



Do you have what it takes?

ESL work, B1+/B2





Warm-up 1: Challenging Careers

Brainstorm three jobs that you consider "difficult" or "extreme." For each job, explain why it is challenging. Consider the following factors:

- **Responsibilities:** What are the high-stakes tasks?
- **Location/Living Conditions:** Is it remote? Is the weather harsh?
- **Work-Life Balance:** Do they work long hours? Is there any "off" time?
- **Relationships:** How does the job affect their family or social life?



Warm-up 2: The Antarctic Research Station

Imagine working at a research station in Antarctica. While scientists are the main focus, these stations also need "support staff": electricians, plumbers, chefs, and even hairdressers.

Brainstorm the possible advantages and disadvantages of spending 6 to 18 months working in such a location. Think about the environment, the community, and the personal growth.





Vocabulary

Read the following words and their definitions. Some definitions are true, and some are mixed up. Discuss if the definition is correct. If not, try to find the right meaning.

1. **Isolation:** The state of being close to many people in a city.
2. **Resilience:** The ability to recover quickly from difficulties or tough conditions.
3. **Fixed-term:** A contract that lasts forever with no end date.
4. **Ecological:** Relating to the relation of living organisms to one another and their physical surroundings.
5. **Reactive:** Acting in response to a situation rather than creating it.
6. **Secluded:** A place that is very crowded and busy.
7. **Cargo:** Goods carried on a ship, aircraft, or motor vehicle.
8. **Sub-Antarctic:** A region that is extremely hot and tropical.
9. **Maintenance:** The process of keeping something in good condition.



Listening - Do you have what it takes?

Listen and answer the following:

- List at least **three jobs** mentioned that are needed at the station.
- List **three advantages** of working there.
- List **three disadvantages** or problems mentioned.



Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn0e30d9wj9o>



Reading 1: Electrical Maintenance Technician

Job Title: Electrical Maintenance Technician (British Antarctic Survey)

Summary: Are you ready for a workplace like no other? We are looking for skilled electricians to maintain and repair electrical services at our Antarctic research stations. This is a fixed-term role for 6 or 18 months. You will be responsible for everything from general lighting and power distribution to fire alarms and kitchen appliances.

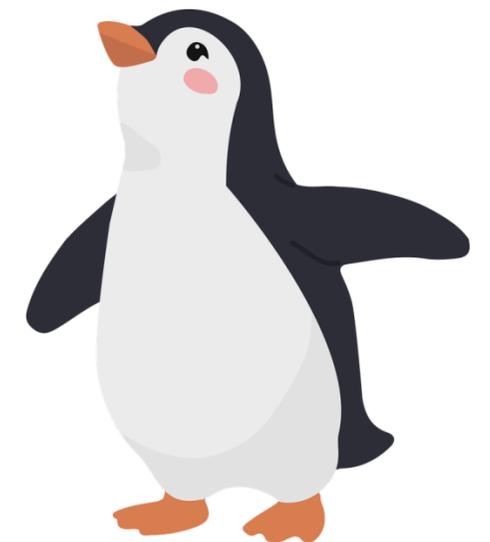
Because the environment is so remote, you must be able to solve complex technical problems independently. You should be quality-focused and comfortable with "reactive repair"—fixing things quickly when they break in freezing conditions. Beyond your technical skills, you must be easy to get along with and a good communicator, as you will be living in a small, tight-knit community. A recognized electrical qualification (like an NVQ or City & Guilds) and a successful medical test are required.

Source : <https://fa-evzn-saasfaukgovprod1.fa.ocs.oraclecloud.com/hcmUI/CandidateExperience/en/sites/UKRI-Careers/job/1880>



Reading 1: Comprehension Check

1. How long are the typical contracts for this role?
2. What are two specific systems the technician must maintain?
3. Why is "independent problem-solving" so important in this job?
4. What personal quality is mentioned as important for living in the community?
5. What is a mandatory requirement before you can be hired?





