

## Exercises

This month's movie is set in the US in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a period of great change in the country. It was the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, and part of this 'war' was the space race - the challenge of building a spacecraft which could orbit the earth with an astronaut on board, then a more powerful one which could manage several orbits and eventually, to try to achieve a moon landing. At the same time, the Civil Rights Movement was gaining great momentum, as African-Americans under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. began to fight peacefully to bring about an end to segregation between blacks and whites in public places. The film tells the story of three black women, all brilliant minds, who contributed significantly to the advances made by the space agency NASA, despite the fact that they were not treated as 'equals' by most of their white colleagues in the agency.

As well as providing entertainment, the film is also a very useful way to practise some important aspects of English. Exercise 1 tests your general English awareness and then you can test your vocabulary in different ways by trying exercises 4 (expressions), 5 (verbs) and 6 (word-building). Exercise 2 tests you on prepositions, and 3 and 7 do the same on grammar constructions. Finally, exercise 8 checks whether you have been paying close attention to the film!

**1) Look at the text below, which outlines the plot of the movie, and fill in each space with ONE word.**

Three extremely intelligent young African-American women start (1)\_\_\_\_\_ for NASA in Virginia (2)\_\_\_\_\_ the start of the 1960s. Segregation of blacks and whites is still the norm in the country as a whole, so (3)\_\_\_\_\_ face many problems and a lot of opposition and suspicion from their white colleagues (4)\_\_\_\_\_ they take up their jobs. One major problem that Katherine Goble has to overcome is that there is (5)\_\_\_\_\_ bathroom for her in the building she works (6)\_\_\_\_\_, so she has to walk, or even run, to another building (7)\_\_\_\_\_ time she needs to use the toilet, which is inconvenient and humiliating for her. In (8)\_\_\_\_\_ of all the problems they have, however, all three women (9)\_\_\_\_\_ a valuable contribution to the project of sending the first American astronauts into space, as the space race with the Soviet Union builds up. Katherine is a brilliant mathematician, Mary Jackson becomes the (10)\_\_\_\_\_ black female engineer to work for NASA and Dorothy Vaughan is not only an excellent supervisor (11)\_\_\_\_\_ is also the first person (12)\_\_\_\_\_ learn how to programme the new IBM computers which can do complicated calculations much faster than humans.

2) Look at the sentences below, adapted from the film. In each one, there is a preposition missing. Choose the correct preposition from the right-hand column.

1 This Institute is the best school_____ Negroes in the State of West Virginia.	on
2. Why don't you try to solve that equation _____ the blackboard?	to
3. The calculations are extremely difficult but we'll get there _____ the end, I'm sure!	at
4. It's at this point that the rocket should go _____ orbit.	in
5. We're _____ our way to work, officer.	in
6, We're employed _____ the NASA space centre.	with
7. The nearest Colored bathroom is almost a kilometer _____ here; that's why I need so much time to get there!	on
8. I'll get you some work to do _____ just a moment.	from
9. The area closest _____ the boosters is always s the hottest.	into
10. Well, that's NASA: they have fast rockets but they are slow _____ promotion.	for

3) Match each of the expressions in bold in the left-hand column below with the correct meaning from the list on the right, which are all in the infinitive form.

1. It's all really straightforward.	a. to understand an idea or concept
2. I'm trying to turn it over.	b. to be distant emotionally
3. Ok, I got it now!	c. to be ready to do something
4. Ok, button it up now!	d. to be in an inferior position
5. We're all set.	e. to be simple, uncomplicated
6. Ok now, hold your horses!	f. to be irrelevant
7. He doesn't warm up to people.	g. to wait, to be patient
8. We need to figure out an answer.	h. to start a car
9. We have a lot of catching up to do.	i. to be quiet, say nothing
10. That's not the point.	j. to calculate, find

4) Look at these sentences: some are correct, but in others, a mistake has been made. Decide which ones are wrong and correct them:

1. It s almost a year that I work here now, Mrs. Mitchell, and you know my work is good.
2. If we altered the exterior of the rocket, it would be more stable.
3. I do the work of a supervisor so I should have to be paid a supervisor's salary.
4. Very little computers last more than a week - so we need some new ones which will last much longer!
5. All our figures have to be checked and double-checked, there's no room for errors!
6. Sony, could you tell me where is the ladies' bathroom, please?
7. Do you know what they are building in the Technology wing? - a super computer!
8. You are better with numbers than nobody else I know!
9. The kids are in bed but are only pretending to be asleep.
10. We are all proud to be doing our bit for the country.

5) In the box below, find the 10 verbs, which are all used in the film (they are all in the infinitive form here). A definition or synonym of each verb is given in the right-hand column, and some letters are given to help you in each case.

		E		A	N			to ask forcefully, insist
H			D		E			to control, manage
	M	A			E			to be important
	A			A	N		E	to make progress
	E		U		R	E		to need
				A	I	S		to express admiration of someone
	C		I	E		E		to reach an objective
	L	A			C			to put a rocket or spacecraft into space
		E		A		L	E	to allow, make possible
		A	S	U		E		to check the size or amount of something

6) Look at the sentences below and form the missing word in each case from the base word given at the end of the sentence. Look at the example:

It was a very \_\_\_\_\_ experience. *frighten*

It was a very frightening experience.

