

LearnUp

Uplift. Upskill. Upgrade.

BLAST

Memorisation Worksheet

Advanced Edition

Twenty exam-grade emotional paragraphs at Sec 1 level. Each paragraph follows the BLAST framework (**Body Language** · **Action** · **Speech** · **Thought**), with the swap slots highlighted and a swap guide on the same page. Memorise the spine. Edit the slots. Edit any sentence freely if a sharper verb suggests itself.

How to use this worksheet

The idea

You have 20 paragraphs ahead of you. Each one is a complete BLAST scene for one emotion — **Body Language, Action, Speech, Thought** — woven into a single, exam-grade paragraph. Your job is to memorise each paragraph word for word.

On exam day, when you need to write a frightened scene, a guilty scene, an angry scene — you do not invent from scratch. You reach for the paragraph you already know, change two to four words to fit the prompt, and you have a polished BLAST paragraph in under a minute.

How to memorise one paragraph

- **READ.** Aloud, slowly, three times. Notice the rhythm of the sentences.
- **COVER.** Recite from memory. It will not be perfect. That is fine.
- **CHECK.** Compare. Notice the parts you missed. Read aloud once more, focusing on what slipped.
- **SLEEP ON IT.** Memory locks in overnight. Do this at night for best results.
- **RETURN.** Next morning, recite once before breakfast. Twice without checking = you own it.

How to deploy it in an exam

- Read the prompt. Decide which emotion the scene calls for. Pick the matching paragraph.
- Identify the swap slots — the words in [red brackets]. There are usually 2 to 5 per paragraph.
- Replace each slot with a word that fits the prompt. The Swap Guide on each page offers options.
- **Then go further.** At Sec 1, you have permission to edit any sentence — swap a verb, add a subordinate clause, tighten a rhythm. The model paragraph is a spine, not a cage.

A note on this edition

These paragraphs are calibrated for Sec 1 writers. Every paragraph contains at least one subordinate clause and avoids crutch-words like *very, really, suddenly, amazing, nice, a lot*. The diction is restrained rather than performative — specificity is what saves emotional writing from melodrama. Use these as your model for the kind of prose you are working toward.

How fast should you go?

One paragraph per day, six days a week, finishes the workbook in under a month. Your weekly homework is to memorise that week's paragraph and recite it back at your next session. Your tutor will check.

Q1 — HOT BAD

high-energy negative

Hot Bad

5 PARAGRAPHS IN THIS QUADRANT

- 1. ANXIETY / NERVOUSNESS**
- 2. PURE TERROR / FEAR**
- 3. EXPLOSIVE ANGER / RAGE**
- 4. SUPPRESSED ANGER (SEETHING)**
- 5. JEALOUSY / ENVY**

Q1 — HOT BAD · high-energy negative

1. ANXIETY / NERVOUSNESS

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

A thin film of sweat formed at my temples as I stood outside [*the place*], the muscles along my jaw locked so tight I could feel my pulse in them. I rolled my pen between my fingers, the cap clicking against the face of my watch in a rhythm I could not quite control. “I’m ready,” I murmured — though the words felt thinner than I had meant them to be, and the [*ambient*] seemed louder than my own voice. The worst-case scenarios arrived one after another, each one more articulate than the last. By the time the door opened, I had argued myself out of every certainty I had walked in with.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|----------------------|---|
| [<i>the place</i>] | the debate chamber · the recital hall · the consulting room · the dean's office · the courtroom |
| [<i>ambient</i>] | the fluorescent lights · the projector fan · the heating ducts · the analog clock · the rain on the windows |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q1 — HOT BAD · high-energy negative

