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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/23**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **October/November 2025**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

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Read the text and then answer **Question 1** on the question paper.

Text A

This text is part of an online podcast discussion between podcast hosts Harpreet and Esther about different attitudes to making mistakes.

Harpreet: What I find really annoying are those people who never admit they're wrong, even when it's obvious that they have really messed things up.

Esther: Yeah.

Harpreet: The other day at the sports club, I could see that one of the runners was hobbling around and not really joining in with the warm-ups. She just kept saying she was feeling a bit stiff when it was obvious she'd pulled a muscle because she'd not warmed up properly – even though she said she had.

Esther: She might just have been trying really hard, wanting to impress the others? Was it one of the new runners?

Harpreet: No, that's the worst of it. She is one of the older club members who sometimes runs classes and is always telling everyone else how it's important to do this stretch and that stretch, but then doesn't even do them herself. It's not the first time either – she was injured most of last season.

Esther: So much for learning from your mistakes then! I mean that's important, right? Owning your mistake and being better next time? Do you think people are just ashamed to do that? I know a lot of people who get really embarrassed about making a mistake and can't accept it happened. They usually transfer the blame onto someone else, or even deny it, especially when money is involved.

Harpreet: You're right, no one enjoys being wrong, and what if they're a trainee brain surgeon or something? Pretty bad if they don't admit their mistakes and learn from them. Or an artist – if they make a mistake, they wouldn't just leave it. They'd keep practising, painting over it, or rubbing it out and drawing it again, until they got it perfect. Actually, when you think of it, that's how most artists work – they see making mistakes as part of being creative. There are loads of times in life when failure is OK. It's even expected.

Esther: Sure, you'd have to read a fiction book to find someone who got everything right first time.

Harpreet: Exactly. Unless you're one of those 'fake it till you make it' types. They always seem like they've got life sorted, but it's all about image with them and pretending they know how to do things.

Esther: Well, 'fake it until you make it' is more than just a catchy saying; researchers have conducted studies on the topic. People say it's really important to have an optimistic mindset and believe in yourself – you know, the idea that you look confident and so eventually you feel confident.

Harpreet: But aren't they really just deceiving themselves, as well as everyone else?

Esther: I suppose so. I mean, I'm not going to advocate hypocrisy, or blatant self-deception, but in some cases, a few psychological 'lies' to oneself or others can really improve someone's mood. It could help them to get through a tricky time until they're sure of what they're doing and

have got the experience they need. The signals you give on the outside can change how you feel on the inside too.

Harpreet: What do you mean?

Esther: Well, it's all about the mind–body connection. You can force a smile, and it relaxes your vocal cords and affects your hormones. Just that loosening of face muscles triggers a happier mood and encourages friendliness.

Harpreet: So we should all be going round pretending we know what we're doing when we don't, sailing through life not worrying about the impact of our mistakes on others, or covering things up, instead of admitting the mistake and offering to put it right?

Esther: I don't think that's really what it's about. Some people probably just fake happiness and confidence in front of other people to keep the perfect image of themselves. When they're alone, mistakes they've made and denied can make them feel like 'imposters' who'll be found out soon. The question for our listeners really is how do we respond when it turns out we were wrong and have made a mistake – when we realise we should have done X rather than Y, or when we find out that the person we thought had stolen something from us was innocent all along?

Harpreet: Or, when we realise we used up the last of the milk and there's none left for coffee?

Esther: Ah yes, that too. I'll get some more later. Sorry.

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