

11+ English Practice Paper 1

Answers

For parents and teachers · keep this booklet separate from the paper

Quick answer key

1 A	2 C	3 C	4 D	5 A
6 B	7 D	8 D	9 B	10 C
11 A	12 A	13 D	14 C	15 B
16 C	17 B	18 D	19 A	20 C
21 A	22 B	23 D	24 B	25 C
26 A	27 C	28 A	29 N	30 D
31 B	32 A	33 D	34 N	35 A
36 B	37 N	38 B	39 C	40 N
41 D	42 C	43 B	44 A	45 A
46 D	47 C	48 E	49 E	50 A

What does the score mean?

Give one mark per correct answer, out of 50. Real 11+ results are reported as *standardised* scores, which compare your child with everyone who sat the same test, so a raw score on a practice paper can't be converted into a pass or fail. Use it to track progress from paper to paper and, more importantly, to find which skills need work.

45–50

Excellent. Keep practising under timed conditions.

38–44

Strong. Look closely at the explanations for the ones missed.

30–37

Developing. Use the skill tracker below to find a focus.

Below 30

Building. Practise one skill at a time before more full papers.

Skill tracker

Circle the questions your child got wrong. The row with the most circles is the skill to practise next.

Skill	Questions	Score
Retrieval — finding information that is stated in the text	1, 3, 8, 17, 23	/ 5
Inference — working out what is suggested but not stated	2, 5, 10, 21, 24, 25	/ 6

Vocabulary in context	4, 9, 19	/ 3
Language and its effect	6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 18, 20	/ 7
Structure — how the text is organised, and why	11, 13, 22, 26	/ 4
Grammar and word classes	16	/ 1
Spelling	27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34	/ 8
Punctuation and capital letters	35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42	/ 8
Sentence completion (vocabulary and grammar)	43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50	/ 8

1 **A — Ten past four** RETRIEVAL

According to the tide tables, at what time was low water?

Line 3 states it directly: “Low water at ten past four.” Twenty to five (B) is the time on Nell’s clock in line 5, not low water — a common slip when two times sit close together.

2 **C — She is working out how long she has before the causeway floods.** INFERENCE

Why does Nell glance at the clock in line 5?

The paragraph is all about tide times and the causeway disappearing, so checking the clock straight afterwards shows she is calculating her time. B is wrong: line 14 says the boatman will not call until Saturday.

3 **C — 50 minutes** RETRIEVAL

Using lines 3–5, roughly how long does Nell have before the sea reaches the causeway stones?

It is twenty to five (4:40). The sea reaches the stones “by half past five” (5:30). From 4:40 to 5:30 is 50 minutes. 80 minutes (D) would be the time until six, when the road is completely gone.

4 **D — creeping forward steadily, like an animal exploring.** VOCABULARY

In line 3, the sea is described as “nosing at the causeway stones”. This suggests the sea is...

An animal “noses” at something when it pushes forward with its nose, curiously and persistently. The word makes the sea sound alive and quietly determined — not violent (A), and certainly not retreating (C).

5 **A — He is playing down how ill he is.** INFERENCE

In lines 7–8, Grandad insists his illness is “a touch of the damp, that’s all”. What does this suggest?

The words “that’s all” try to make it sound minor, but the narrator shows the opposite: rattling breath that has “grown steadily worse” and hands too shaky to hold a cup. Grandad is likely trying not to worry Nell.

6 **B — a simile** LANGUAGE

“usually as steady as the old harbour wall” (line 9) is an example of...

It compares Grandad’s hands to the harbour wall using “as ... as”, which makes it a simile. A metaphor would say his hands were a wall.

7 **D — To make his trembling seem more unusual and worrying.** LANGUAGE

Why does the writer tell us that Grandad’s hands are usually “as steady as the old harbour wall”?

By first telling us how strong and reliable his hands normally are, the writer makes the trembling a shocking change. The comparison is about Grandad, not about the wall itself (A).

8 **D — Dr Anwar is too ill to travel.** RETRIEVAL

Which of these is NOT a reason why Nell has to go for help herself?

A, B and C are all given in lines 12–14. Nothing in the passage says Dr Anwar is ill — Nell is going to fetch the doctor. Read “NOT” questions slowly and tick off each option against the text.

