Unit 35 – 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 …

Raphael: The roof!

Mr Taylor: Yes, you're absolutely right! 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 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. So, what is a carpenter responsible for, together with the architect, of course?

Michael: That the roof is strong enough to carry the tiles.

Mr Taylor: Yes, and, you know, where I come from, you have to expect hurricanes and tornados, so this is really important. 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 need to keep in mind … Do you know what?

Michael: Building regulations!

Mr Taylor: That's correct. So, when you have taken care of all that, the rafters meet on the ridge beam.

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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: 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 the 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. That's it.

Teacher: Sounds easy in English, doesn't it? Thank you very much, Mr Taylor, for talking to us today. Have a nice stay in …