

model compos by @clarisstudycorner

1. Write about a time when you made a plan that did not turn out as expected and what you learnt from the experience.

It was the first week of the June holidays, and I was determined to make the most of it. For once, I decided to plan my days down to the hour — a schedule so perfect I was convinced nothing could go wrong. The plan was simple. I would spend the mornings revising for my upcoming science exam, take a short break in the afternoon, and then work on a group project in the evenings. I even printed out a colourful timetable and stuck it on my wall. I felt motivated, confident, and proud of myself for being so organised.

On the first day, things went smoothly. I woke up early, stuck to my revision slots, and even helped my group mates complete some slides. But on the second day, things started to fall apart. It began with a message from my cousin: *“Hey, want to come over to play some games? Just for a bit.”* I hesitated. According to my schedule, I was supposed to be revising. But I told myself, *“One hour won’t hurt.”* That one hour turned into four, and by the time I got home, I was too tired to study.

The next day, I overslept. Since I had stayed up late gaming with my cousin, I missed my morning revision entirely. I told myself I would catch up in the afternoon, but then another friend asked if I wanted to join an online movie night. Again, I gave in. As the days passed, my plan slowly crumbled. The once-colourful timetable on my wall started to feel like a reminder of failure. I kept telling myself I would get back on track the next day, but I never did. By the end of the week, I had completed only a fraction of what I had planned.

When I finally sat down and looked at how little I had achieved, I felt disappointed and frustrated. My grades were depending on this holiday, and I had wasted it chasing distractions. However, this experience taught me an important lesson. Having a plan is one thing, but sticking to it requires discipline. I realised that I had made the mistake of thinking motivation alone was enough. In reality, self-control and knowing when to say “no” were just as important.

Since then, I’ve started setting more realistic goals. Instead of cramming everything into one day, I break tasks into smaller parts and reward myself only after I’ve achieved something. I also try to minimise distractions — especially during study time. Looking back, my plan may not have worked out as expected, but the experience helped me grow. It showed me that failure is not the end, but an opportunity to learn and improve.

2. Recount an occasion when you took on a responsibility and how it changed your perspective.

When my teacher first announced that our class would be organizing the school's annual Teachers' Day celebration, I was excited. It sounded like fun — planning performances, decorating the hall, and surprising our teachers. But when she appointed me as the student-in-charge of the entire event, that excitement quickly turned into nervousness. I had never led anything before. I wasn't the loudest in class, nor the most organised. But something in me said, "*Just try. You might surprise yourself.*" So, I accepted the responsibility — not knowing then how much it would teach me.

The first challenge came almost immediately. During our first planning meeting, everyone had different ideas. Some wanted a skit, others wanted to perform a dance, and a few just wanted to be in charge of food. At first, I tried to please everyone. I nodded along, took notes, and tried to include every suggestion. But it quickly became chaotic — nothing got done, and people started losing interest. That evening, I sat down and thought hard about what went wrong. I realised that taking on responsibility wasn't just about doing the work; it was about making decisions and leading others clearly and confidently. I knew I had to step up.

The next day, I gathered the team again — this time with a plan. I assigned roles, created a timeline, and made sure everyone knew what they were responsible for. I listened to suggestions but also made firm decisions when needed. Slowly, things began to fall into place. Rehearsals were running smoothly, decorations were being prepared, and our group chat was finally being used for updates instead of jokes.

Of course, not everything was perfect. Two performers fell sick the day before the event, and we had to reshuffle the programme last minute. I felt the stress bubbling inside me, but I reminded myself to stay calm and adapt — just like any responsible leader would. And in the end, the event went better than we had imagined. Our teachers laughed, clapped, and even cried during the appreciation video. The applause we received felt like a reward not just for the performance, but for all the effort behind it.

Looking back, taking on that responsibility changed the way I saw leadership. I used to think being a leader meant having all the answers or being the most popular. But I learnt that true leadership means listening, adapting, staying calm under pressure, and sometimes making tough decisions for the good of the team.