9 **B — closed and locked the cottage while they were away.** VOCABULARY

In line 13, “shut up their cottage” means the Pritchards had...

To “shut up” a house is an idiom meaning to close it up, usually for a long time. The phrase “for the winter” confirms it. A takes the words literally — a classic trap.

10 **C — Courage cannot protect you from the tide; only speed can.** INFERENCE

“The sea doesn’t care how brave you are ... It only cares how quick.” (lines 19–21). What does Grandad mean?

Grandad is warning that bravery makes no difference to the rising water — what matters is whether you are fast enough. B is close, but the sea is not “kind” to anyone; it simply doesn’t care.

- 11 A — To make Nell’s moment of decision stand out. STRUCTURE**
Why do you think line 22 (“Then she thought of the cold tea, and she ran.”) is a paragraph on its own?
 A one-sentence paragraph after longer ones makes the reader pause on it. This is the turning point: remembering how weak Grandad was makes Nell ignore his warning. It is not dialogue (B), and the action speeds up rather than slows down (D).
- 12 A — long and narrow. LANGUAGE**
The causeway is compared to “a grey ribbon” (lines 23–24). This tells us it is...
 A ribbon is long and thin, like a mile-long path across the sand. “Grey” removes any sense of a pretty, colourful ribbon (C), and nothing suggests the causeway is soft (B) — it is made of cobbles.
- 13 D — To contrast the safe, cheerful summer causeway with how threatening it is now. STRUCTURE**
Why does the writer mention visitors eating ice creams in summer (line 25)?
 The very next sentence begins “Now...”. The relaxed summer picture makes the cold, hostile November causeway feel even more dangerous. This is called contrast (or juxtaposition).
- 14 C — It is cold, grey and harsh. LANGUAGE**
What does “the iron light of a November afternoon” (line 26) suggest about the light?
 Iron is grey, hard and cold, so the metaphor makes the light feel bleak and unwelcoming. Rust (D) is a trap — the writer chose “iron”, not “rust”.
- 15 B — “did not wish to be crossed” (line 27) LANGUAGE**
Which phrase gives the causeway human feelings?
 Only a living thing can “wish” for something. Giving an object human feelings is personification, and here it makes the causeway seem hostile, as if it is against Nell.
- 16 C — Adjective GRAMMAR**
In “the wet stones were treacherous underfoot” (line 28), what word class is “treacherous”?
 “Treacherous” describes the noun “stones” (what were the stones like? treacherous), so it is an adjective. It means dangerous and untrustworthy.
- 17 B — Counting helps to keep her mind off her fear. RETRIEVAL**
Why does Nell count the posts as she passes them?
 Lines 31–32 tell us: “because counting was better than thinking”. Concentrating on numbers stops her thinking about the danger or about Grandad.
- 18 D — The sea is tense and threatening, like someone holding back anger. LANGUAGE**
The sea’s hiss is “like a breath being let out through clenched teeth” (lines 34–35). What does this suggest?
 People breathe out through clenched teeth when they are angry or straining to control themselves. The simile makes the sea sound like a menacing creature about to lose its temper.
- 19 A — Determined VOCABULARY**
Which word is closest in meaning to “purposeful” (line 38)?
 Something purposeful has a clear aim and moves towards it with determination. “Aimless” (B) is its opposite. The water may be slow, but it is not gentle (D) — it is steadily taking over the causeway.
- 20 C — sliding in one direction, smoothly but powerfully. LANGUAGE**
“as though the whole bay were being tilted” (lines 38–39) suggests that the water was...
 If you tilt a tray of water, all of it slides the same way at once. The image matches “not in waves, but in a slow, purposeful slide” (line 37–38), so A and B are ruled out by the text.

