Practice Exam - People and Achievement

Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511 | Reading practice paper

Exercise 1

Read the article about a young inventor award then answer the questions.

An award for useful ideas

A regional young inventor award has changed its rules to focus on usefulness rather than complexity. In previous years, many entries used advanced technology, but judges found that some impressive projects did not solve a clear problem. The new rules ask entrants to explain who their idea helps, what problem it addresses and how it could be tested in real life. The organisers also ask entrants to describe who might struggle to use the design, because a useful invention should consider limits as well as benefits.

The winning project last year was a simple reminder tag for reusable water bottles. The tag clips onto a school bag and shows whether the bottle has been filled that morning. The student who designed it said she often forgot her bottle until lunchtime, then bought a drink in a plastic container. Her design was not expensive, but it responded to a common habit.

Judges praised the project because the student had tested several versions. The first tag was too large and caught on classroom chairs. The second used paper, which became damaged in rain. The final version used a small plastic disc with a sliding marker. The student interviewed classmates and changed the design after watching how they used their bags.

The award ceremony now includes a testing table. Finalists must show their prototypes and explain what failed during development. Organisers say this helps visitors understand that achievement is not only about a polished final object. It also involves noticing mistakes, asking for feedback and improving an idea step by step.

Teachers have welcomed the change because more students feel able to enter. Not everyone can build a robot or write complex code, but many students can identify a practical problem. The award now celebrates careful observation as much as invention. As one judge said, a useful idea does not have to be dramatic; it has to make something easier for someone. This has encouraged more teamwork, with some students testing each other's ideas before the official judging day.

Judges do not look only for inventions that are expensive or impressive. They ask whether the idea solves a real problem, whether it can be explained simply and whether other young people could use it.

Exercise 1 questions

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

1 What do the new award rules focus on instead of complexity? [1]

_____

2 What did some impressive projects fail to solve? [1]

_____

3 What did the winning reminder tag clip onto? [1]

_____

4 When did the student often remember she had forgotten her bottle? [1]

_____

5 What happened to the first tag? [1]

_____

6 List three features of the invention award. [3]

_____

_____

_____

Exercise 2

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

A Reading mentor award

A student received an award for helping younger pupils read aloud. She did not teach full lessons; instead, she listened patiently and helped pupils choose books at the right level. Teachers said her achievement was consistency, because she came every week even during exam revision. The younger pupils also gained confidence because the sessions happened in a quiet corner, away from the whole class. The mentor kept a simple reading log so teachers could see progress. The mentor keeps a simple reading log so teachers can see progress.

B Community map prize

A group of students won a prize for creating a map of step-free routes around their town. They tested pavements, crossings and shop entrances with advice from wheelchair users. The map was praised because it included small obstacles that official maps often miss. The group repeated parts of the route at different times of day because parked cars sometimes blocked dropped kerbs. They also photographed temporary obstacles such as advertising boards. The group photographed temporary obstacles as well as permanent ones.

C Science fair improvement

One student did not win the science fair, but received recognition for improving the most. His first display was confusing, so he redesigned it with clearer headings and fewer words. Judges said the final version showed that he had listened carefully to feedback. The student kept both versions of the display, which helped him explain exactly what had improved. The student explained what changed after the first unsuccessful test.

D Sports leadership certificate

A young coach earned a certificate for organising warm-ups for a girls' football team. She planned short activities that included all players, not just the strongest ones. Her coach said the achievement was creating confidence in others rather than showing her own skill. She also asked quieter players to lead one warm-up each month, so leadership was shared gradually. Quieter players are invited to lead one warm-up each month.

The award descriptions focus on useful effort rather than fame. Each achievement is judged by what changed for other people, not simply by whether the student won a prize.

The descriptions include evidence as well as praise. Readers are asked to notice what each person actually did, because an impressive title does not always explain the achievement clearly.

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 achievement project…	A-D
9(a)	was recognised for helping others feel more confident	.....
9(b)	included details that are often left out of official information	.....
9(c)	showed progress after feedback	.....
9(d)	required regular commitment during a busy school period	.....
9(e)	was developed with advice from people who understood access problems	.....
9(f)	helped younger pupils select suitable material	.....
9(g)	valued improvement rather than winning first place	.....
9(h)	made sure activities did not focus only on the strongest participants	.....
9(i)	changed a display by reducing the amount of text	.....

Exercise 3

Read the article about preparing for a personal achievement interview then complete the notes.

Explaining an achievement clearly

Students are sometimes asked to talk about a personal achievement in interviews or applications. The strongest answers are specific. Instead of saying 'I worked hard', students should explain what they did, what was difficult and how they responded. This helps the listener understand the achievement rather than simply hear a positive claim.

