Practice Exam - Environment and Conservation

Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511 | Reading practice paper

Exercise 1

Read the article about restoring a riverbank then answer the questions.

Bringing life back to a riverbank

A riverbank near a town centre had become bare after years of heavy foot traffic. People walked down to the water to feed ducks, take photographs and eat lunch, but the constant pressure damaged the plants that held the soil together. After heavy rain, mud washed into the river, making the water cloudy and covering places where insects and small fish lived. The work was planned for early spring, before the busiest months for visitors. This gave new plants time to settle before families returned to the riverside in large numbers.

The local council worked with a conservation group to restore the area. They did not close the riverbank completely, because residents valued access to the water. Instead, they built two clear paths and fenced off the most damaged sections. The aim was to guide people to safe viewing points while giving plants space to recover.

Volunteers planted reeds, grasses and low shrubs. These plants were chosen because their roots hold soil in place and provide shelter for wildlife. The group avoided tall trees near the main path because they could block views and make the area feel unsafe at night. Information boards explain why some parts of the bank look untidy: fallen leaves and dead stems can be useful habitats.

The project also changed how people feed birds. Signs ask visitors not to throw bread into the water, as it can attract rats and make ducks unhealthy. A nearby shop now sells small packets of suitable bird food. This was a compromise, because the council knew that simply banning feeding would be unpopular with families.

Early results are encouraging. Water near the restored bank is clearer after rain, and volunteers have recorded more dragonflies than before. The bank still needs maintenance, especially after storms, but residents say the area feels calmer and more attractive. The project shows that conservation in a town centre is not about keeping people away from nature. It is about helping people enjoy nature without slowly damaging it. The group also trains volunteers to photograph the same points each month, so changes to plant cover can be compared without relying only on memory.

The project also included a short information board explaining why some branches and stones were left in place. Visitors sometimes thought the bank looked unfinished, but these rough areas created shelter for insects and small fish.

Exercise 1 questions

Answer the questions using information from the article. Write short answers.

1 What damaged the plants on the riverbank? [1]

_____

2 What happened to mud after heavy rain? [1]

_____

3 How many clear paths were built? [1]

_____

4 Why were the most damaged sections fenced off? [1]

_____

5 Which plants were avoided near the main path? [1]

_____

6 Give three ways the riverbank project supports wildlife. [3]

_____

_____

_____

Exercise 2

Read the article about four conservation actions (A-D). Then answer Questions 9(a)-9(i).

A Wildflower strips

A school has left narrow strips of grass uncut beside its sports field. Wildflowers grow there in summer, attracting bees and butterflies. The strips are marked with small signs so students understand that the grass has not been forgotten. Grounds staff cut the strips once a year after seeds have fallen. Science classes visit the strips in June to count insects, but they are asked to stay on the path. Students count insects from the path so the flowers are not damaged.

B Beach litter survey

Volunteers collect litter from one section of beach and record what they find before recycling or disposing of it. The survey matters because it shows which items are most common. If many bottle tops are found, for example, local shops may be asked to improve recycling points. The survey team records brand names only when this helps identify where an item may have come from. Results are compared by item type, not only by total weight.

C Rainwater barrels

A community garden uses barrels to collect rain from the roof of a nearby shed. The water is used during dry weeks, reducing the need for tap water. The barrels must be covered to stop insects breeding inside them. They are emptied before winter to avoid damage from freezing. Gardeners write the water level on a small card each week, which helps them notice if a barrel is leaking. Gardeners check lids after heavy rain because loose covers can blow away.

D Night-light reduction

A village has reduced some decorative lighting near a woodland path. Safety lights remain, but they point downwards instead of shining into trees. The change helps insects and bats that are disturbed by bright light. Some residents were worried at first, so the council arranged a trial before making the change permanent. The council kept one brighter lamp at the entrance so walkers could still find the path easily. Notices explain the reason for the darker section, which reduced complaints during the trial and helped residents understand the wildlife benefit more clearly during evening walks nearby. One brighter lamp remains at the entrance for walkers' safety.

The conservation notice explains that small changes can have different timescales. Some results are visible within a week, while others, such as wildlife returning, may take a season before people notice them.

Exercise 2 questions

For each statement, write the correct letter A, B, C or D on the line. Each letter may be used more than once.

No.	Which conservation action…	A-D
9(a)	uses information collected to influence local services	.....
9(b)	helps wildlife affected by artificial light	.....
9(c)	must be protected so insects do not breed inside	.....
9(d)	is cut only after seeds have fallen	.....
9(e)	was tested before becoming permanent	.....
9(f)	reduces the use of tap water	.....
9(g)	needs signs so people know the area is intentional	.....
9(h)	records objects before they are removed	.....
9(i)	keeps safety lighting but changes its direction	.....

Exercise 3

Read the article about reducing energy use in a school building then complete the notes.

A school energy check

A school energy check is a simple investigation into how electricity and heat are used during a normal week. Students may begin by walking around the building at the end of the day to see which lights, computers and projectors have been left on. They also note rooms that feel too hot or too cold, because heating problems can waste more energy than people realise.

