



People and Achievement

Vocabulary Long List

Topic vocabulary, useful phrases, phrasal verbs and idioms | Cambridge IGCSE ESL

1 Learn by theme Study one table at a time.	2 Notice combinations Learn complete phrases, not isolated words.	3 Use the examples Adapt each sentence for speaking or writing.
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Personal achievement

Word or phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
achievement	something successful gained through effort	Passing the exam was a major achievement.
personal success	success that matters to an individual	Personal success is not always about prizes.
sense of achievement	pride after completing something difficult	Finishing the project gave her a sense of achievement.
make progress	improve or move forward	Regular practice helped him make progress.
milestone	an important stage in development	The first performance was a milestone.
celebrate progress	notice and value improvement	Teachers should celebrate progress, not only final results.
breakthrough	an important moment of progress after difficulty	The first successful test was a breakthrough.

Goals and motivation

Word or phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
set a goal	decide on something to achieve	It is useful to set a goal before starting.
motivation	the reason or desire to do something	Clear feedback can increase motivation.
ambition	a strong wish to achieve something	Her ambition is to become an engineer.
long-term aim	a target for the future	Learning English is part of his long-term aim.
stay focused	keep attention on a task	A timetable helps students stay focused.
self-discipline	ability to make yourself work or behave sensibly	Independent study requires self-discipline.
personal target	a specific goal set by an individual	He set a personal target for revision each week.



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Determination

Word or phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
be determined	strongly intend to succeed	She is determined to improve her writing.
make an effort	try hard	Everyone should make an effort in group work.
perseverance	continuing despite difficulty	Perseverance helped him recover after injury.
commitment	willingness to give time and energy	The project needs commitment from the whole team.
resilience	ability to recover after problems	Sport can build resilience.
keep trying	continue making attempts	Keep trying even if the first answer is wrong.
dedication	serious effort over time	Her dedication helped her improve quickly.

Challenges and failure

Word or phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
overcome a challenge	succeed despite a difficulty	She overcame a challenge by asking for advice.
deal with failure	respond sensibly after not succeeding	Learning to deal with failure is important.
setback	a problem that slows progress	The injury was a temporary setback.
learn from mistakes	use errors to improve	Good learners learn from mistakes.
pressure	stress caused by expectations	Some students feel pressure before competitions.
turn a weakness into a strength	improve an area that was once difficult	Practice helped him turn a weakness into a strength.
bounce back	recover after a problem	Resilient people can bounce back after failure.



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Role models

Word or phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
role model	someone admired and copied by others	A good role model behaves responsibly.
inspire others	make others want to act or improve	Her charity work inspired others.
positive influence	a helpful effect on someone's behaviour	Coaches can be a positive influence.
admire	respect someone for their qualities	Many students admire people who help others.
mentor	a person who advises and supports someone less experienced	A mentor helped him plan his career.
lead by example	show others how to behave through actions	Captains should lead by example.
achievement story	an account of someone succeeding through effort	The speaker shared an inspiring achievement story.

Competitions and awards

Word or phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
competition	an event in which people try to win	The science competition attracted many schools.
take part	participate	I decided to take part in the debate.
award	a prize or honour for achievement	The award recognised her community work.
nominate	suggest someone for an award or role	Students can nominate a classmate.
finalist	a person reaching the final stage	Three finalists presented their ideas.
fair judgement	a decision based on honest standards	Competitions need fair judgement.
runner-up	the person or team that finishes second	The runner-up also received a certificate.



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Skills and improvement

Word or phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
develop a skill	improve an ability through practice	Volunteering can help teenagers develop a skill.
strength	a quality or ability someone is good at	Communication is one of her strengths.
weakness	an area needing improvement	He identified spelling as a weakness.
feedback	advice or comments about performance	Useful feedback helps students improve.
practice regularly	repeat an activity often	Musicians need to practice regularly.
measure improvement	check how much progress has been made	Short tests can measure improvement.
learning curve	the process of improving while learning something new	Starting a business was a steep learning curve.

Team and community achievement

Word or phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
team achievement	success gained by a group	The clean-up was a team achievement.
community project	organised work that helps local people	The community project improved the park.
shared goal	an aim held by several people	A shared goal keeps the group united.
contribution	something given to help a result	Every volunteer made a contribution.
cooperate	work together effectively	Students must cooperate during group tasks.
make a difference	have a positive effect	Small actions can make a difference.
collective effort	work done by a group together	The charity event was a collective effort.



PEOPLE AND ACHIEVEMENT | LANGUAGE BUILDER

Phrasal verbs

Use these natural verb combinations when speaking or writing about this topic.

Word or phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
work towards	make effort to achieve	She is working towards a scholarship.
keep at	continue doing something difficult	Keep at the task until it becomes easier.
give up	stop trying	Do not give up after one setback.
build up	increase gradually	Confidence builds up with experience.
stand out	be clearly better or different	Her presentation stood out.
look up to	admire and respect	Many young players look up to their coach.
come through	succeed after difficulty	The team came through a difficult season.
take on	accept a responsibility or challenge	He took on the role of team leader.
carry on	continue	She carried on practising after school.
fall behind	make less progress than others	Ask for help if you fall behind.
catch up	reach the same level as others	Extra practice helped him catch up.
bring out	develop or show a quality	Drama classes brought out her confidence.

High-value collocations

achieve personal success	set a realistic goal	stay motivated
be determined	make an effort	overcome a challenge
deal with failure	learn from mistakes	show perseverance
build resilience	inspire others	act as a role model
take part in a competition	celebrate progress	develop a skill
receive useful feedback	make a contribution	make a difference



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Idioms and figurative expressions

Use these selectively. One natural expression is more effective than several forced into the same answer.

Word or phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
reach for the stars	aim for something ambitious	Teachers encourage students to reach for the stars.
go from strength to strength	become increasingly successful	The club went from strength to strength.
where there is a will, there is a way	determination can overcome difficulty	Where there is a will, there is a way, even after a setback.
the sky is the limit	there is no clear limit to success	With practice, the sky is the limit.
learn the hard way	learn through difficult experience	He learned the hard way that preparation matters.
stand on your own two feet	become independent	The programme helps teenagers stand on their own two feet.
make your mark	become known for achievement	She hopes to make her mark in science.
rise to the occasion	perform well when challenged	The team rose to the occasion in the final.

Exam-ready language

Purpose	Useful sentence frame
Introducing a benefit	<i>One significant benefit is that...</i>
Introducing a drawback	<i>A possible drawback is that...</i>
Balancing an argument	<i>Although this offers clear advantages, it may also...</i>
Explaining a result	<i>As a result, people may...</i>
Giving an example	<i>A clear example of this can be seen when...</i>
Making a comparison	<i>Compared with..., this option is...</i>
Giving advice	<i>People can improve the situation by...</i>
Suggesting action	<i>One practical solution would be to...</i>
Expressing caution	<i>It is important to consider whether...</i>
Giving an opinion	<i>In my view, the most sensible approach is to...</i>