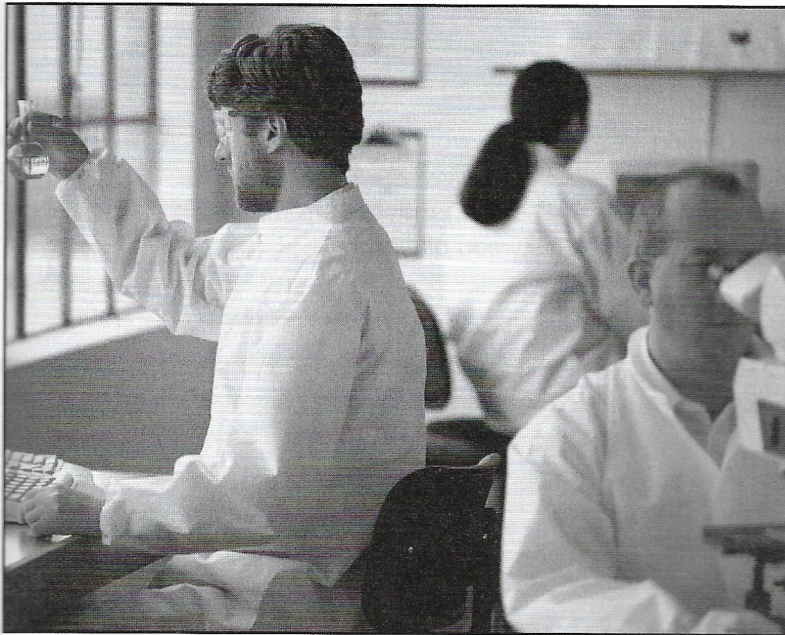
B. (T) (F)

C. (T) (F)

D. (T) (F)

E. (T) (F)

F. (T) (F)

15.

A. (T) (F)

B. (T) (F)

C. (T) (F)

D. (T) (F)

E. (T) (F)

B. Sentences with Sound Problems

These sentences test your ability to distinguish similar-sounding words. These words may rhyme (*pile* and *file*, for exa̲m̲ or they may sound alike in other ways (*car* and *card*, for example, or *lock* and *lake*.) Here's an example: The photogra̲ shows a man taking a letter out of a file. The spoken sentence says, "He's taking the letter from the pile." To avoid choosing the incorrect answer, you must be able to hear the difference between *pile* and *file*.

Remember: If you hear a sentence with a sound-alike word, that sentence is not the right answer.

Also remember that if you hear a sentence that seems strange or unrelated to what you see in the photograph, it pro̲ involves a sound problem, even if that problem is not clear to you. These sentences will not be correct answers.

Exercise 1.3

Focus: Identifying distractors involving sound problems and recognizing correct answers.

