

2 Let's read: The Empire State Building

GK + EK In the 1920's and 1930's everybody wanted to have the world's highest building. That is why John J. Raskob gave the money to build the Empire State Building in 1930. They started to build on 17th March 1930 and they finished 410 days later, on 1st May 1931. It has 102 floors¹ and is 381 meters high. With the television tower on top, it is almost 449 meters high. Over 3,400 people worked on the building and most of them were from Europe or were Mohawks, who are Native Americans. They needed people who were not scared of heights and they found them. There are many photographs which show workers who had their lunch hundreds of meters above the ground with nothing to protect them. Official² numbers show that only 14 people died because they fell.



Before they finished the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building had been the tallest building in the world and then the Bank of Manhattan at 40 Wall Street was the tallest. They had kept their titles only for a year because people with money planned every new building higher and higher. It was like a race to the clouds. The Empire State Building was the winner of the race – it stayed the world's tallest skyscraper for over 40 years. The building got its name because the State of New York is also called the 'Empire State'.

EK The Empire State Building is at the corner of 5th Avenue and 34th Street and they built it in the place where the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel had once been. The hotel was also very famous because at the end of the 19th century the rich and beautiful people of New York had often stayed or eaten there. This group of people were called *The Four Hundred* and they were the people you had to know if you wanted to be somebody in New York at the time. Today the Waldorf-Astoria is at 301, Park Avenue. Many people have died in or around the building but some people have also been very lucky. In 1945, on Saturday, 28th July, a plane flew into the building. It was an accident and it happened because it was a very foggy day. Fourteen people died but one woman was very lucky. Betty Lou Oliver was in an elevator³ when it fell 75 floors down but she lived. The building opened again for work on the Monday, only two days later. In 1979 another woman was very lucky. Elvita Adams fell from the 86th floor but the wind blew her back into the 85th floor and she only broke her hip⁴.

GK + EK You can visit the Empire State Building and have a great view of New York or you can just look at the building from outside. Even at night you can always see the building because there are beautiful lights at the top. They also change color at different times of the year. On 4th July they are red, white and blue. At Christmas they are red and green and when the Yankees play at home, they become blue and white. For Christopher Street Day they go pink.

¹floor [flɔ:] - Stockwerk, ²official [ə'fɪʃəl] - offiziell/veröffentlicht, ³elevator [elɪ'veɪtə] - Aufzug, ⁴hip [hɪp] - Hüfte

Read the text and complete the fact box.

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◎ ◎ FACT BOX ◎ ◎	
Building time:	
➞ started:	_____ / finished: _____
Size/height:	
➞ how high:	_____ (with TV tower: _____)
➞ number of floors:	_____
Other buildings that fought for the title of highest building:	
➞ 1)	_____ / 2) _____
➞ how long the ESB could keep the title:	_____