



Practice Exam - Public Places and Services

Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511 | Reading practice paper

Exercise 1

Read the article about redesigning a library entrance then answer the questions.

A library entrance that works

A town library has redesigned its entrance after visitors said the old layout was confusing. The building had three doors, but only one led directly to the reception desk. New visitors often entered through a side door and found themselves beside the children's area, with no clear sign showing where to ask for help. The library also tested the new signs with volunteers who had never visited the building before, asking them to find common services without help. Staff timed the task and noted where visitors hesitated.

The redesign began with observation. Staff watched how people moved through the entrance at different times of day. They noticed that parents with pushchairs needed more space, older visitors often paused to look for signs and teenagers walked straight to the study area without checking notices. These patterns helped staff decide which changes mattered most.

The main entrance now has a clear information point, a returns shelf and a digital screen showing room bookings. The side door is still open, but it has a large sign pointing to reception. A lower section of the desk allows wheelchair users and children to speak to staff more comfortably. The library also moved noisy self-service machines away from the quiet reading room.

Not every change was expensive. Staff removed old posters, used larger arrows and placed a simple map near the entrance. They also changed the wording on signs. Instead of formal phrases such as 'circulation services', signs now say 'borrow and return books'. This helped people understand the building without asking for help immediately.

The new entrance has reduced queues because visitors can find common services faster. Staff still answer questions, but fewer people ask where to go first. The library manager says a public building should not make people feel foolish. A good entrance quietly explains how the place works. Staff now review the entrance every few months because a layout that works in term time may become crowded during summer activities.

The designers watched how visitors moved through the entrance before changing anything. They noticed that people with prams often stopped near the door, while older visitors looked for somewhere to sit before choosing books.

Exercise 1 questions

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

1 How many doors did the library have? [1]

2 Where did only one door lead directly? [1]

3 Who needed more space at the entrance? [1]

4 What does the digital screen show? [1]

5 Which door is still open? [1]

6 List three changes made during the library entrance redesign. [3]

Exercise 2

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

A Mobile library van

A mobile library van visits villages that do not have a permanent branch. It carries popular books, large-print titles and forms for requesting other items. The timetable is printed in community centres because some regular users do not check websites. The driver can help users fill in request forms, but only when the van is parked safely. Borrowers can also return books from the main library through the van. The timetable is printed where regular users already collect local information.

B Park information point

A park information point opens during busy weekends. Volunteers give directions, report damaged equipment and explain which paths are suitable for wheelchairs. They do not sell food or tickets, so visitors are directed to nearby businesses for those services. The volunteers carry a radio so they can contact park staff if equipment is dangerous. Volunteers carry a radio for reporting dangerous equipment quickly.

C Health advice desk

A health advice desk in a shopping centre offers basic guidance about appointments, screening and local support groups. Nurses cannot diagnose illnesses there, but they can help people decide which service to contact next. Privacy screens are used for sensitive conversations. The desk also keeps leaflets in several languages for services that receive many new residents.

D Council repair app

A council app lets residents report broken streetlights, blocked drains and damaged pavements. Users can upload a photograph and location. The app is efficient for simple reports, but urgent dangers should still be reported by phone. Reports are sorted by type so repair teams can deal with lighting, drainage and pavement problems separately. Residents receive a reference number so they can check progress later.

The service guide makes clear that public help is divided between different teams. Visitors need to choose the right contact point, because a useful service can still be the wrong one for an urgent problem.

The entries also distinguish between advice, reporting and direct help. This matters because visitors sometimes expect one service to solve a problem that belongs to another team.

The guide also tells users which services require an appointment and which can be used immediately. This prevents people waiting at the wrong desk when the problem needs a different response.

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 public service... | A-D |
|------|---|-------|
| 9(a) | is not suitable for reporting immediate danger | |
| 9(b) | uses printed timetables for people who are not online | |
| 9(c) | can advise visitors about wheelchair-friendly routes | |
| 9(d) | uses screens when conversations need privacy | |
| 9(e) | allows residents to include a photograph | |
| 9(f) | carries books for people who need larger text | |
| 9(g) | cannot diagnose medical problems | |
| 9(h) | does not provide food or tickets | |
| 9(i) | helps people choose the next service to contact | |

Exercise 3

Read the article about planning a community sports centre timetable then complete the notes.

Sharing a sports centre fairly

A community sports centre is used by many groups, so its timetable must be planned carefully. School classes need daytime slots, while working adults often prefer evenings. Clubs may request the same hall every week, but the centre also needs space for casual users who book only occasionally.

