Electric hydrofoil ferries gain speed in US

LEVEL B2


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I. WARM-UP

1. How often do you travel by boat or ferry?
2. What transport changes could cut city air pollution?
3. Would you try a new kind of fast boat? Why or why not?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

hydrofoil
An underwater wing that lifts a boat as it speeds up

hull
The main body of a boat that sits in the water

drag
Resistance that slows a moving object, such as a boat in water

battery
A device that stores electricity to power motors and equipment

diesel
A type of fuel used by many boat and bus engines

emissions
Gases released into the air, often from burning fuel

recharge
To fill a battery with electricity again after use

operator
A company or agency that runs a transport service

III. READING

A new generation of electric ferries is appearing in the United States, and some ride on hydrofoils. In a New York Harbor demo, Vessev's small craft lifted its hull above the waves, turning bumps into a smooth glide.

The company says hydrofoils cut drag by about 66%, so boats can use smaller battery packs and cost less to run. Vessev operates in New Zealand, is expanding to Australia, and plans its first US route on Lake Tahoe.

It argues that electric vessels could become everyday transport, linking communities without adding cars. As electricity gets cleaner, switching ferries from diesel to batteries can reduce emissions and improve air around waterfronts. Vessev has rivals.

In Stockholm, commuters already ride electric hydrofoil ferries from Swedish maker Candela, which says they use up to 80% less energy than similar boats. In San Francisco, the largest ferry operator carries about 3.5 million passengers a year on 18 diesel vessels and plans four battery-powered ferries. Route length, passenger loads and recharge time still shape what is possible.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "A new wave of electric ferries is here in...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What technology lifts some electric ferries out of the water?
2. How much drag reduction does Vessev claim for its design?
3. Where is Vessev planning its first US service?
4. Which city already carries commuters on electric hydrofoil ferries?
5. How many diesel vessels does San Francisco's largest ferry operator use?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Where could electric ferries work well in your country? Why?
2. Do hydrofoils' benefits outweigh their costs and limits? Explain.
3. Should cities prioritise electric boats or electric buses first?
4. What would persuade commuters to switch from cars to ferries?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Mixed conditionals

Mixed conditionals link different times. 1) Past condition + present result: If + had + past participle, ... would + base verb (now). 2) Present condition + past result: If + past simple, ... would have + past participle (then).

> *"If Vessev had launched sooner, fares* **would be** *lower now."*
>
> *"If hydrofoils were standard, commuters* **would have saved** *time last year."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence using "would".

1. If routes had been shorter, boats (cost) ___ less now. _____
2. If charging had improved, services (run) ___ more often now. _____
3. If ferries were cheaper, more people (take) ___ them last year. _____
4. If batteries had been bigger, ferries (carry) ___ more now. _____
5. If links were direct, commuters (spend) ___ less last month. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or concept-check hydrofoil, hull, drag, recharge and emissions with quick sketches or gestures, then highlight the difference between diesel engines and battery power.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist (What is new? Who is involved?), then detail (figures, places, claims). Pair-check answers before a brief whole-class recap. No sensitive content expected.
- For discussion, start with pairs to collect local examples of waterways, then regroup into fours to compare feasibility and policy ideas; ask each group for one concrete suggestion to close.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Ask students to name specific rivers, lakes or ports, then justify with distance and demand.
2. List two pros and two cons on the board first; push for examples and rough costs.
3. Take a quick vote, then pair students from opposite sides to test each other's reasons.
4. Elicit practical ideas: price, frequency, comfort, time saved; ask for one change per student.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In teams, propose one new ferry route for your city and defend it in a 2-minute pitch.

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word notice promoting the first week of an electric ferry service.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Mixed conditionals

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What technology lifts some electric ferries out of the water?
   Hydrofoils.
2. How much drag reduction does Vessev claim for its design?
   About 66% less drag.
3. Where is Vessev planning its first US service?
   Lake Tahoe.
4. Which city already carries commuters on electric hydrofoil ferries?
   Stockholm.
5. How many diesel vessels does San Francisco's largest ferry operator use?
   Eighteen.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Mixed conditionals link different times. 1) Past condition + present result: If + had + past participle, ... would + base verb (now). 2) Present condition + past result: If + past simple, ... would have + past participle (then). (Examples constructed.)

> *"If Vessev had launched sooner, fares* **would be** *lower now."*
>
> *"If hydrofoils were standard, commuters* **would have saved** *time last year."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence using "would".

1. If routes had been shorter, boats ___ less now. **would cost**
2. If charging had improved, services ___ more often now. **would run**
3. If ferries were cheaper, more people ___ them last year. **would have taken**
4. If batteries had been bigger, ferries ___ more now. **would carry**
5. If links were direct, commuters ___ less last month. **would have spent**