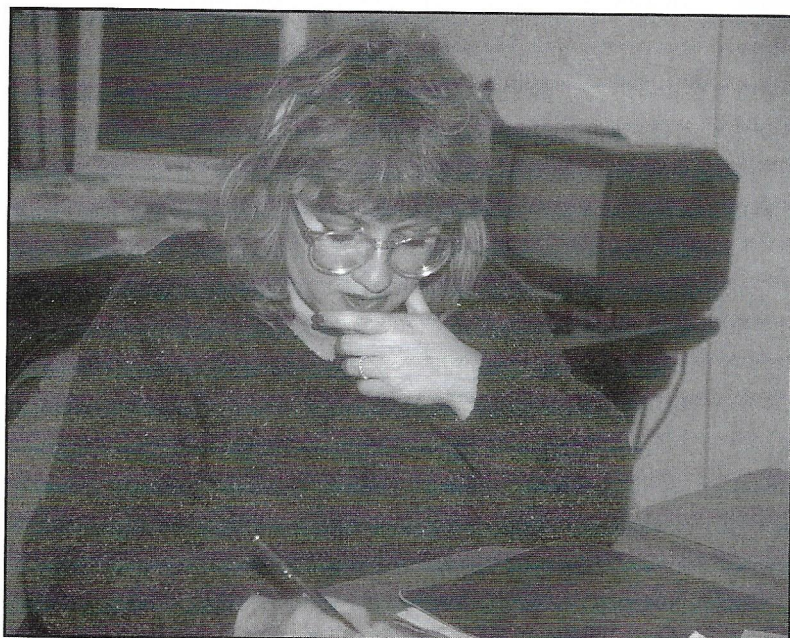**Directions:** There are two parts to this exercise. For Part A, look at the photographs and listen to the sentences — (A (B) — about them. Mark the letter of the sentence that best describes what can be seen in the photograph.
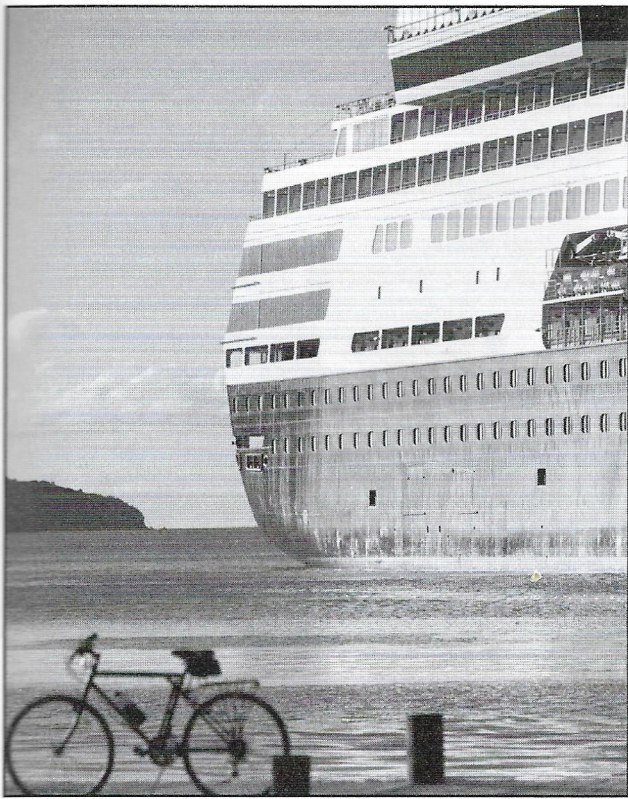
Part A

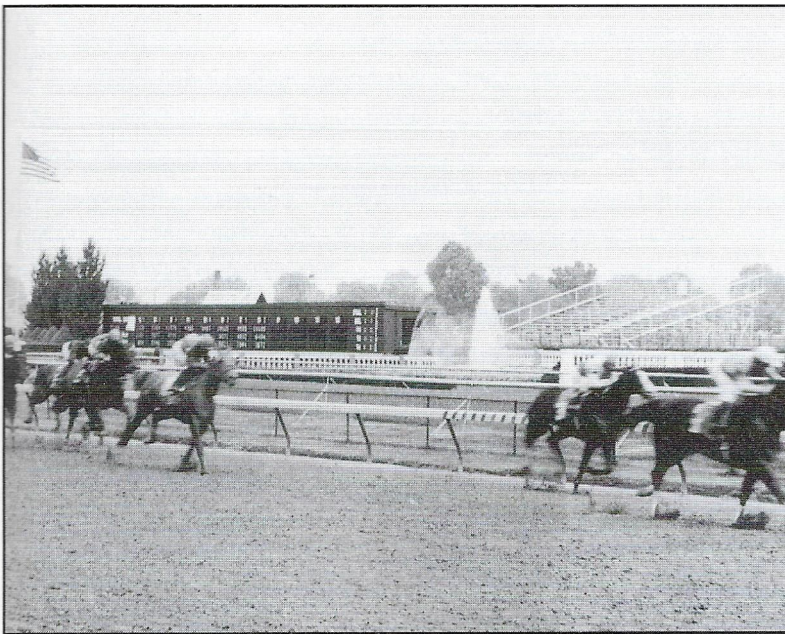🎧 *Now start the audio program.*

1.

