



Unit 22 Up on the roof

Task 05

Announcer: Listen to a guest from America talking about roofs.

Teacher: We have a special guest here, today, Mr Taylor from New Orleans. He is an expert on, what do you think? – one of the most important parts of a house, right on top ...

Raphael: The roof!

Mr Taylor: Yes, yes, you're absolutely right! How would you describe your job responsibility here in Austria?

Michael: Well, we work on houses and buildings ... to build, maintain and repair roofs.

Mr Taylor: Very well said. That's the same as in America. The roof is a very important part of a building. Do you know why?

Raphael: It protects the building and the walls from rain.

Mr Taylor: Exactly, and, you know, where I come from, you have to expect hurricanes and tornados. We must be able to align the tiles or other materials properly in order to protect the house from rain, but also from other climatic factors like heat, cold and wind. That's the roof's main function, apart from the way it makes a house look. Insulation and energy-saving is a big topic. If a roof is well-insulated, you need less energy for heating. Anything else you can think of?

Raphael: Here in Austria we have a lot of snow in winter, at least in the mountains.

Mr Taylor: Very good, that's not so much of a problem in New Orleans, though...

Teacher: Mr Taylor, could you explain to our class how a roof is set up?

Mr Taylor: Of course ... I'm sure you know, so you'll understand when I explain it in English ... well, the roof framework rests on the outer walls. So either the rafters themselves or the eave purlins transmit the weight of the roof to the building.

Raphael: Excuse me, I have a question. What is the part where the rafters meet called in English.

Mr Taylor: That's the ridge beam. The rafters are set up at a certain angle. The slope depends on how much space you want to have under the roof, and, of course, on something else you have to keep in mind ... Do you know what?

Michael: Building regulations!



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- Mr Taylor: That's correct. So, when you have taken care of all that, the rafters meet on the ridge beam.
- Teacher: Mr Taylor, could you please explain how all the different parts of the roof are fixed? How does it all hold together?
- Mr Taylor: Well, the roof battens are usually nailed into the rafters in parallel, at a certain distance from one another. They are used, for example, to fasten the tiles or shingles. Very often a plastic foil underlay is spread between rafters and roof battens to guarantee that no rain can get under the roof, not even with strong winds. In addition, materials such as mineral wool or rock wool are inserted between the rafters to insulate the roof. Is that all roofers and tinsmiths have to do?
- Raphael: No, fixing materials is only one part, we also do repair work.
- Mr Taylor: Correct! We may need to inspect damage on roofs, estimate costs and materials to fix or build a roof, install insulation or vapour barriers, cut materials to fit corners and against walls, and seal everything to avoid leaks. Other roofs may need to be covered in tar and gravel to protect them from the elements.
- Teacher: Sounds easy in English, doesn't it? Thank you very much Mr Taylor for talking to us today. Have a nice stay in ...