Reading 2: Zoological Field Assistant (Seals)

Job Title: Zoological Field Assistant (Seals) – Bird Island

Summary: This unique 20-month role involves living on Bird Island, a small sub-Antarctic island home to thousands of fur seals and penguins. Your primary task is to carry out long-term ecological monitoring. This includes handling wild seals, weighing pups, and collecting data on leopard seal sightings.

The work is intensive, involving long hours of outdoor fieldwork in rain and snow. You must be highly organized to manage data collection and meet strict deadlines. Life on Bird Island is quiet, especially in winter when the number of staff decreases significantly. Because the team is so small, everyone shares the "house" duties, such as cooking and cleaning. This position is perfect for someone who is highly disciplined, loves wildlife, and enjoys living in a challenging, secluded environment.

<https://fa-evzn-saasfaukgovprod1.fa.ocs.oraclecloud.com/hcmUI/CandidateExperience/en/sites/UKRI-Careers/job/1977>

Reading 2: Comprehension Check

1. Where is the job located, and what makes the weather there difficult?
2. What is the main purpose of the "ecological monitoring" mentioned?
3. What does "animal handling" involve in this role?
4. How does the job change during the winter months?
5. What extra "house" duties must the assistant perform?





Reading 3: Station General Assistant

Job Title: Station General Assistant

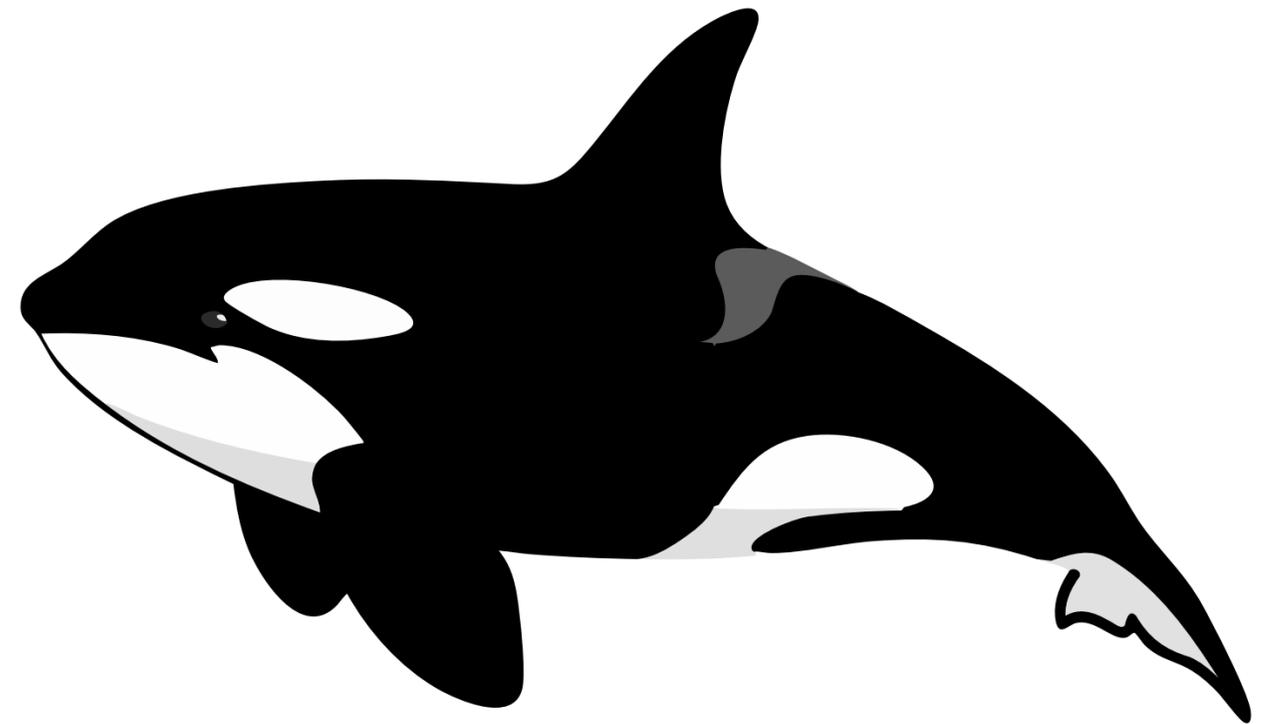
Summary: If you want to support polar science but don't have a specific trade, this is the role for you. The Station General Assistant is a vital "all-rounder" who keeps the station running smoothly. Your main duties include waste management, cargo handling, and preparing supplies for field researchers. You might also help with aircraft support or assisting with boats.