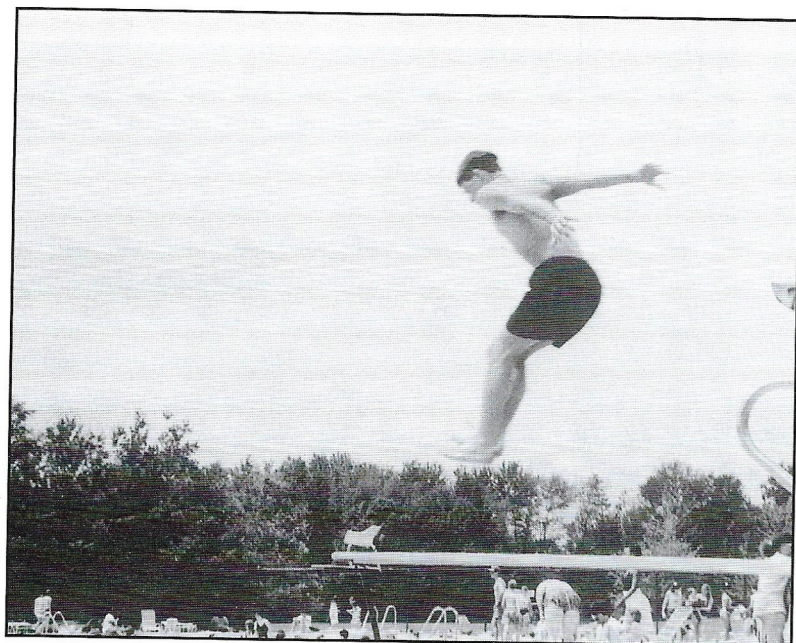   (A)   (B)

Ⓐ   Ⓑ

Ⓐ   Ⓑ

4. Ⓐ   Ⓑ

5. Ⓐ   Ⓑ

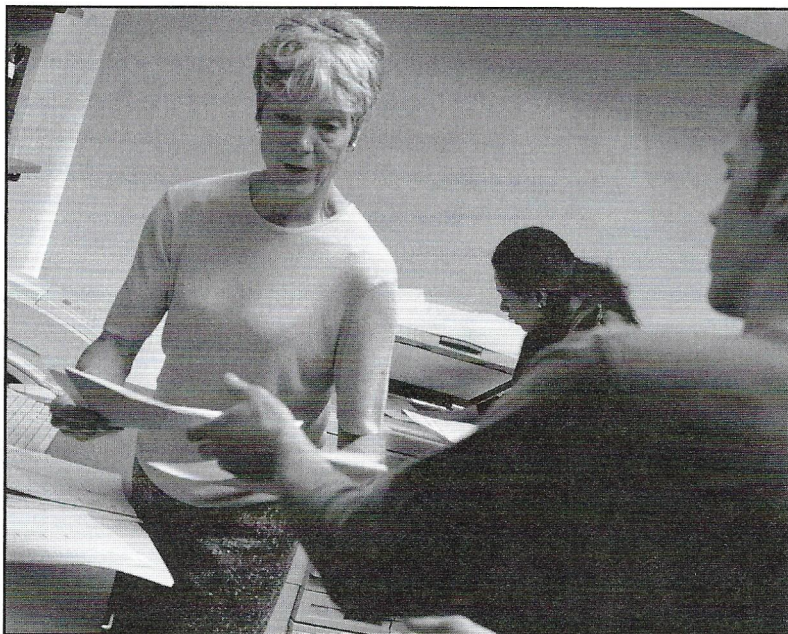(A)　　　(B)

(A)　　　(B)
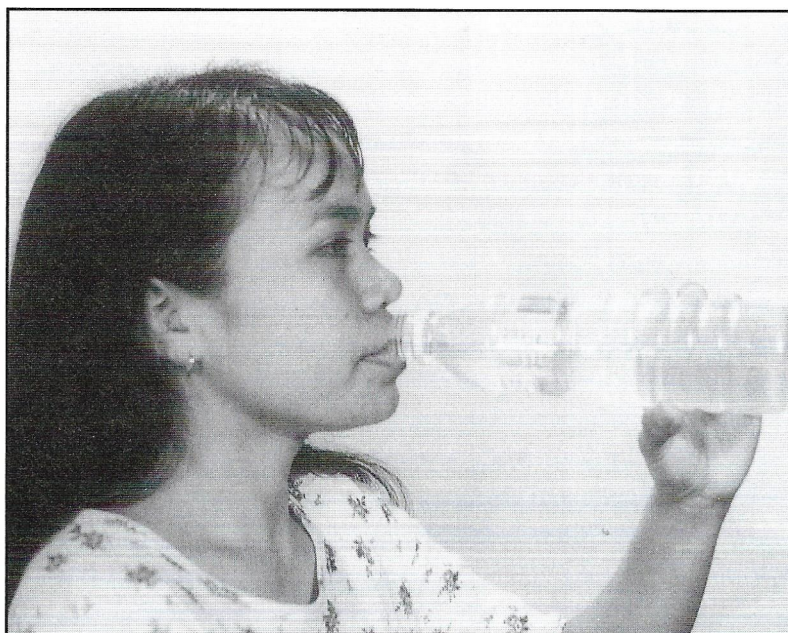
8.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ

9.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ

(A)   (B)

Listen to Exercise 1.3 again. Write down the "sound-alike" word from the incorrect answer and the "correct" word from the correct answer. You may want to stop the audio program between items to give yourself time to write.

