



Safety and Rules

Short-answer questions: the RNLI | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511

1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner before you read.

1. What dangers do people face at sea?
2. Should rescue services depend on volunteers?
3. How can beach visitors stay safe?
4. Why do charities need public support?

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 the RNLI help keep people safe around water?

The RNLI

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution, usually called the RNLI, is a charity that saves lives at sea. It was founded in 1824 after concerns that people were still dying in shipwrecks around the coasts of Britain and Ireland. Today, the RNLI operates lifeboat stations around the UK, Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

The organisation is famous for its volunteers. Lifeboat crew members may be at work, at home or asleep when a call comes. If their pager sounds, they travel to the station, put on protective clothing and launch the lifeboat if conditions allow. Some rescues happen in rough weather, darkness or cold water.

The RNLI uses different kinds of lifeboats. All-weather lifeboats can travel further and operate in more difficult conditions. Inshore lifeboats are smaller and can work closer to beaches, rocks or shallow water. The type of lifeboat used depends on the emergency, the location and the sea conditions.

The charity also works to prevent accidents. It gives safety advice about tides, cold-water shock, lifejackets and calling for help. On some beaches, RNLI lifeguards patrol during busy seasons. Their work may include rescuing swimmers, helping injured people and warning visitors about dangerous currents.

Running the RNLI costs money. Boats, equipment, training and protective clothing all need funding. The charity relies heavily on donations and public support. This makes community fundraising important, from local events to gifts left in people's wills.

The RNLI's work shows that safety is not only about rules. It also depends on preparation, training, equipment and people willing to help strangers. For anyone visiting the coast, the organisation's message is clear: enjoy the water, but understand the risks before entering it.

Training is essential because lifeboat rescues can change quickly. Crew members practise navigation, first aid, radio communication and working safely on moving water. They also need to trust each other, as a rescue may involve waves, darkness or people in panic. Good equipment is important, but it is not enough without trained people.

The RNLI also tries to stop people needing rescue in the first place. Water-safety campaigns encourage people to check tides, carry a way to call for help and float if they unexpectedly fall into cold water. Prevention may be less dramatic than a lifeboat launch, but it can save lives before an emergency happens.

This prevention work is especially important during holiday periods, when many visitors may not understand local beaches, tides or weather conditions.

3. Strategy focus

Check names and roles

The text mentions the organisation, volunteers and people in danger. Check who does each action before answering.

4. Exam-style short-answer questions

Answer the questions using words from the text.

1. What concern led to the RNLI being founded? [1]

2. What may sound when lifeboat crew members are needed? [1]

3. Which lifeboats can operate in more difficult conditions? [1]

4. What safety topic is mentioned besides tides? Give one. [1]

5. What does the charity rely heavily on? [1]

6. According to the text, what are three things RNLI lifeguards may do on beaches? [3]

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 safety advice should tourists know at the coast?

2. Summary: Summarise the RNLI in about 50 words.

3. Creative task: Write a beach safety poster.

4. Research: Find one rescue charity in another country.

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2. Read for overall understanding

Suggested answer: The RNLI helps by operating lifeboats, using volunteers, giving water-safety advice and rescuing people around the coasts and on some inland waterways.

4. Exam-style short-answer questions

1. people were still dying in shipwrecks
2. their pager
3. all-weather lifeboats
4. Any one from: cold-water shock; lifejackets; calling for help; dangerous currents.
5. donations and public support
6. Any three from: patrol; rescue swimmers; help injured people; warn visitors about dangerous currents.

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.