Now, I no longer shy away from responsibilities. In fact, I look forward to them — because I know they're not just tasks to complete, but opportunities to grow.

3. Narrate a personal challenge you overcame and the impact it had on you.

Public speaking had always terrified me. The mere thought of standing in front of a crowd made my palms sweaty and my heart race. So, when my English teacher announced that every student would have to deliver a two-minute speech for our oral assessment, I felt like the ground had been pulled from beneath my feet. I tried to remain calm, but inside, I was panicking. The speech was still a week away, but I was already losing sleep. I kept imagining myself forgetting my lines, my voice cracking, or worse — freezing completely in front of my classmates.

For days, I stared at my speech draft, unable to practise. I even considered faking an illness to skip school that day. But deep down, I knew that avoiding the challenge wouldn't help me in the long run. So, one evening, I forced myself to stand in front of the mirror and read my speech out loud. The first attempt was a disaster. I mumbled, stuttered, and forgot whole chunks. But instead of giving up, I tried again. And again. Every night that week, I practised — sometimes in front of the mirror, sometimes to my pillow, and eventually, to my parents. Slowly, I began to memorise the lines. My voice grew steadier, and my confidence began to build, piece by piece.

When the day finally arrived, I was still nervous, but something had changed. I walked up to the front of the classroom, took a deep breath, and began. My hands trembled slightly, but I kept going. I could hear my voice — clearer than I had expected — and for the first time, I wasn't focused on my fear. I was focused on what I had to say. When I finished, there was a moment of silence, followed by light applause. My teacher gave me a small nod of approval. I sat down, stunned. I had done it.

Overcoming that challenge changed me in ways I hadn't expected. It made me realise that fear doesn't disappear — but with preparation and courage, it can be managed. I learnt that growth happens just outside of our comfort zones, and that pushing through discomfort is often where we discover what we're truly capable of.

Since then, I've volunteered to speak in group presentations and even hosted a class assembly. It's not that I no longer get nervous — I do — but now, I know that I can face my fear and still move forward.

4. Tell the story of a memorable journey you took and why it remains significant to you.

Last year, I went on a school trip to the mountains for a three-day hiking adventure, and it quickly became one of the most memorable experiences of my life. Before the trip, I was both excited and nervous. I had never been on a hike longer than an hour, and the thought of walking up steep slopes for hours was intimidating. Still, I was determined to take on the challenge and make the most of the journey.

The first day started with cool morning air and chirping birds as we set off on the trail. At first, the path was gentle, winding through tall trees and colourful wildflowers. The fresh mountain air filled my lungs, and I felt a sense of peace. However, as we climbed higher, the terrain became rougher and the slope steeper. My legs began to ache, and I found myself falling behind the group. Every step felt heavy, and doubts crept in — I wondered if I could really finish the hike.

That night, when we finally arrived at the campsite, I was exhausted but proud. Sitting around the warm campfire under a sky full of stars, my friends and I shared stories and toasted marshmallows. The sense of camaraderie made me realise that this journey wasn't just about physical endurance; it was about support and friendship. I learnt that sometimes, leaning on others is just as important as pushing yourself.

The next morning, we reached the mountain peak just as the sun began to rise. The sky was painted with shades of pink and orange, and below us stretched a vast sea of trees and hills. I stood there, breathless not just from the climb but from the overwhelming beauty and the feeling of accomplishment. It was in that moment I truly understood how far I had come — physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Looking back, that mountain journey remains one of the most memorable experiences of my life because it changed how I see challenges and myself. It showed me that with patience, determination, and the support of others, I can overcome obstacles I once thought impossible. This journey taught me more than just how to hike — it taught me resilience and the importance of teamwork, lessons that continue to guide me in my daily life. That's why this journey will always hold a special place in my heart.