2. PURE TERROR / FEAR

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

The blood in my veins seemed to slow, and a heat I did not recognise rose through my chest before resolving, all at once, into a cold I knew. I retreated by inches, my back searching for [the wall] behind me, and when I found it, I pressed against it as though it might absorb me. My breath caught somewhere between my throat and my chest; the scream I had rehearsed in idle daydreams never came. There was no comfortable lie left to tell myself — I was not going to walk out of [this place]. Every shadow performed its own small choreography, and every sound resolved, after a moment, into footsteps that had not been there a beat ago.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|--------------|--|
| [the wall] | the railing · the cold door · the locker · the bookshelf · the tiled column |
| [this place] | the alley · the gorge · the archive · the stairwell · the abandoned building |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q1 — HOT BAD · high-energy negative

3. EXPLOSIVE ANGER / RAGE

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

The edges of my vision narrowed into a pulse of red, and the cords in my neck rose against the collar of my shirt before I had decided to let them. I brought my fist down onto [the surface], hard enough that the [objects] jumped half an inch and my knuckles went the colour of old paper. “Enough,” I said — not a shout, but a sentence said with such finality that the room seemed to rearrange itself around it. How dare [this person] stand there and pretend the [timeframe] had not happened. I was done being managed, done being talked around, done being made small inside the only [place] that should have felt like mine.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|---------------|---|
| [the surface] | the desk · the wall · the counter · the boardroom table · the lectern |
| [objects] | the loose papers · the trophies · the pens · the documents · the laptop |
| [this person] | she · they · the manager · my coach · the senior |
| [timeframe] | past three months · past year · whole semester · two terms |
| [place] | home · team · house · family · classroom |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q1 — HOT BAD · high-energy negative

4. SUPPRESSED ANGER (SEETHING)

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

My jaw closed so tightly that the muscle below my ear announced itself in a slow, audible click, and my breath became something measured, careful, parcelled out a sip at a time. I held my pen between two fingers — held it, did not grip it, because gripping would have given me away — and turned the angle of my face just enough that no one could read what was happening behind it. “Fine. Have it your way,” I said, the words landing flat, exact, weighed out. There was no need to argue today. [*This person*] would learn, on their own time, what came next. I would smile when smiled at, nod where nodding was required, and say nothing at all — but I would catalogue, in detail, what had just been said and by whom.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|------------------------|---|
| [<i>this person</i>] | the manager · my brother · the prefect · the senior · the teacher |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q1 — HOT BAD · high-energy negative

5. JEALOUSY / ENVY

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

A taste like old metal rose in my mouth, and a familiar, narrow ache opened just below my ribs. I folded my arms across my chest — not for warmth, not even consciously — and watched [*this person*] through eyes I had narrowed without meaning to. “Must be nice,” I said, the two words doing more work than a sentence would have. The applause should have been for me. I had put in the hours, had stayed late while [*this person*] left early, had revised twice while [*they*] revised once — and still, again, the door had opened for the wrong person.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|------------------------|---|
| [<i>this person</i>] | her · my cousin · the new transfer · the section head · the captain |
| [<i>they</i>] | he · she · they |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q2 — COLD BAD

low-energy negative

Cold Bad

5 PARAGRAPHS IN THIS QUADRANT

- 6. GUILT / REGRET**
- 7. DEEP SADNESS / GRIEF**
- 8. BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT**
- 9. LONELINESS / ISOLATION**
- 10. SUSPICION / MISTRUST**

Q2 — COLD BAD · low-energy negative

6. GUILT / REGRET

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

A heat crept up the back of my neck that had nothing to do with the room, and a weight I could not have named earlier in the day arrived in the centre of my chest. I studied the scuff on my shoe with the kind of attention I should have given the conversation, because I could not lift my eyes to meet [whose] gaze. “I didn't mean for it to happen like that,” I said, my voice softer than I would have allowed it to be in any other setting. I had been warned. I had been told, by people who were not in the habit of being wrong. The words I had used could not be returned, and the look that had passed across [whose] face would replay itself, unsummoned, for weeks.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|-----------|--|
| [whose] | her · Mum's · the teacher's · my friend's · my coach's |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q2 — COLD BAD · low-energy negative

7. DEEP SADNESS / GRIEF

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

My eyes filled the way a glass fills under a slow tap, and an ache I had not invited took up a permanent address in the centre of my chest. My shoulders folded inward; my hands rose to cover my face not for comfort but because there was nothing else left to do with them. “I can't believe [they're] gone,” I said, and the sentence broke somewhere in the middle of itself. The world after this morning had a different geometry — emptier, less hospitable, less mine. I did not know yet how to be a person in a world that did not contain [them].

