

UOW College Hong Kong / Community College of City University
Student English Enhancement Unit (SEE U)
Daily English Practice

Week 10

#97 The US Government's search for aliens in the universe

Skills/ Objectives: To train students' reading, listening and writing skills

PART 1: Before you read...

Preparatory questions

Qt 1: Are you aware that the US Government has started a programme to search for the existence of life on other planets in the universe?

Qt 2: Why does the US scientist conduct its search for life in the universe on the basis of environments on Earth instead of another planet like Mars?

Qt 3: Do scientists who believe in the Fermi paradox think that life exists in the universe?

If you are not very sure what these questions are asking, don't worry. They are all explained in very simple terms in the main reading text cited below.

The answers to Qts 2 and 3 will be provided at the next set of Daily English Practice exercises.

Vocabulary

1. blue-ribbon (adjective): of top quality
2. assemble (verb): to put the parts together
3. at the behest of (preposition): under the order of
4. drumbeat (noun): the regular pace like that of playing a drum
5. probe (noun): investigation into hidden secrets
6. guinea pig (noun): a subject for experimental testing
7. trite (adjective): used so often that the saying has lost its appeal
8. exoplanets (noun): a planet that is outside the solar system
9. entail (verb): to lead to another matter
10. plays a hand (verbal phrase): takes up an active part in an event
11. prosaic (adjective): uninteresting
12. Fermi paradox (noun): The strange situation that life seems to exist in this universe but there is no trace of them found.

The following is/are answer(s) to relevant question(s) in the preceding set of exercises "Can we live on Mars?":

Qt 2: NASA is very certain that humans can live on Mars in the future since the "building blocks of life" have been discovered on the planet.

Qt 3: Mars is the most similar to the environments found on Earth compared with any other planet in the solar system. For this reason, Mars is the best possible option for human emigration.

PART 2: Article for Reading

Why is the US Government so keen on finding other living beings in the universe? The article posted on the web below gives the details:

US scientists have laid out a plan to search for life in the universe

<https://qz.com/1418576/us-scientists-lay-out-plan-to-search-for-life-in-universe/>

PART 3: Listening Comprehension

You should also listen to the following YouTube video clip to find out more on the topic, while practicing your listening skills at the same time:

Space Experts Discuss the Search for Life in the Universe at NASA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNjuz6MO0eU>

PART 4: Writing Practice

Did you notice the nice description in the following sentence in the main text?

“Indeed, the recently gained knowledge it highlights is the front end of a wave.”

This sentence is well-expressed because it employs the use of figurative comparison like some examples described in previous exercises. The “front end of a wave” tells the enormous power and size of forthcoming knowledge which will follow after recent discovery of the knowledge. Note a similar use of this comparison in the following example:

Archaeologists are uncovering more and more ancient relics of human beings of the pre-historic age but what they have found is only the front end of a wave.

Can you write a sentence of your own using this expression “the front end of a wave”? Send your writing to: see.u@cccu.edu.hk. Remember! Our **SEE U** teachers are always ready to give you feedback.