Preparation begins with choosing the right example. It does not have to be a prize. It could be completing a difficult project, helping a team improve or continuing with an activity after a setback. Students should choose an example they can explain honestly, including mistakes or problems along the way.

A clear answer often has three parts. First, describe the situation briefly. Next, explain the actions taken, using practical details. Finally, say what changed as a result. The result might be a score, a finished product, a person helped or a skill developed. Without a result, the answer may sound unfinished. Students are encouraged to prepare one example from school and one from outside school, so they can choose the most suitable story during an interview.

Students should also avoid exaggeration. Interviewers may ask follow-up questions, so invented details can create problems. It is better to describe a small achievement clearly than a huge achievement vaguely. A thoughtful answer shows self-awareness, which is often more impressive than a perfect story. A useful practice method is to answer once in detail, then shorten the same answer to one minute without losing the main point. This helps students sound prepared without memorising a script.

Students practise choosing one strong example instead of listing every certificate they have received. A short, specific story usually explains effort and progress better than a long list of activities.

Interviewers may ask what was difficult, so students prepare one honest problem as well as one success. This makes the achievement sound more believable and less rehearsed.

The final practice is timed. Students learn that a short answer with one clear example is usually stronger than a long answer that moves from one idea to another without focus.

Students are also asked to avoid exaggeration. A simple explanation of steady effort is usually more convincing than a claim that everything was difficult or life-changing.

Exercise 3 questions

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

Notes	Write short answers
10 What a strong achievement answer should explain	- ..... - ..... - .....
11 What students should include or avoid	- ..... - ..... - ..... - .....

Exercise 4

Read the article about finishing a long project then answer the questions.

The model I nearly abandoned

For a technology project, I decided to build a model bridge from wooden sticks. I chose it because I thought it would look impressive, not because I understood bridge design. During the first week, progress was quick. I cut the sticks, glued the base and imagined carrying a perfect model into class.

The problems began when the sides would not stay straight. Each time I added a new section, another part bent slightly. I became frustrated and started working faster, which made the model worse. My teacher suggested stopping for one lesson and drawing the forces on paper. I did not want to do that because it felt like going backwards.

The drawing helped. I realised that I had treated the bridge as decoration rather than a structure. Some pieces were placed where they looked neat, not where they supported weight. I rebuilt one side with diagonal supports. It took longer, but the model became stronger and less twisted.

The final bridge was not the best in the class. Another student had built a cleaner model that held more weight. However, when we presented our projects, I could explain every weakness in mine and how I had tried to solve it. That felt more satisfying than pretending the bridge had gone smoothly. The writer had hoped the finished model would hide the difficult process, but the presentation made the process valuable.

I used to think achievement meant finishing something impressive. Now I think it can also mean staying with a problem long enough to understand it properly. The bridge mattered because it forced me to slow down, accept advice and change my method. Those skills will probably last longer than the model itself. He also learned that advice can feel annoying at first because it interrupts the version of success you imagined.

I kept one cracked piece in the final display. It was not there to look dramatic; it reminded me which material had failed and why the stronger version worked.

The project was still ordinary from a distance, but I knew which decisions had made it stronger. That made the final mark feel less important than the process.

Exercise 4 questions

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

12 Why did the writer first choose to build a bridge? [1]

A He already knew a lot about bridges.

B He thought it would look impressive.

C His teacher gave everyone the same project.

13 What made the model worse? [1]

A working too quickly after becoming frustrated

B drawing the forces on paper

C adding diagonal supports

14 Why did the writer resist drawing the forces? [1]

A He could not find any paper.

B The teacher had banned drawing.

C It felt like moving backwards.

15 What did the writer realise from the drawing? [1]

A The model was already perfect.

B Some pieces looked neat but did not support weight.

C Decoration mattered more than structure.

16 Why was the presentation satisfying? [1]

A His bridge held the most weight.

B Nobody saw the weaknesses.

C He could explain the problems and solutions.

17 What is the writer's final view of achievement? [1]

A It can involve understanding and adapting.

B It means avoiding advice.

C It depends on producing the best object.

ANSWER KEY

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Exercise 1

1. usefulness
2. a clear problem
3. a school bag
4. lunchtime
5. it caught on classroom chairs
6. paper became damaged in rain; finalists must show their prototypes; many students can identify a practical problem

Exercise 2

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

Exercise 3

10 What a strong achievement answer should explain

- what they did
- what was difficult
- how they responded

11 What students should include or avoid

- practical details
- what changed as a result
- avoid exaggeration
- self-awareness

Exercise 4

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

12 B - He chose it because it would look impressive.

13 A - He worked faster, which made it worse.

14 C - He says it felt like going backwards.

15 B - He saw he had treated it as decoration.

16 C - He could explain every weakness and response.

17 A - He says achievement can mean staying with a problem.