"Sound-Alike" Words	"Correct" Words
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____
9. _____	_____
10. _____	_____

C. Sentences with Sound and Meaning Problems

This type of item is more common than those involving sound problems. A sentence of this type contains a sound-alike word, but the sentence is also an inaccurate description of what can be seen in the photograph. For example, a photograph shows a man putting a lock on his bicycle. One sentence says, "He's blocking the path." Another sentence says, "He's swimming in the lake." In the first sentence, *blocking* sounds like *locking*, and in the second sentence, *lake* sounds like *lock*. Neither sentence describes what is happening in the picture.

Sentences of this type can be eliminated by either the sound-alike word or the incorrect meaning.

Exercise 1.4

Focus: Identifying distractors involving sound + meaning problems and recognizing correct answers.

Directions: There are two parts to this exercise. In the first part, look at the photographs and listen to the two sentences — (A) and (B) — about them. Mark the letter of the sentence that best describes what can be seen in the photograph.
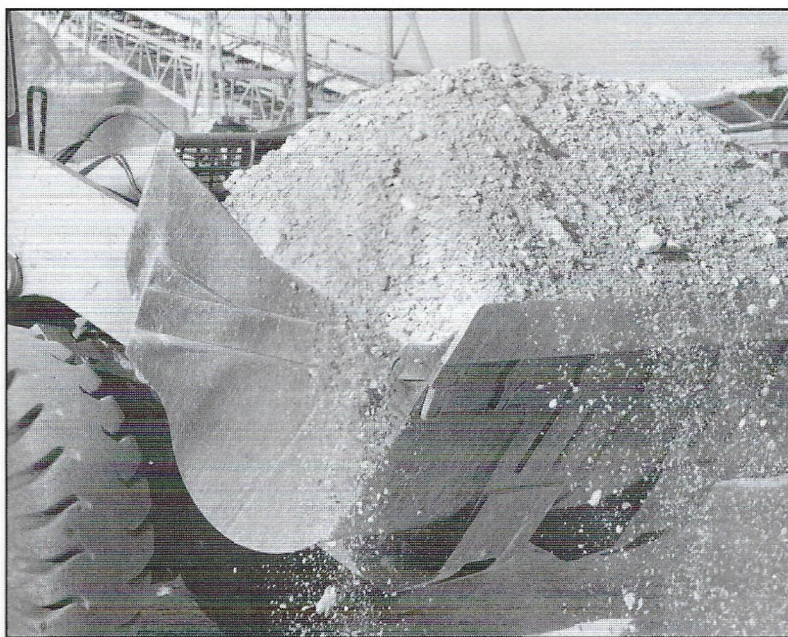
Part A

