

Insurance 2: Building and Contents Insurance

"The best time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining." – John F. Kennedy



Warm up

- What do you think the quote means in everyday life? How does it apply to preparing for unexpected events?
- What are the biggest risks to property in your area (e.g., floods, storms, theft)? Rank them from most to least likely.
- If you had unlimited money to protect your home, what security or safety features would you add first?



1. Match the keywords to the explanations, then discuss the following questions in pairs.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| a) home insurance | 1. A policy that protects the building and its contents |
| b) burglary | 2. Water entering a building from heavy rain or rivers |
| c) flood | 3. Breaking into a building to steal |
| d) accidental damage | 4. Money paid for damage caused without intent |
| e) personal possessions | 5. Personal belongings such as laptops or jewellery |

- Do you think home insurance should be required by law? Why or why not?
- What are some common ways people protect their homes against burglary?
- Has your area ever experienced flooding? How did people deal with it?
- Have you ever broken or damaged something expensive by accident? What happened?
- Which of your personal possessions would you most want to protect with insurance?



2. Read the article and discuss with your group.

In June 2024, extremely heavy rain fell across southern Germany for several days. The Danube River, the second longest in Europe, and many smaller rivers, overflowed. Entire towns in the region of Bavaria were flooded, and thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed.

The German Insurance Association (GDV) estimated over €2 billion in property damage. However, many homeowners were surprised to find out that their insurance policies did not cover this kind of natural disaster. As a result, people lost more than they expected.



In response, the European Union's insurance authority (EIOPA) recommended new rules to help prevent future problems. These included stronger building codes and the creation of a shared insurance fund between public and private companies. The idea was to make insurance fairer and more affordable, especially for people living in high-risk areas.

Meanwhile, other countries have already taken action. In Japan and the Netherlands, two countries that often face floods, governments and insurance companies use smart technology to predict flooding. For example, Japan uses AI-powered satellite data and real-time river sensors to send early warnings to residents. The Netherlands has built "smart dikes" that can alert local authorities when water pressure becomes dangerous. These systems help people evacuate earlier and prevent larger losses.

Insurance companies in these countries also collaborate with city planners. For example, new housing developments in the Netherlands must meet strict flood-proofing requirements, and insurance providers use 3D urban maps to calculate risk more accurately.

With climate change expected to bring more extreme weather, experts say European countries should learn from these examples and act quickly to close the "protection gap", which is the difference between what's covered by insurance and the real costs of a disaster.

- a. What caused the flooding in Germany in 2024?
- b. Why were many people shocked after the floods?
- c. What two solutions did the EU recommend?
- d. How are Japan and the Netherlands handling flood risks?
- e. What is the "protection gap," and why is it a problem?

Passive Voice in Insurance

Why do we use the *passive voice*? We use the *passive voice* to shift focus from the person doing the action to the result or event itself. This is very useful when talking about damage, disasters, or unexpected events.

Structure: **Subject** + **be** (in the correct tense) + **past participle** (3rd form)

Tense	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Present Simple	The company covers accidental damage.	Accidental damage is covered by the company.
Past Simple	The flood damaged the house in 2023.	The house was damaged by the flood in 2023.
Present Perfect	The company has assessed the risk.	The risk has been assessed .
Future Simple	The law will include home insurance.	Home insurance will be included in the law.
Modal Passive	You must insure personal possessions.	Personal possessions must be insured .



3. Complete each sentence with a modal verb (e.g. *must, may, might, can, should*) and the passive voice form of the verb in brackets. More than one answer may be correct.

- a. Personal possessions *must be protected* (protect) with a separate contents policy.
- b. Home insurance _____ (include) in every rental contract.
- c. Burglary risks _____ (reduce) with better door locks and lighting.
- d. Accidental damage _____ (cover) under optional add-ons.
- e. The new insurance policy _____ (explain) to all new clients.



4. Complete the sentences using the passive voice. Use the correct tense based on the context (past, present, future, or modal). There may be more than one correct answer.

