

The Status Game: Why Nobody Ever Wins — Answer Key

C1 Business English | Fluency Space | Answers for Exercises 1–3

Exercise 1 — Key Words from Context

Answers to the matching and example-sentence gap-fill in the vocabulary exercise, in the order they appear on the worksheet. Some forms change slightly to fit the example sentence (e.g. tense, form).

No.	Answer
1	boast — “Their sales director likes to boast that they’ve never lost a client, but I’m not convinced.”
2	ingrained — “Changing the culture will take time — some of these habits are deeply ingrained in the team.”
3	opt out of / opt into — “Anyone who would rather not take part can opt out of the new training scheme.” / “So far, only half of our clients have chosen to opt into the loyalty programme.”
4	pecking order — “As the newest member of the board, she’s still finding her place in the pecking order.”
5	an abundance — “Since the campaign launched, we’ve had an abundance of enquiries from new clients.”
6	convey — “We need the opening slide to convey our key message in under ten seconds.”
7	relentlessly — “Our main competitor has been cutting prices relentlessly all year.”
8	states — “The contract clearly states that payment is due within 30 days.”
9	thrive — “Small teams tend to thrive when they’re given real ownership of a project.”
10	wide of the mark — “I’m afraid last quarter’s forecast was way wide of the mark — we sold almost twice as much.”
11	strive — “As a team, we strive to answer every client query within 24 hours.”
12	On the contrary — “Is the project behind schedule?” “On the contrary — we’re actually two weeks ahead.”

Exercise 2 — Comprehension

Model answers only — learners’ own wording will vary. Look for the key facts below rather than exact phrasing.

1. According to Will Storr, what is status, and why is it wrong to think that it is about wealth, power or expensive watches?

Model answer: Status is a social construct: the way others see us and the way we position ourselves in relation to them. It isn’t simply about wealth or possessions, because the status game differs wildly from group to group — farmers, tech experts and conspiracy theorists all play by different rules.

2. According to the text, why did status matter so much to our ancestors in the stone age?

Model answer: As tribal animals, our survival and reproduction depended on being accepted into a supportive community. Higher status within the group meant access to better partners, more abundant food and greater safety, which increased the chances of thriving and producing thriving children.

3. What do the rooftoppers and Elizabeth Holmes have in common, according to the article?

Model answer: Both were drawn into dangerous status games. Rooftoppers take ever greater risks because the more dangerous the stunt, the more attention it earns; Holmes chased status by modelling herself on Steve Jobs. In both cases the pursuit of status ended in disaster — death for the climbers, and prison for Holmes after her technology failed.

4. Why does the article suggest that the status game might continue, even in a future where AI provides everything we need?

Model answer: Because the drive for status is so deeply ingrained in human nature, people are likely to keep competing even in a world of abundance — possibly in a more primitive form, such as competing on physical prowess or physical beauty.

Exercise 3 — Fill in the Gaps: Answers

“The New Sales Leaderboard” — correct form of each key word/phrase, in order.

No.	Answer
1	thrive
2	strive
3	boast
4	relentlessly
5	wide of the mark
6	ingrained
7	pecking order
8	opt out of