

Lecture 3: Purpose and process

This unit deals with two closely linked concepts: **purpose** and **process**. Purpose is concerned with the question of **why** or for **what reason** something is done or exists, while process describes **how**, or **the manner** in which it is done.

Process is frequently associated with the passive form.

Functions & Grammar

KEY POINTS – PURPOSE & PROCESS

1. Purpose

→ Purpose is concerned with questions of "**why**" or for "**what reason**" something is done.

■ Nouns

the purpose • function • use

➤ Metal is increasingly used in architecture for structural **purposes**.

the aim • goal • target • objective

➤ The main **objective** of hydrology is to study the physical and chemical processes of the water cycle.

■ Verbs

it is designed to / for^{G. Notes 23} • is devised to / for •
is planned to / for • is aimed to / for • is responsible for

➤ The new safety measures were **designed to** reduce the risks of contamination.

➤ A cooling system was **devised for** the preservation of clinical specimens.

it functions (as) • operates (as)

it provides • supplies

➤ The haemoglobin **provides** the extra oxygen.

■ Other expressions

in order to / so as to • so that

→ N.B.

- "**In order to / so as to**" have basically the same meaning as "**to**". They are merely stronger ways of expressing the idea of purpose.

- **"So that"** is followed by a clause composed of subject + verb.
 - Platinum contacts should be used **to** prevent oxidisation.
 - Platinum contacts should be used **in order to / so as to** prevent oxidisation.
 - Platinum should be used **so that oxidisation can be prevented**.

2. Process

→ Process is concerned with questions of **"how"** or **"in what way"** something is done.

■ Adverbial and prepositional phrases (see Unit 5)

by means of • through • thanks to • via

➤ The brain was damaged **through** lack of oxygen.

therefore • thus • thereby

➤ He switched off the computer, **thereby** losing all the data.

■ Verbs

to enable • make (it) possible (for) • allow • permit

- It is the carbon compounds that are responsible for the chemical reactions that **enable / make it possible for** the cell to grow.
- Visibility was poor – the plane was not **allowed / permitted** to land.

✚ N.B. – Meaning

- **"To enable / to make possible"** have the primary meaning of making something feasible or physically possible.
- **"To allow / to permit"** have the primary meaning of making something possible by giving authorisation or permission.

However, in modern English, the meaning of **to allow / to permit** is often extended to physical possibility.

The Erasmus grant

enabled
made it possible for
allowed
permitted

him to go on studying