🎧 *Now start the audio program.*

1.   (A)   (B)
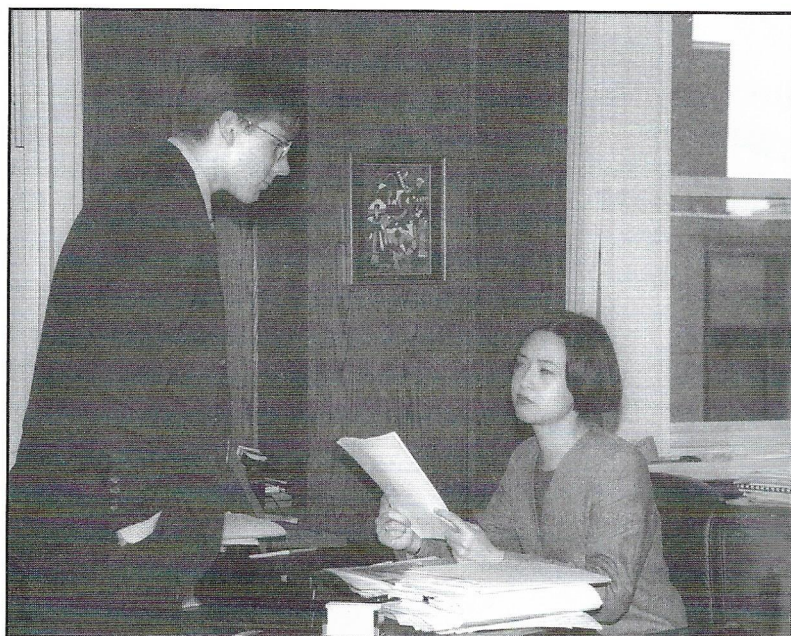
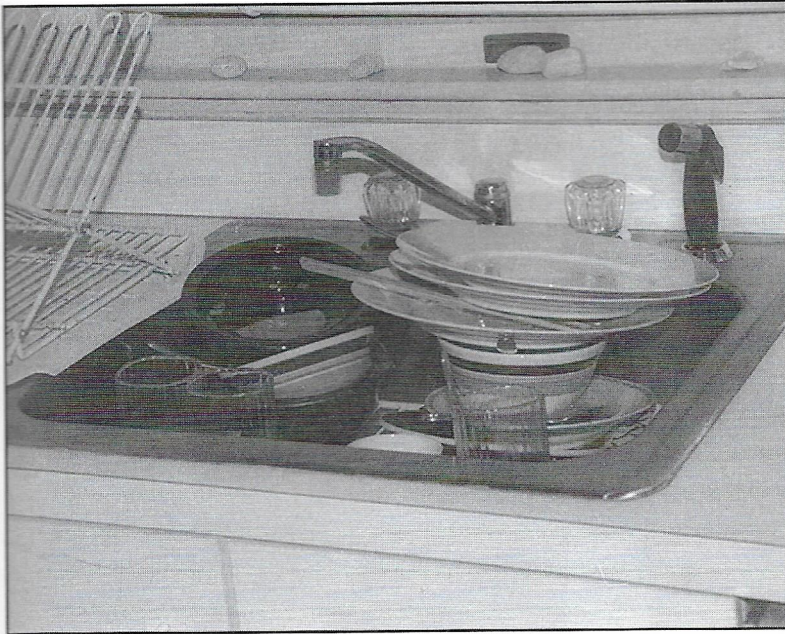Ⓐ   Ⓑ

Ⓐ   Ⓑ

4.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ

5.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ

Ⓐ Ⓑ

Ⓐ Ⓑ
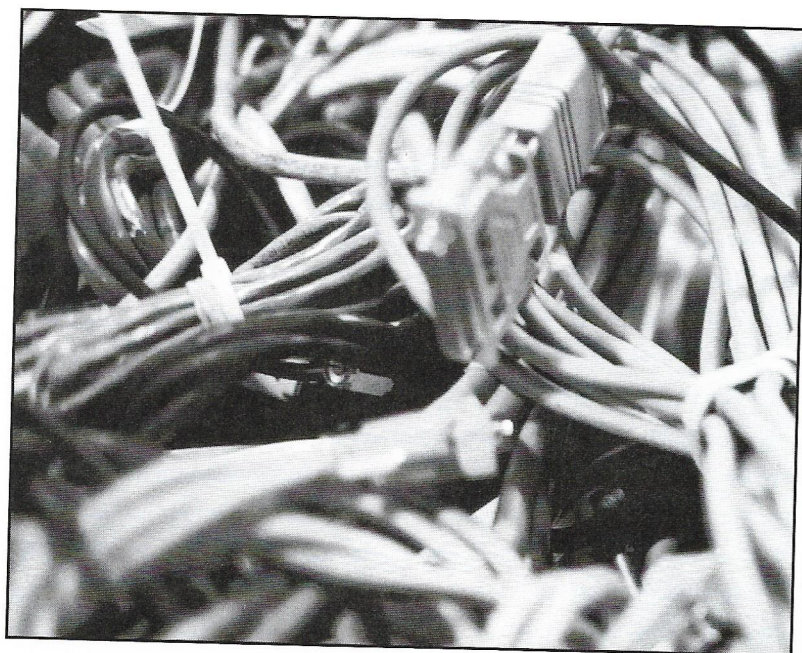
8. Ⓐ Ⓑ
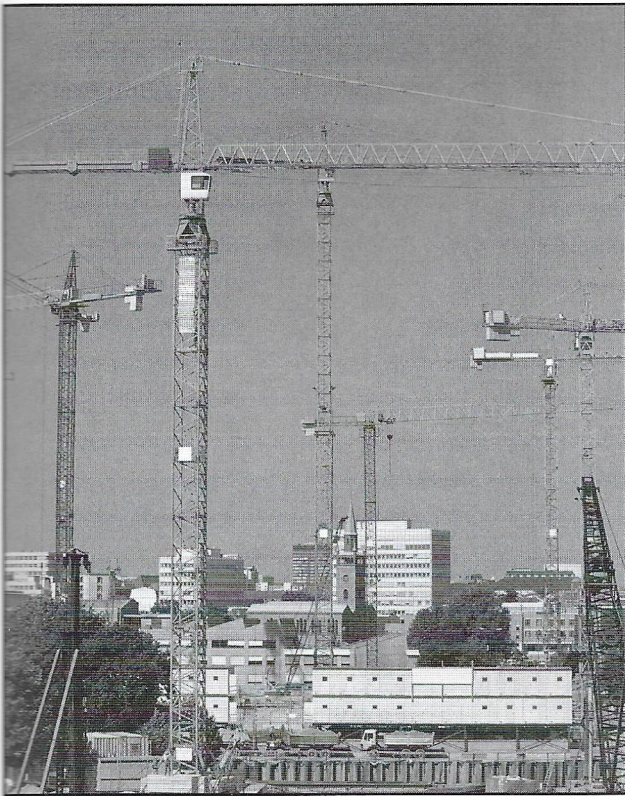
9. Ⓐ Ⓑ