This is a physical role that requires working outdoors in stunning but harsh coastal scenery. You need to be hardworking, flexible, and willing to jump into any task—whether it's tidying the site or helping a scientist move equipment. It's an ideal position for someone who wants to experience Antarctica, see the wildlife, and be part of a team without needing a specialized engineering or scientific degree.

<https://fa-evzn-saasfaukgovprod1.fa.ocs.oraclecloud.com/hcmUI/CandidateExperience/en/sites/UKRI-Careers/job/2061>

Reading 3: Comprehension Check

1. Does this job require a specific scientific or engineering degree?
2. What are the two primary duties of a General Assistant?
3. What kind of environments will you be working in?
4. How would you describe the physical nature of this job?
5. Who might this assistant help besides the station manager?



Speaking 1: Discussion



1. Would you be willing to work in Antarctica for 18 months? Why or why not?
2. Which of the three jobs mentioned (Electrician, Seal Assistant, General Assistant) sounds the most appealing to you?
3. What do you think would be the hardest thing to live without for a year?
4. How do you think your personality would change after living in total isolation?
5. What features of character does a person need to succeed in such a harsh environment?
6. How would you handle a conflict with a colleague if you couldn't leave the building?
7. "Money is the main reason people go to Antarctica." Do you agree or disagree?
8. If you could create a "perfect" job at a research station, what would it be?



Speaking 2: Taboo



ANTARCTICA

South
Ice
Continent

WILDLIFE

Animals
Nature
Seals

MAMMALS

Seals
Whales
Animals

COMMUNITY

People
Group
Together

GLACIER

Ice
Mountain
Snow

GENERATOR

electricity
power
machine

SURVIVAL

live
danger
nature

ISOLATION

Alone
Remote
Distance

RESEARCH

Science
Study
Experiment

CONTRACT

Work
Legal
Agreement

CARGO

Ship
Supplies
Delivery

SEAL

animal
ocean
flippers

TEAMWORK

team
cooperate
together

RESEARCH STATION

scientists
laboratory
Antarctica

PENGUIN

Bird
Black
White

EXPEDITION

Strong
Tough
Difficulty

EQUIPMENT

Tools
Gear
Stuff

PRIVACY

Personal
Space
Secret

SNOWSTORM

wind
snow
storm

FIELDWORK

outside
research
data

SCIENTIST

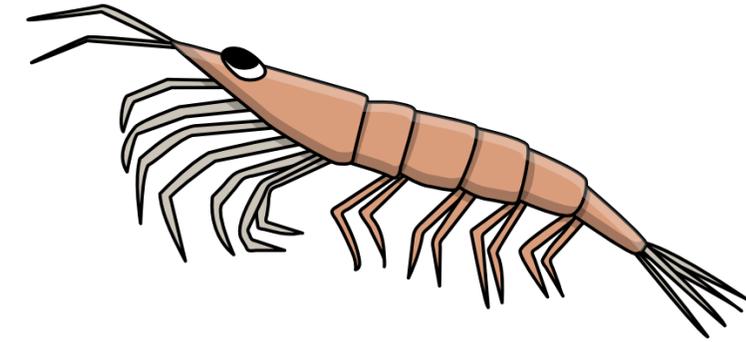
experiment
research
laboratory

Answer key



Listening Task:

1. Jobs: Mechanics, carpenters, logistics managers, scientists.
2. Advantages: Resilience/testing yourself, wildlife/wilderness, saving money, adventure.
3. Disadvantages: Isolation, lack of privacy, potential for conflict.