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|-----------|---|
| [they're] | she's · he's · Grandpa's · my best friend's |
| [them] | her · him · them |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q2 — COLD BAD · low-energy negative

8. BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

The floor did not move, but everything I had been standing on seemed to give way at once, and the breath I had been holding for the result went out without permission. I let [the envelope] fall from my hand the way someone might drop something already broken, and I looked, without focus, at a point on the wall that did not require me to react. “Right. I see,” I said, my voice carrying no weather at all. Five months. Three drafts. Two unanswered emails. I had wanted [the place] more than I had let myself say out loud, and I had not been good enough for it — not, in the end, good enough for [the place], or for the version of myself I had been auditioning to become.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|----------------|---|
| [the envelope] | the letter · the report card · the phone · the trophy · the certificate |
| [the place] | the role · the scholarship · the audition · the programme · the school |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q2 — COLD BAD · low-energy negative

9. LONELINESS / ISOLATION

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

A hollowness opened, slow and unhurried, just behind my sternum, and the warmth of the [ambient] did not reach me. I drew my knees up against my chest and held them there, taking up less of the bench than I had taken up that morning. “Hello?” I said, mostly to myself, and the word disappeared into the noise as if it had never been spoken. Everyone in the room had been organised, somehow, into pairs and small clusters that did not include me. The conversation drifting in from [the next place] only made the silence around me feel heavier — not because it was loud, but because none of it was for me.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|------------------|--|
| [ambient] | afternoon sun · fluorescent lights · summer heat · the bright canteen lights |
| [the next place] | the corridor · the playground · the basketball court · the dining hall · their table |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q2 — COLD BAD · low-energy negative

10. SUSPICION / MISTRUST

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

One of my eyebrows lifted on its own, and my eyes thinned in the way they do when the mind is still putting a pattern together. I tilted my head a degree to one side, watching [this person] not with hostility but with the careful, patient attention you give to a sentence that does not quite parse. “And you're certain about that?” I asked, the question landing lighter than the doubt that had produced it. Something in the rhythm was off. [They] were leaving something out — not lying outright, but choosing words too carefully. The smile had arrived a beat too early, the story had moved three details to the left, and the version they were giving me now was not the version I would hear if I asked again tomorrow.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|---------------|--|
| [this person] | her · the stranger · the shopkeeper · the friend · my sister |
| [they] | she · they · the manager · the seller |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q3 — HOT GOOD

high-energy positive

Hot Good

5 PARAGRAPHS IN THIS QUADRANT

- 11. OVERWHELMING JOY / ELATION**
- 12. CONFIDENCE / PRIDE**
- 13. CURIOSITY / INTRIGUE**
- 14. SURPRISE / ASTONISHMENT**
- 15. DETERMINATION**

Q3 — HOT GOOD · high-energy positive

11. OVERWHELMING JOY / ELATION

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

My eyes seemed to open wider than they had been built to, and a grin arrived on my face entirely without my permission. I lifted both hands towards the sky and let out a sound that was somewhere between a shout and a laugh — the kind of sound the body makes before the brain has caught up. “We did it. We actually did it,” I said, the second sentence quieter than the first because the first had taken most of the air. There would be other days, longer years, more measured triumphs. But none of them, I suspected, would feel quite like this — when the long arc of a thing one had only half-believed in finally landed, and even [the weather] was, somehow, on my side.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|---------------|--|
| [the weather] | the rain · the heat · the late hour · the doubters · the bruises |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q3 — HOT GOOD · high-energy positive