The next stage is measurement. Some schools borrow plug-in meters to test how much electricity different devices use. Students compare a computer on standby with one that is switched off completely. They may also check whether windows are open while radiators are on. These small observations help students connect everyday habits with energy bills.

Recommendations must be realistic. Asking teachers to switch everything off is less useful than creating a clear closing routine for each classroom. For example, one student checks windows, another checks lights and the teacher checks shared equipment. Posters can help, but they work best when they are specific to the room rather than general slogans. Students present their findings to the site manager rather than simply handing in a worksheet. This makes the investigation feel connected to real decisions about the building.

A good energy check also considers comfort and learning. A classroom should not become cold just to save money, and dark corridors can feel unsafe. The most successful changes are practical: timers for outdoor lights, labels on switches and regular reminders before holidays. Students learn that conservation is not only about big technology. It also depends on noticing small routines that happen every day. The school avoids promising instant savings because weather, timetable changes and building repairs can all affect energy use. Instead, students look for patterns that can be checked again later. This also helps them understand why evidence from one week may not be enough.

Students compare rooms that are used in different ways, such as classrooms, corridors and computer rooms. This helps them avoid blaming one group unfairly and shows whether the problem is equipment, habits or the building itself.

Students present the results as actions, not just numbers. For example, they may suggest moving a printer, changing a reminder sign or turning off screens in rooms that are empty at lunchtime.

Exercise 3 questions

Complete the notes using information from the article. Write short words or phrases.

Notes	Write short answers
10 What students may check first	- ..... - ..... - .....
11 Practical ways to reduce energy waste	- ..... - ..... - ..... - .....

Exercise 4

Read the article about joining a tree-planting day then answer the questions.

The tree-planting mistake

I joined a tree-planting day because I wanted to do something useful for the environment. I imagined arriving, planting a few young trees and going home feeling proud. The organiser began by giving us gloves, a map and a long explanation about spacing, soil and protection tubes. I remember thinking that planting trees seemed less simple than it looked in photographs.

My first mistake was digging too quickly. I wanted to finish more trees than everyone else, so I made a shallow hole and pushed the roots in. A volunteer stopped me politely and explained that a badly planted tree might survive the first week but fail later when the weather changed. That was embarrassing, but it made me slow down.

The second surprise was how much attention went into protecting the trees afterwards. Each young tree needed a tube to stop animals eating it, and the tube had to be pushed firmly into the ground. We also added mulch around the base to keep moisture in the soil. The planting was only one part of the work; the real aim was to give the tree a chance to grow.

At lunch, an older volunteer told me that some previous planting days had failed because nobody returned to check the trees. Dry summers, loose tubes and weeds had damaged many of them. This changed how I saw the project. The exciting part was not the day when everyone arrived with cameras. The important part was the quiet maintenance that happened months later. The writer also noticed that volunteers who had planted before spent more time checking the ground than choosing where to stand for photographs.

By the end, I had planted fewer trees than I expected, but I understood more. Environmental work is not always dramatic. Sometimes it means doing one small task carefully and accepting that results will take years to see. I still felt proud, but not because I had planted a large number of trees. I felt proud because I had learned to do the job properly. That observation made the day feel less like a public event and more like a careful piece of preparation for the future.

Exercise 4 questions

For each question, choose the correct answer, A, B or C.

12 What did the writer expect before the event? [1]

A a simple activity that would feel rewarding

B a lesson mainly about using maps

C a competition between volunteers

13 Why was the writer's first hole a problem? [1]

A It was too far from the other trees.

B It was not deep enough for the tree to survive well.

C It had too much mulch inside it.

14 What did the writer learn about protection tubes? [1]

A They replaced the need for water.

B They were used only for old trees.

C They helped stop animals eating young trees.

15 What changed the writer's view at lunch? [1]

A finding out that cameras were not allowed

B learning that all previous trees had survived

C hearing that later maintenance was essential

16 What does the writer suggest about environmental work? [1]

A It should always produce quick results.

B It often requires careful long-term effort.

C It is mainly about public events.

17 Why did the writer feel proud at the end? [1]

A He had learned to do the work properly.

B He had planted more trees than expected.

C He had organised the event himself.

ANSWER KEY

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Exercise 1

1. heavy foot traffic / constant pressure
2. it washed into the river
3. two
4. to give plants space to recover
5. tall trees
6. fallen leaves and dead stems provide useful habitats; visitors are asked not to throw bread into the water; volunteers have recorded more dragonflies

Exercise 2

9(a) B; 9(b) D; 9(c) C; 9(d) A; 9(e) D; 9(f) C; 9(g) A; 9(h) B; 9(i) D

Exercise 3

10 What students may check first

- lights
- computers and projectors / projectors
- rooms that feel too hot or too cold

11 Practical ways to reduce energy waste

- clear closing routine for each classroom
- specific posters / posters specific to the room
- timers for outdoor lights
- labels on switches

Exercise 4

12 A; 13 B; 14 C; 15 C; 16 B; 17 A

12 A - He imagined planting a few trees and feeling proud.

13 B - A shallow hole could make the tree fail later.

14 C - The text says tubes stop animals eating the trees.

15 C - The older volunteer explained failures happened when nobody returned.

16 B - He says results take years and maintenance matters.

17 A - He felt proud because he learned to do the job properly.