Vocabulary (Truth/False):

1. False (Isolation is being alone/remote).
2. True.
3. False (Fixed-term has a specific end date).
4. True.
5. True.
6. False (Secluded means private/sheltered).
7. True.
8. False (It is a cold region near the Antarctic).
9. True.

Comprehension Check (Reading 1):

1. 6 or 18 months.
2. Lighting, power distribution, fire alarms, etc.
3. Because the station is remote and you must work independently.
4. Being easy to get along with/good communicator.
5. A medical test.

Comprehension Check (Reading 2):

1. Bird Island; high rainfall and snow/wind.
2. To understand regional and global change/conservation.
3. Handling/weighing wild seals.
4. Fewer staff, more shared responsibilities.
5. Cooking and cleaning.

Comprehension Check (Reading 3):

1. No.
2. Waste management and cargo handling.
3. Harsh/stunning coastal scenery.
4. Physical/hardworking.
5. Scientists or pilots (aircraft).

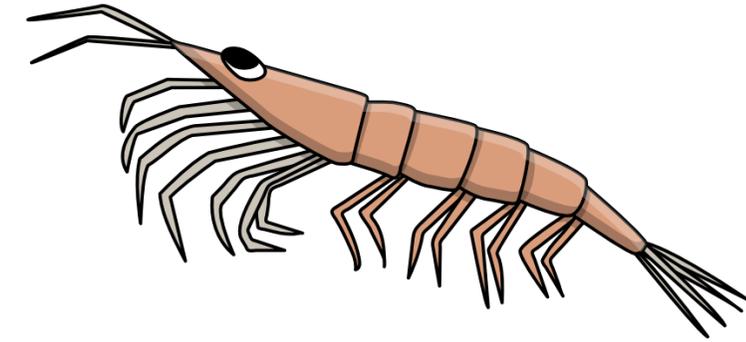
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Answer key



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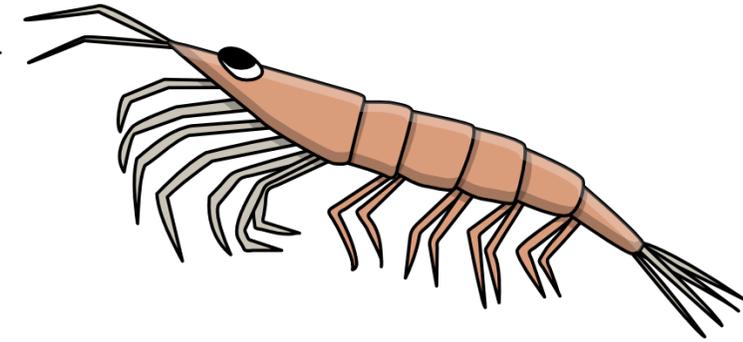
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Transcript

Do you have what it takes to spend a season in the Arctic or Antarctic? It sounds like a dream for many, but the reality is a mix of extreme highs and lows. To keep a research station running, we need more than just scientists; we need mechanics, carpenters, and even logistics managers to ensure everyone survives.



But let's talk about the reality. First, there is the isolation. You are thousands of miles away from your family, and if there is an emergency back home, you can't just hop on a plane. Paradoxically, while you are isolated from the world, you suffer from a total lack of privacy. You live, eat, and work with the same small group of people 24/7. In such close quarters, even a small disagreement about who left the dishes in the sink can turn into a major conflict.

However, the rewards are unique. It is the ultimate test of your resilience and character. You get to witness incredible wilderness and wildlife that few humans will ever see. Many people also go for the money—since there is nowhere to spend your salary, you can save a significant amount. Above all, it's about the adventure; it's a chance to step away from the modern world and test your limits against nature.

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