Ⓐ   Ⓑ

Listen to Exercise 1.4 again. Write down the "sound-alike" word from the incorrect answer and the "correct" word from the correct answer. You may want to stop the listening program between items to give yourself time to write.

"Sound-Alike" Words   ## "Correct" Words

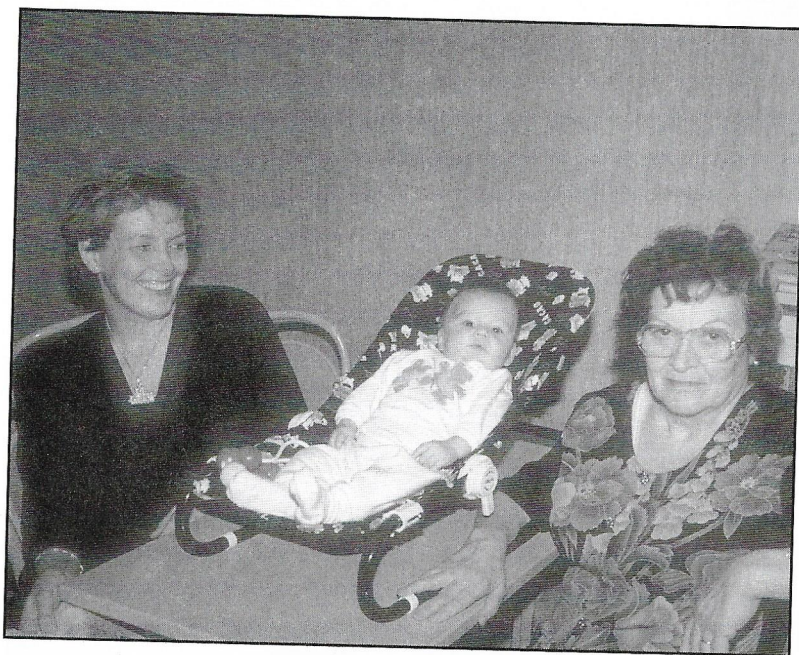|	"Sound-Alike" Words	"Correct" Words
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____