- 21 A — Nell has come a long way and it is hard to see clearly. INFERENCE**
“Behind her, the island was already a smudge” (lines 40–41). This shows that...
A smudge is a blurry, unclear mark. The island looks like that because it is far behind her and the light is fading — the gloom is mentioned in line 33.
- 22 B — To show Nell remembering his warning at the most dangerous moment. STRUCTURE**
Why does the writer repeat Grandad’s words on line 42?
The line stands alone, just after the water starts moving, as if the words have flashed into Nell’s head. It reminds her (and us) that speed is everything — and in the next line she “splashed forward”.
- 23 D — She fears that seeing how fast the water moves would make her freeze. RETRIEVAL**
Why does Nell keep her eyes on the lit window and not look down (lines 45–47)?
The text says so directly in lines 46–47: “if she saw how fast the water was moving she would freeze.” “Freeze” here means become too frightened to move.
- 24 B — she is so focused and frightened that she hardly notices what she is doing. INFERENCE**
Nell is “distantly surprised to discover that she was talking aloud” (lines 47–48). This suggests...
“Distantly” means she only vaguely notices — her mind is entirely on getting across. People under great stress often do things without realising, like talking to themselves.
- 25 C — Determined INFERENCE**
Which word best describes Nell in this passage?
She is clearly afraid, but keeps going even when the water reaches her knees. “Reckless” (A) is the trap: she does break Grandad’s rule, but only after weighing up the danger, for a good reason, and she crosses as carefully as she can.
- 26 A — It suggests her brave crossing leaves no trace, quietly showing how close she came to danger. STRUCTURE**
The passage ends with Nell’s footprints being “soon washed away” (line 54). What is the effect of this ending?
The story ends on a calm image rather than a dramatic one. The rain wiping away her footprints, just as the sea has swallowed the causeway, makes us realise that no one saw what she did — and how easily she could have vanished too.

Section B: Spelling — explained

Questions 27–34

27 C — “creating a buldge” → *bulge*

“Bulge” has no d. The “dge” ending belongs to words like “badge” and “ledge”, where it follows a short vowel.

28 A — “of the planet. Becuase” → *Because*

Remember “be-cause”: the second part is spelled like the word “cause” (au).

29 N — no mistake

No mistake. Check “interval”, “roughly” and “although” carefully — all correct.

30 D — “which occurs twice a month.” → *twice*

The “s” sound at the end of “twice” is spelled -ice, as in “mice”, “nice” and “slice”.

31 B — “spring tides, wich have” → *which*

“Which” begins with wh, like most question words (what, when, where, why).

32 A — “Many coastal comunities” → *communities*

“Communities” has a double m — think of “common”, which shares the same root.

33 D — “the water will apear.” → *appear*

“Appear” has a double p. Many words starting with ap- double the p: appear, apply, approach, appoint.

34 N — no mistake

No mistake. “Consequences” and “unprepared” are both spelled correctly.

Section C: Punctuation — explained

Questions 35–42

35 A — “dr Anwar opened the door” → *Dr Anwar*

A sentence must start with a capital letter, and titles before names (Dr, Mrs, Mr) are always capitalised.

36 B — “in the doctors car,” → *the doctor’s car*

The car belongs to the doctor, so it needs a possessive apostrophe: doctor’s.

37 N — no mistake

No mistake. The comma before “so” correctly joins the two parts of the sentence.

38 B — “can go out tonight” → *tonight?*

This is a question, so it needs a question mark inside the closing speech marks.

39 C — “fifty years didn’t” → *fifty years, didn’t*

“who had known Grandad for fifty years” is extra information in the middle of the sentence. It opens with a comma after “Fenwick”, so it must close with one after “years” — commas in pairs, like brackets.

40 N — no mistake

No mistake. Note that “o’clock” correctly has an apostrophe (it is short for “of the clock”).

41 D — “cross alone.” he said.” → *cross alone,” he said.*

When speech is followed by “he said”, the sentence has not finished, so the spoken words end with a comma, not a full stop.

42 C — “she felt, warm all the” → *she felt warm*

There should be no comma between “felt” and “warm” — it splits the verb from the word that completes it. A comma there makes the reader pause for no reason.

43 B — distinctive

“Distinctive” means easy to tell apart from others — exactly what sailors needed to identify each lighthouse. “Identical” and “similar” say the opposite.

44 A — demanding

The next sentence lists hard, all-night work, so the job was “demanding”. “Effortless” and “idle” contradict the evidence.

45 A — sleep

After “might not” we need the plain form of the verb: “might not sleep”. This is a grammar question — every other option is the same word in the wrong form.

