



# Public Places and Services

Short-answer questions: Helsinki Central Library Oodi | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511

## 1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner before you read.

1. What should a modern library offer besides books?
2. Why are public spaces important in a city?
3. Would you use a library for studying, relaxing or making things?
4. How can libraries stay useful in a digital age?

### Exercise 1 at a glance

Read one factual text. Answers are in the text. Copy exact words and check the question carefully before choosing your answer.

## 2. Read for overall understanding

Read the text. How does Oodi show a modern idea of a library?

### Helsinki Central Library Oodi

Helsinki Central Library Oodi opened in December 2018 in the centre of Finland's capital. It stands near important public buildings, including the Finnish Parliament. Although it is called a library, Oodi is also designed as a public living room where people can read, meet, work, study and spend time without needing to buy anything.

The building has three main levels. The ground floor includes public services, a cafe and spaces for events. The middle floor is known for creative activities. Visitors can use studios, meeting rooms, sewing machines, 3D printers and other equipment. The top floor is quieter and more traditional, with books, reading areas and views across the city.

Oodi is part of Helsinki City Library, not a private business. This matters because the building is open to everyone. People can use many of the spaces without paying, and they do not have to prove that they are students or office workers. In a city centre, this kind of non-commercial space is valuable.

The library also reflects changes in how people use information. Many books and services can now be accessed online, so a modern library cannot depend only on shelves. Oodi still has books, but it also offers tools, digital services and places where people can work together.

The building was planned with public input. Helsinki residents were asked what they wanted from a new central library, and many hoped for flexible spaces rather than only more bookshelves. This helped shape Oodi as a place for everyday activities, not just quiet reading. The result is a library that feels closer to a civic centre than a traditional book storehouse.

Oodi also supports people who may not have access to equipment at home. A student can find a place to work, while another visitor might use a sewing machine, recording studio or computer. These services can reduce inequality because expensive tools are shared by the public instead of owned by only a few people.

The library is also placed in a symbolic location. It faces the Parliament Building, which makes it part of the city's public and democratic space. Visitors can move from a quiet reading area to a busy square, or from a workshop room to a public event. This location reinforces the idea that libraries are part of civic life.

The design of the building encourages movement and openness. Large windows bring in natural light, while the wide indoor spaces make it easier for people to find a place that suits their needs. Some visitors come to borrow books, but others come to record music, attend talks, repair clothes or simply meet a friend.

Oodi shows that public services can be flexible. A library can support reading, digital skills, creativity and community life at the same time. Its success suggests that libraries remain important when they adapt to the everyday needs of the people who use them.

### 3. Strategy focus

#### Choose from a list carefully

If a question asks for one example, copy one clear item from the list. If it asks for three details, choose three separate ideas.

### 4. Exam-style short-answer questions

Answer the questions using words from the text.

1. What was Oodi also designed as besides a library? [1]

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2. Which important public building is near Oodi? [1]

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3. What creative equipment can visitors use? Give one example. [1]

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4. What kind of space is valuable in a city centre? [1]

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5. What do large windows bring in? [1]

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6. According to the text, what are three ways Oodi is different from a traditional library? [3]

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### 5. Vocabulary notebook

Underline five useful words or phrases. Check their meaning, then record them in your vocabulary notebook.

### 6. Follow-up tasks

1. Discussion: What would you add to a modern library?

2. Summary: Summarise Oodi in about 50 words.

3. Creative task: Design one room for a new public library.

4. Research: Find another unusual public library or community space.

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## 4. Exam-style short-answer questions

1. a public living room
2. the Finnish Parliament
3. Any one from: studios; meeting rooms; sewing machines; 3D printers; other equipment.
4. non-commercial space
5. natural light
6. Any three from: it is designed as a public living room; it has creative equipment; it offers digital services; it provides places where people can work together; it includes public services, a cafe and event spaces.

## Notes for checking

1. Answers should be short and clearly based on the text.
2. Accept bracketed or optional wording if the meaning is clear.
3. For the final question, learners need three separate details.