Directions: For each item, there is a photograph in the book and four short sentences about it on the audio program. Choose the one sentence — (A), (B), (C), or (D) — that is the best description of what can be seen in the photograph. Then mark the correct answer.
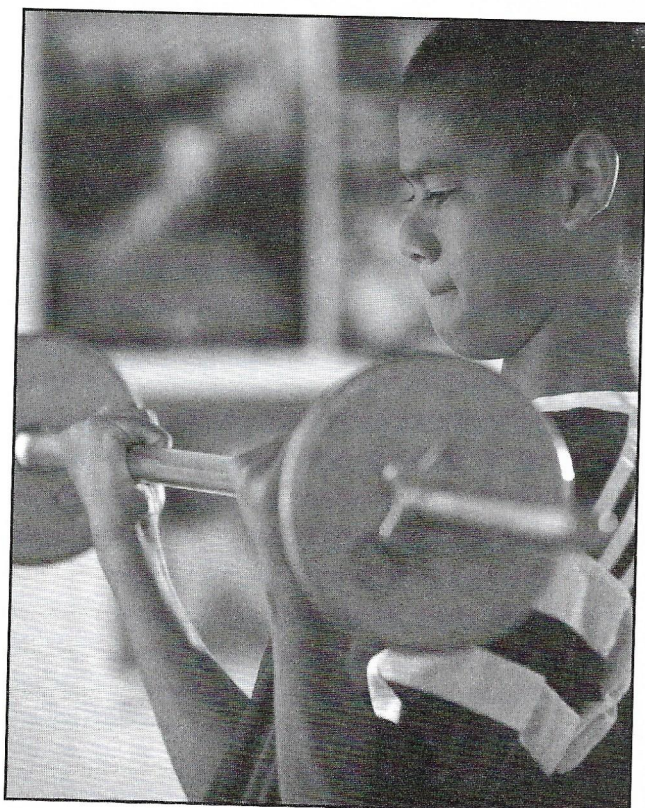
🎧   *Now start the audio program.*

1.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ   Ⓒ   Ⓓ

2.

Ⓐ   Ⓑ   Ⓒ   Ⓓ

Ⓐ   Ⓑ   Ⓒ   Ⓓ

Ⓐ   Ⓑ   Ⓒ   Ⓓ

5.

Ⓐ　　Ⓑ　　Ⓒ　　Ⓓ

6.