- This job doesn't pay much but it's better than being \_\_\_\_\_! *employ*
- I hope you are not being \_\_\_\_\_ to me, young lady! *respect*
- I'll need all these \_\_\_\_\_ on my desk by the end of the day! *calculate*
- It seems to me that our government's \_\_\_\_\_ is the reason we are falling behind the Russians in the space race - we need to be bolder! *decide*
- This is our biggest problem and we need to find a \_\_\_\_\_ to it as soon as possible! *solve*
- Ladies, if you arrive late, you won't get an \_\_\_\_\_, so be punctual! *assign*
- Once your \_\_\_\_\_ for the post of supervisor has been received, it will be given the appropriate consideration. *apply*
- I'm afraid Katherine doesn't have \_\_\_\_\_ to attend a meeting at this level. *clear*
- She's a brilliant mathematician and specialises in \_\_\_\_\_ geometry. *Analyse*
- The only \_\_\_\_\_ for the job are having ability and being prepared to work really hard. *require*

7) Look at each of the following sentences and then rewrite them, without changing the meaning, using between 3 and 6 words, including the word(s) given. Look at this example:

He was slim when he was a child but now he's really overweight. *used*

He..... than he is now.

Answer: He **used to be (much) slimmer** than he is now.

1. We have never had a Colored working with us before. *time*  
It's the ..... a Colored working with us.
2. That's the information that was given to me, sir. *told*  
That's ..... , sir.
3. We need to put that work in the trash, it's already obsolete! *away*  
We need to .....it s already obsolete!
4. It s not a problem if my work is checked by Katherine. *having*  
.....Katherine is not a problem.
5. Can everyone listen to me for a moment, please? *attention*  
Can I.....for a moment, please?
6. The only jewellery that may be worn is a simple pearl necklace. *except*  
..... a simple pearl necklace.
7. Kathenne Goble is so smart, I really admire her! *such*  
Kathenne Goble is..... I really admire her!
8. The IBM is so complex that we can't operate it right now. *too*  
The IBM is ..... operate right now.
9. All of these women can do extremely complicated calculations. *capable*  
All of these women..... extremely complicated calculations.
10. Whose folder is that? *belong*  
Who.....?

8) Look at the statements below, referring to the film, and decide whether each one is True or False. You may have to watch sections of the rilm again to check your answers!

1. Katherine Goble went to the only non-segregated school in West Virginia.
2. She went to work for NASA at Cape Canaveral in Florida.
3. She was assigned to the Space Task Group headed by Al Harrison.
4. Head engineer Paul Stafford admired her work and helped her to settle in to her new post.
5. There is no bathroom for women in the building Katherine works in.
6. Sputnik, the first artificial Earth satellite, was launched by the Soviet Union in 1957.
7. Chernushka was the surame of one of the first Russian astronauts to be sent into space.
8. Katherine was a widow with three young daughters when she met Jim Johnson.
9. Dorothy Vaughan taught herself all about the programme Fortran so that she would be able to operate the new IBM super-computers.

## Answers

- 1) 1. working, 2. at, 3. they, 4. when, 5. no, 6. in, 7. every, 8. spite, 9. make, 10. first, 11. but, 12. to
- 2) 1. for, 2. on, 3. in, 4. into, 5. on, 6. at, 7. from, 8. in, 9. to, 10. with
- 3) 1. e, 2. h, 3. a, 4. i, 5. c, 6. g, 7. b, 8. j, 9. d, 10. f
- 4) 1. **Wrong.** It should be: "It's almost a year since I started working here now, Mrs. Mitchell, and you know my work is good." (or: "I've been working here now for almost a year...") 2. **Correct** 3. **Wrong.** It should be: "I do the work of a supervisor so I should be paid a supervisor's salary." 4. **Wrong.** It should be: "Very few computers last more than a week – so we need some new ones which will last much longer!" 5. **Correct** 6. **Wrong.** It should be: "Sorry, could you tell me where the ladies' bathroom is, please?" 7. **Correct** 8. **Wrong.** It should be: "You are better with numbers than anybody else I know!" 9. **Correct** 10. **Correct**
- 5) 1. demand, 2. handle, 3. matter, 4. advance, 5. require, 6. praise, 7. achieve, 8. launch, 9. enable, 10. measure

	D	E	M	A	N	D	
H	A	N	D	L	E		
	M	A	T	T	E	R	
	A	D	V	A	N	C	E
R	E	Q	U	I	R	E	
		P	R	A	I	S	E
A	C	H	I	E	V	E	
	L	A	U	N	C	H	
		E	N	A	B	L	E
M	E	A	S	U	R	E	

- 6) 1. unemployed, 2. disrespectful, 3. calculations, 4. indecision, 5. solution, 6. assignment, 7. application, 8. clearance, 9. analytic, 10. requirements
- 7) 1. It's the first time we've had a Colored working with us. 2. That's what I was told, sir. 3. We need to throw that work away, it's already obsolete! 4. Having my work checked by Katherine is not a problem. 5. Can I have everyone's attention for a moment, please? 6. No jewellery may be worn except a simple pearl necklace. 7. Katherine Goble is such a smart woman / person, I really admire her! 8. The IBM is too complex for us to operate right now. 9. All of these women are capable of doing extremely complicated calculations. 10. Who does that folder belong to?
- 8) 1. **False** – her school was segregated, for 'negroes' only. 2. **False** – She worked for NASA in Langley, Virginia. 3. **True** 4. **False** – he did everything possible to make her life difficult and would not let her put her name on any of the reports she had done. 5. **False** – there is a bathroom but it is only for white women. 6. **True** 7. **False** – Chernushka was a dog sent into orbit for testing purposes before a human being was used. 8. **True** 9. **True**.