46 D — but

The second half contrasts with the first (lonely, yet comforted), so we need a contrasting conjunction: “but”. “Because”, “therefore” and “so” would mean loneliness caused the comfort.

47 C — recording

“Recording” describes what the keepers were doing as they kept the diaries: “Some kept detailed diaries, recording the weather...”. The other forms don’t fit the sentence.

48 E — automated

“Controlled remotely” tells us machines now do the keepers’ work, so the lighthouses are “automated”. “Inhabited” means people live there — the opposite.

49 E — went

The sentence is in the past tense (“left”), so the verb must be past tense too: “with them went a way of life”.

50 A — sweep

“Still ... every night” tells us this happens now, so we need the present tense “sweep”, which also describes how a lighthouse beam moves. “Swept” is past tense.

The best way to improve your writing is to read like a writer: notice how an author made you feel something, then try the same trick yourself. “The Causeway” uses seven techniques that work in almost any 11+ story.

1. Set a ticking clock

“By half past five the sea would be nosing at the causeway stones; by six, the road to the mainland would simply cease to exist.” (line 3–5)

Before anything happens, the writer gives Nell a deadline. From then on, every delay makes the reader anxious.

Try it: Give your character a time limit early on: a train leaving, a light fading, a battery running down.

2. Show, don’t tell

“Nell had held it to his lips herself, and the tea had gone cold before he managed half of it.” (line 10–11)

The writer never says “Grandad was very ill”. Instead we see a detail that proves it, and we work it out ourselves, which makes it hit harder.

Try it: Instead of naming a feeling (scared, ill, excited), describe one thing the character does or notices because of it.

3. The one-line paragraph

“Then she thought of the cold tea, and she ran.” (line 22)

After several long paragraphs, a single short one makes the reader stop. It marks the moment everything changes.

Try it: Save a very short paragraph for your story’s turning point. Use it once or twice, no more, or it loses its power.

4. Make the setting an enemy

“it looked like something that did not wish to be crossed ... like a breath being let out through clenched teeth” (line 26–27, 34–35)

Personification and similes turn the causeway and the sea into threatening characters, so the setting itself creates tension.

Try it: Ask: if this place could feel something, what would it feel about my character? Then describe it that way.

5. Use contrast

“In summer, visitors strolled along it eating ice creams. Now, in the iron light of a November afternoon...” (line 25–26)

Showing the place at its safest makes its danger now feel even sharper.

Try it: Describe your setting as it usually is in one sentence, then start the next with “Now...” or “But tonight...”.

6. Plant it early, pay it off later

““It only cares how quick.”” (line 21 and 42)

Grandad’s warning returns on its own line at the most dangerous moment. Readers love noticing an echo. It makes a story feel planned and complete.

Try it: Give your character a saying, an object or a habit at the start, and bring it back at the climax or the ending.

7. End on an image, not an explanation

“leaving a trail of wet footprints that the rain, beginning now in earnest, soon washed away.” (line 53–54)

The writer doesn't tell us how Nell felt or what happened next. A quiet picture lets the reader feel it instead.

Try it: Finish with something your character sees or does, not “It was the best day ever” or “It was all a dream”.

A 5-minute plan for Task 1

Five minutes of planning saves you from running out of ideas halfway through. Jot a few words for each stage, not sentences.

Opening (hook)	Start with the given line, then one vivid detail. Who is speaking? Where are they? Why is no one else coming?
Build-up	Show what is at stake and set the ticking clock. What will happen if your character does nothing?
Problem	The journey or task, and the moment it gets harder. Use the setting against your character.
Climax	The most tense moment. Short sentences. Bring back the thing you planted earlier.
Ending	Help arrives, or the task is done. End on a small, quiet image.

Model answer — Task 1

About 350 words, which is a good length for 25 minutes. The numbers point to the notes after the story.

“Nobody else was coming. It would have to be me.” ¹

I knew it the moment Mia’s foot slid off the stile and I heard the crack – a small, dry sound, like a twig snapping underfoot. ² Now she sat in the frozen mud with her ankle cradled in both hands, her face the colour of the snow that had begun, silently, to fall.

