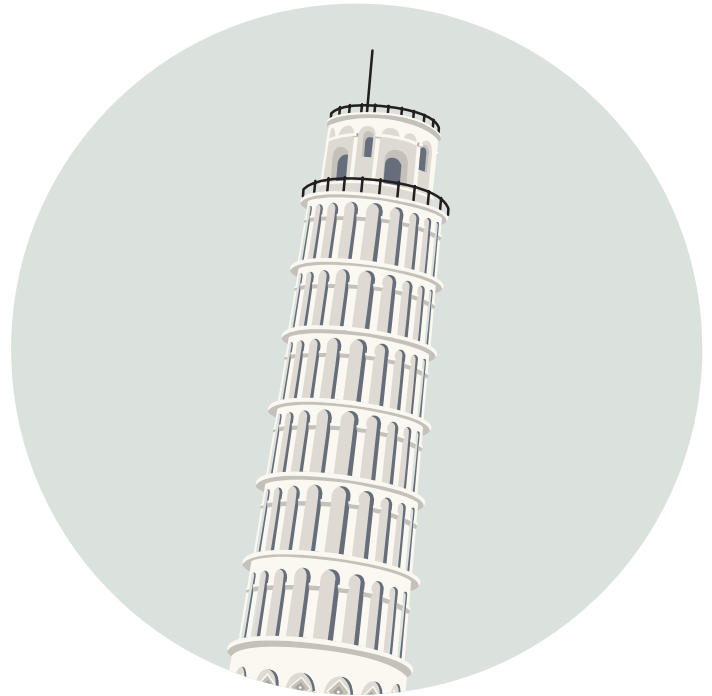


The Leaning Tower of Pisa



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Have you ever been to Italy? If so, have you visited the Leaning Tower of Pisa?
2. When do you think the Leaning Tower was built?
3. How high do you think the tower is?
4. Why do you think the tower leans?
5. Do you know what the Italian government has done to try to straighten the tower?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.
Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| ___ 1. lean | a) the answer to a problem |
| ___ 2. cathedral | b) the lowest part of something |
| ___ 3. step | c) to go down below the surface |
| ___ 4. arch | d) a type of church, a large building for prayer |
| ___ 5. compress | e) an effort, trying to do something |
| ___ 6. base | f) to come to rest, to stop moving |
| ___ 7. clay | g) sticky earth or mud |
| ___ 8. sink | h) part of a stairway |
| ___ 9. solution | i) earth |
| ___ 10. attempt | j) a curved structure |
| ___ 11. soil | k) to be in a sloping position, not straight up |
| ___ 12. settle | l) to push or press into a smaller space |

Reading

1. The Leaning Tower of Pisa, in Pisa, Italy, is famous because it looks like it might fall over.
2. This circular bell tower stands next to Pisa's **cathedral**. It is 187 feet (about 57 metres) high and has eight floors. Over 293 **steps** lead to seven bells at the top. The outside is decorated with **arches** and columns.
3. Construction began in 1173. After the first three floors were finished in 1178, the tower **leaned** to the north. Construction then stopped until 1275 because Pisa was at war. To try to correct the lean, the next three floors were built to be even with the ground instead of the bottom floors. When they were finished, about 1319, the tower leaned to the south. The last two floors were added about 1350.
4. During the long building delays, the tower's weight **compressed** the ground under it. This strengthened its **base** enough to keep it from falling, but it still leaned a bit more each year. The tower leans because it is too heavy for the ground it is built on. The uneven layers of soft sand and **clay** beneath it have caused the tower to **sink** more in certain places.
5. Over the years, the tower became a symbol of Italy and an important tourist attraction. Several **attempts** were made to straighten the tower, but some just made it worse. By 1990, the top floor leaned 17 feet (about five metres) to the south.
6. In 1990, the government closed the tower to the public and began a ten-year effort to stabilise it. International experts tried different **solutions**, but nothing worked. Then, in 1999, a British engineering professor suggested that **soil** be removed slowly from the high side so that the tower could **settle** back into the ground. This worked, and by 2001, the tower was 16 inches (about 41 centimetres) straighter. Experts believe it is now safe for another 300 years.
7. The tower reopened to the public in June 2001.

Pronunciation Tip

The words *Pisa* (pee-zah) and *pizza* (peet-zah) are pronounced differently. Practise these words with your class.

Comprehension

A. True or False?

Read the statements below.

If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence.

If it is false, write F and correct the information.

- _____ 1. The Leaning Tower of Pisa is 293 feet high.
- _____ 2. It took over 100 years to complete the building of the tower.
- _____ 3. The ground beneath the tower is very hard and solid.
- _____ 4. Several attempts to straighten the tower failed.
- _____ 5. The tower is closed to the public because it is not safe.

B. Ask & Answer

Practise asking and answering the following questions with your partner.

Then write your answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

- 1. Why is the Leaning Tower of Pisa so famous?
- 2. Describe the Leaning Tower.
- 3. Why was the tower built in several different stages?
- 4. Why does the tower lean?
- 5. What did the Italian government do in 1990?
- 6. Who proposed the successful solution to stabilise the tower?
- 7. What was his suggestion and what was the result?

Vocabulary Review

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

1. The outside of the tower is decorated with arches and columns.
 - a) painted colourfully
 - b) made beautiful
 - c) built higher
2. Construction began in 1173, but there were many delays and the tower wasn't finished until 1350.
 - a) wars
 - b) storms
 - c) holdups
3. The circular bell tower stands next to Pisa's cathedral.
 - a) circus
 - b) large
 - c) round
4. The government began a ten-year effort to stabilise the tower.
 - a) stop movement
 - b) rebuild parts of the tower
 - c) remove arches
5. International experts tried different solutions, but nothing worked.
 - a) experienced builders
 - b) people with special skills
 - c) examiners

Discussion

1. The Leaning Tower of Pisa has become a symbol of Italy and a very important tourist attraction of that country. What famous tourist attractions come to mind when you think of certain places around the world? Have you visited any of these sites? If so, describe them. Discuss some of the famous tourist attractions in your country.
2. Why do you think the Italian government made such a great effort to stabilise the Leaning Tower of Pisa?
3. Tourist attractions around the world become famous for many different reasons, such as historic or cultural significance, architectural beauty, engineering achievements, etc. Choose several different tourist attractions around the world and discuss why you think they have become so famous. Which ones would you like to visit the most, and why?