Special

Wool Slacks $45⁰⁰
Wool Jackets $75⁰⁰
Wool Coats $149⁰⁰

Ⓐ　　Ⓑ　　Ⓒ　　Ⓓ
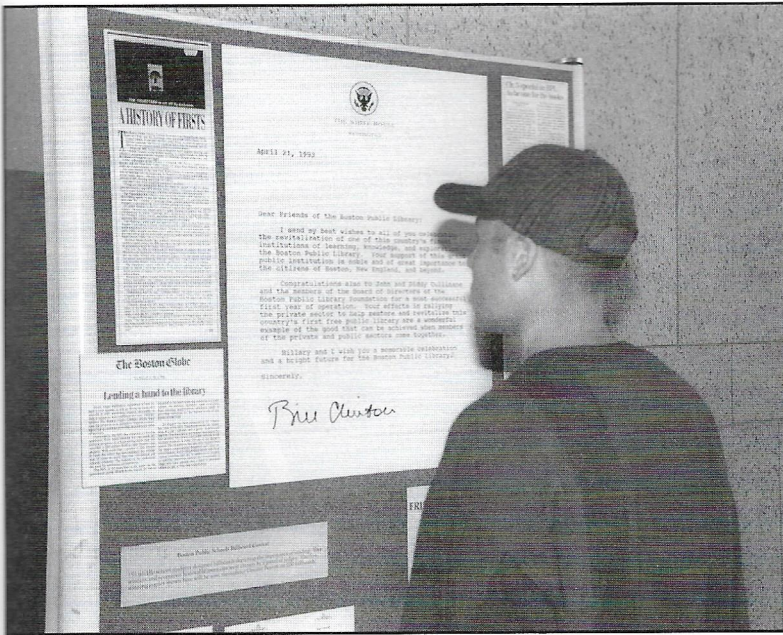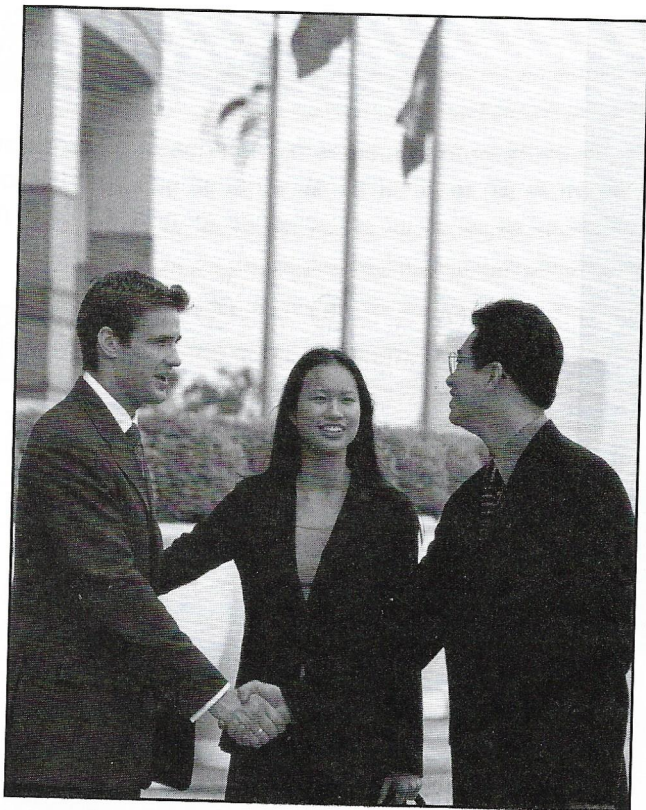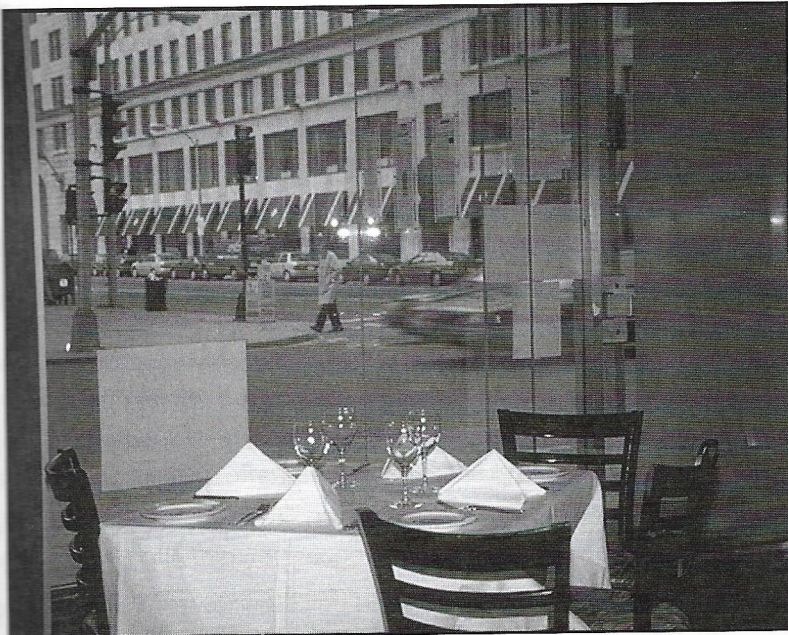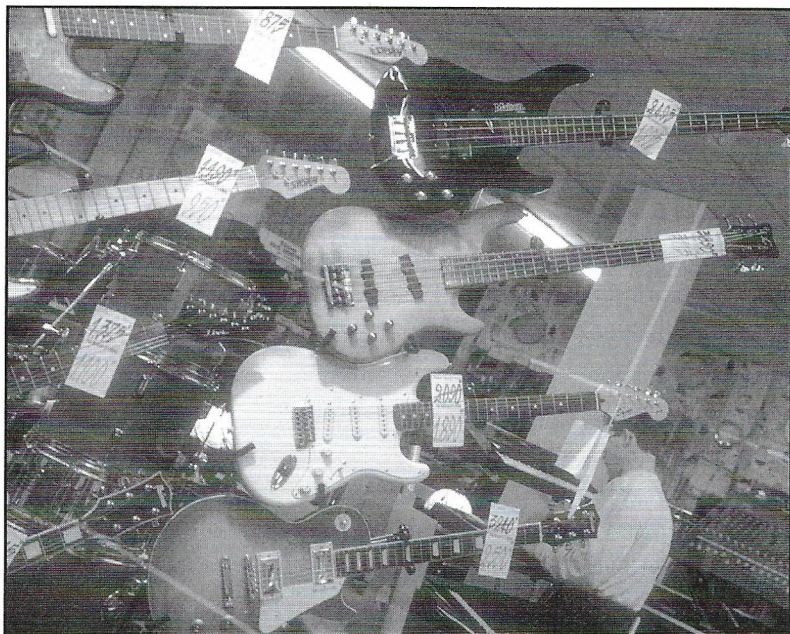
(A)   (B)   (C)   (D)

(A)   (B)   (C)   (D)

9.

(A)　(B)　(C)　(D)

10.

(A)　(B)　(C)　(D)