My phone showed two words: No Service. ³

“Don’t go,” Mia whispered. “Please, Sami. Don’t leave me.”

The farmhouse was two fields away. In summer I could run there in five minutes, racing through the long grass with the dog at my heels. But this was not summer. ⁴ The light was already draining out of the sky, and the path had disappeared under a thin white blanket that hid every rut and stone.

I took off my coat and wrapped it round her shoulders. It swallowed her. “Count to five hundred,” I told her. “Slowly. I’ll be back before you finish.” ⁵

Then I ran. ⁶

The cold hit me at once. It crept through my jumper, it stung my ears, it filled my lungs like broken glass. ⁷ Snowflakes clung to my eyelashes until the world blurred and shrank to the few metres in front of my boots. Twice I fell; twice I got up. The hedge loomed on my right, black and bristling, and I kept one hand trailing along it, because the hedge led home.

One hundred. Two hundred. I was counting too, I realised – counting with her, as if the numbers were a rope stretched between us. ⁸

At last a yellow square of light swam out of the whiteness: the kitchen window. I hammered on the door with both fists. When Dad opened it, I could not speak at all. I just pointed back into the dark.

We found Mia exactly where I had left her, huddled in my coat, her lips moving.

“Four hundred and ninety-eight,” she said, as Dad lifted her into his arms. “Four hundred and ninety-nine.”

She looked at me over his shoulder and, through chattering teeth, she smiled.

“Five hundred.” ⁹

Why the model answer works

1. The given opening line is used exactly as written, then the story explains it immediately.
2. A simile appeals to the sense of hearing. A small, quiet sound can be more chilling than a loud one.
3. A one-line paragraph that sets up the problem: there is no other way to get help.
4. Contrast, just like “The Causeway”: the place at its safest, then “But this was not summer.”
5. Planting the count. It seems like a small detail now, but it will return.
6. The turning point gets its own paragraph. (Borrowing a technique is good, but don’t copy whole sentences from a passage.)
7. A list of three, with repeated “it” at the start of each part, builds pressure, ending on the most powerful image.

8. The planted detail returns, and a simile (“a rope stretched between us”) shows the bond between the siblings without saying “I loved my sister”.
9. The story ends on the count, with no explanation needed. The ending circles back to the planted detail.

Tips for Tasks 2 and 3

Task 2 — Description. There is no plot to lean on, so structure it as a slow walk or a camera moving: start close (the window, the bed) and move outwards (the garden, the shore, the causeway). Use all five senses, and let the calm morning contrast with the storm. Avoid listing (“I saw... I heard... I smelled...”) by starting sentences in different ways.

Task 3 — Letter. Use letter features: your address and the date in the top right, “Dear Dad,”, paragraphs, and a warm sign-off (“Love from Nell”). Write in the first person, as Nell would really speak to her father: honest about how scared she was, but not just retelling the passage. Add something new, like what Grandad said afterwards or a question for her dad.

Upgrade your sentences

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
It was very cold.	The cold bit at my fingers until I couldn't feel the zip on my coat.
I was really scared.	My heart was thudding so hard I could hear it over the wind.
The sea was big and scary.	The sea stretched out like a grey sheet of metal, hissing at the edges.
Suddenly, a noise came.	Somewhere behind the hedge, a branch snapped.

Marking the writing (a guide for parents)

Give up to 5 marks for each area, out of 20. This is a guide to help you give useful feedback, not an official mark scheme. Schools assess writing in different ways, and some (such as the Kent Test) use the writing task only in certain circumstances, rather than adding it to the score.

Ideas and content	Does the piece answer the task? Is it interesting, with a clear sense of who, where and what is at stake?	/ 5
Structure and paragraphs	Is there a clear opening, middle and ending? Are paragraphs used, including at least one short one for effect?	/ 5
Vocabulary and techniques	Ambitious but accurate word choices; a few well-chosen similes, metaphors or personification (not one in every sentence).	/ 5
Sentences, spelling and punctuation	A mix of short and long sentences and sentence openings; accurate speech punctuation, commas and apostrophes.	/ 5

Pick **one** thing your child did well and **one** thing to try next time. That works better than correcting everything at once.

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