Managers begin by collecting information. They look at booking records, waiting lists and times when rooms are empty. They also ask groups whether they can use smaller rooms or different equipment. This prevents the largest clubs from automatically taking the best times simply because they ask first.

Fairness does not mean giving everyone exactly the same hours. A swimming class for beginners may need warmer pool times, while a wheelchair basketball group may need a court with easier access to storage and toilets. The timetable should consider practical needs, not only popularity. Managers also check whether groups need storage space before or after their booking, because this affects changeover times.

Changes must be communicated clearly. If a regular slot moves, users need notice before the new timetable begins. Staff put printed copies at reception and send updates by email. A review is held after six weeks so managers can fix problems before frustration becomes permanent. The review meeting includes reception staff, who often hear complaints before managers see them in booking records. This helps managers spot problems that are too small to appear in formal data.

The timetable group checks which users need fixed times, such as school teams with coaches, and which groups can move more easily. This reduces complaints when popular evening slots are limited.

The group leaves one flexible slot each week for repairs, extra demand or community events. This prevents the timetable becoming useless whenever something unexpected happens. The draft timetable is shown to users before it becomes final. Short comments are collected on paper, because not every group checks email regularly.

The group also marks which spaces need cleaning time between users. This prevents one activity ending just as another group is supposed to begin. The centre also keeps a separate booking note for regular clubs, because one-off events should not accidentally remove a space that a group depends on every week.

Exercise 3 questions

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

| Notes | Write short answers |
|--|--|
| 10 Information managers collect | - - - |
| 11 What a fair timetable should consider | - - - - |

Exercise 4

Read the article about visiting a public advice centre then answer the questions.

Asking at the desk

I went to the public advice centre with my mother because she needed help understanding a housing letter. I expected the visit to be uncomfortable. The letter looked official, and I thought the staff might speak in complicated language. My mother asked me to come because she wanted someone to take notes.

The waiting room was busy, but calmer than I expected. A volunteer checked why people had come and gave each person a number. When our turn came, the adviser asked my mother what she already understood before explaining anything. That made a difference because she did not feel treated like someone who knew nothing.

The adviser read the letter slowly and highlighted three dates. One was the deadline for replying, one was the date of an appointment and one was the period covered by the payment information. I had looked at the letter earlier but had not separated the dates in that way. Suddenly the problem seemed smaller.

The adviser did not complete the whole form for us. Instead, she showed my mother where to write each piece of information and checked the first section. At first, I thought this was less helpful than doing everything. Later, I understood that my mother left knowing how to handle a similar form next time. The writer had expected official help to feel cold, so the adviser's first question changed the mood of the meeting.

The visit changed my view of public services. Good advice is not only about giving answers quickly. It is about making people feel capable of taking the next step. We left with a plan, but also with more confidence than we had when we arrived. He also noticed that the centre helped people understand systems that can otherwise make ordinary problems feel frightening.

The next time I visited, I wrote my question on a piece of paper before going in. That made the conversation shorter, but it also made me feel less like I was asking for a favour.

The adviser did not solve everything, but she gave me the next step. That was enough, because I had arrived with a problem that felt too large to start.

Exercise 4 questions

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

12 Why did the writer's mother ask him to come? [1]

- A to translate the letter
- B to make an appointment
- C to take notes

13 What did the adviser ask first? [1]

- A what the mother already understood
- B how much money she had
- C why the writer was missing school

14 What helped the problem seem smaller? [1]

- A throwing away the letter
- B separating the three dates
- C asking another visitor

15 Why did the adviser not complete the whole form? [1]

- A She had no time to read it.
- B The form was not important.
- C She wanted the mother to learn how to do it.

16 How did the visit affect the writer's view of advice? [1]

- A He decided advice centres are too formal.
- B He saw that it can build confidence.
- C He thought answers should always be quick.

17 What did they leave with besides a plan? [1]

- A more confidence
- B a new appointment letter
- C a completed payment

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Exercise 1

1. three
2. the reception desk
3. parents with pushchairs
4. room bookings
5. the side door
6. noisy self-service machines were moved away from the quiet reading room; signs no longer say circulation services; queues have been reduced

Exercise 2

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

Exercise 3

10 Information managers collect

- booking records
- waiting lists
- times when rooms are empty

11 What a fair timetable should consider

- space for casual users
- practical needs
- warmer pool times
- easier access to storage and toilets

Exercise 4

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

- 12 C - She wanted someone to take notes.
- 13 A - The adviser asked what she already understood.
- 14 B - The adviser highlighted and explained the dates.
- 15 C - The mother left knowing how to handle a similar form.
- 16 B - He says advice makes people capable.
- 17 A - They left with more confidence.