- a. Many homes *were damaged* (damage) during the flood.
- b. The broken laptop _____ (cover) by the contents insurance policy.
- c. Valuable personal possessions _____ (steal) during the burglary.
- d. Home insurance _____ (include) in the new rental agreement next year.
- e. The smart TV _____ (break) due to accidental damage.
- f. In some countries, flood risks _____ (monitor) using satellite data.



5. You work for SafeShield Insurance. Yesterday, a customer emailed you about storm damage. Read the customer's email below and complete the Internal Report Form on the next page. Use the passive voice where possible.

Hello,

Yesterday afternoon, at around 4:30 p.m., strong winds tore at least six roof tiles off my house in Karlsruhe, Germany. Some tiles fell into the garden, and one hit the back fence, leaving a visible crack. I have lived here since 2015 and have never filed a claim before.

My neighbour, Mr. Weber, helped me move the broken tiles out of the way, and he suggested I contact you immediately. This morning, I called your office and attached eight photos of the damage, including the roof and the fence.

The forecast says more rain is expected tomorrow, so I am worried about water leaking into the attic.

Best regards,
Daniel Klein

SafeShield Insurance – Internal Report

Customer Name: _____

Date of Claim: _____

Location: _____

Summary: - Several roof tiles _____ (tear) off the house during a storm.

- The property _____ (own) by Mr. Klein since 2015.
- No previous claims _____ (file).
- Photos of the damage _____ (send) this morning.

A loss adjuster _____ (already / assign) and _____ (schedule) to visit the property tomorrow.



6. Match each damaged item to the correct part of a home-and-contents insurance policy: Building, Contents, or Optional Add-On. Then compare your answers with a partner and discuss any differences.

Item	Building	Contents	Optional add-on
1. Burst pipe in the wall			
2. Stolen bicycle from the garage			
3. Cracked smartphone screen			
4. Flood-damaged kitchen floor			
5. Lost wedding ring while travelling			
6. Fire damage to the living room wall			
7. Damaged sofa from indoor water leak			
8. Broken television during a house move			
9. Jewellery stolen from a hotel room abroad			
10. Water damage from a leaking washing machine			



7. Role-play: Read the scenario below. Then your teacher will give you a role card for either the Customer or the Insurance Agent.

Scenario 1: Making a Claim After a Storm

Last weekend, a severe storm hit Utrecht, the Netherlands. A customer is now calling *SafeShield* Insurance to file a Home + Contents claim. The customer isn't sure what is covered. They will now speak to an insurance agent to explain what happened, confirm what's covered, and agree on next steps.

Scenario 2 (swap roles): Reporting a Burglary

Earlier this week, a burglary occurred at an apartment in a European city. A customer is now calling *SafeShield* Insurance to make a claim under their Contents Only policy.

They will speak to an agent to explain what happened, check what's covered, and decide on next steps.

Your teacher will give you a role card. After the call, switch roles and try the next scenario with a new partner.

SafeShield Insurance – Report Form (Scenario 2)

Customer Name:

Date of Incident:

Location (City, Address if given):

Summary of Incident: (Briefly describe what happened, when, and what was stolen)

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Estimated Value (if known):

Is the claim covered by this policy? Yes No Partially

Notes about coverage exclusions (if any):

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Next Steps:

Assign adjuster Request police report Request proof of ownership

Decline claim Other:

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8. In pairs or small groups, research how one country is preparing for climate-related disasters such as floods, storms, or earthquakes. Then, briefly report your findings to the class.

Suggested countries and topics to explore:

- Japan – J-ALERT system; AI flood forecasting; earthquake-resistant building laws
- The Netherlands – Delta Works engineering; smart dikes; insurance + spatial planning
- United Kingdom – "Flood Re" insurance scheme; property-level flood protection grants
- Bangladesh – Microinsurance for low-income communities; community flood shelters
- United States (e.g., Florida, California) – FEMA risk maps; wildfire exclusions; private-public insurance schemes (e.g., Florida, California)
- Italy – Earthquake risk zones; Sismabonus tax incentive for building upgrades