12. CONFIDENCE / PRIDE

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

I stood without effort, my chin lifted by no particular act of will, and the room arranged itself around me — for once — in a way that asked nothing more of me than to be present. I crossed [the place] at a pace I had chosen, my footsteps audible against the floor because I had no need to hide them. “I’ve got this,” I said, the sentence requiring no decoration. The hours had been put in. The decisions had been made. The version of myself that had been rehearsing for this morning since some October in the past finally had nothing left to prove.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|-------------|--|
| [the place] | the stage · the field · the boardroom · the courtroom · the auditorium |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q3 — HOT GOOD · high-energy positive

13. CURIOSITY / INTRIGUE

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

My attention sharpened the way it does when the world offers you something the world had not been advertising, and I leaned forward without registering that I was leaning. I extended one careful finger toward [*the object*], the kind of finger you use when the question of whether a thing is alive is still open. “What in the world...” I said, the rest of the sentence going looking for itself somewhere in my mouth. There was something here that did not, on first inspection, belong. I would find out what it was — even if finding out cost me the morning I had budgeted for something else.

SWAP GUIDE

Swap slot**Try one of these (or invent your own)***[the object]*

the diary · the locked drawer · the strange light · the closed door · the unmarked envelope

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q3 — HOT GOOD · high-energy positive

14. SURPRISE / ASTONISHMENT

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

My jaw opened a centimetre on its own, and my eyebrows lifted into a place they did not normally visit. I took a small step backward, my hand rising to cover the lower half of my face — the universal gesture of someone whose mouth needs supervision. “You’re not serious,” I said, the consonants louder than they had any right to be. I had not, in any rehearsal, prepared a response to this. Was this — could this actually be — happening? I looked at [*this person*] once, then again, half-waiting for someone to come forward with the explanation that would let me set my jaw back down.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|------------------------|--|
| [<i>this person</i>] | her · them · the screen · the letter · the messenger |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q3 — HOT GOOD · high-energy positive

15. DETERMINATION

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

My gaze settled — not narrowed, settled — on the task in front of me, and my shoulders moved into a line they had not been holding ten minutes earlier. I adjusted my [garment] and took a long breath whose purpose was administrative rather than emotional. “I’m not stopping until this is finished,” I said, the sentence less of an announcement and more of a contract with myself. One more attempt. There would not be a second one if this one ran out without the result. I had come too far, given up too much, and rewritten the plan too many times to walk away inside the final lap.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|-----------|---|
| [garment] | tie · collar · sleeves · jersey · cuffs |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q4 — COOL / NEUTRAL*low-energy neutral*

Cool / Neutral

5 PARAGRAPHS IN THIS QUADRANT

16. EXHAUSTION / FATIGUE**17. RELIEF****18. EMBARRASSMENT / HUMILIATION****19. CONFUSION / BEWILDERMENT****20. BOREDOM / IMPATIENCE**

Q4 — COOL / NEUTRAL · low-energy neutral

16. EXHAUSTION / FATIGUE

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

My eyelids felt as though they were being weighted from inside, and a long, involuntary yawn rose through my jaw and refused to be held back. I walked the last hundred metres in increments, dragging each foot a half-pace short of the previous one, and when I reached the wall I rested against it as though it had been waiting for me. “Can we just — stop. For a minute,” I said, my breath uneven, the words shorter than I would have wanted them to be. There was no part of me, on either side of the muscle, that wanted to take one more step. My body had filed an honest, formal complaint, and my mind, this once, had decided to listen.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|------------|---|
| [the wall] | the summit · the end of the trail · the front door · the bus stop · the locker room |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q4 — COOL / NEUTRAL · low-energy neutral

17. RELIEF

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

The tension that had been holding my shoulders together for the last forty minutes — perhaps the last forty days — finally released, and a warmth I had not had access to all morning travelled through my chest. I let out a long, shuddering breath that I had not realised I had been rationing, and I lowered myself into the nearest chair as though sitting were a privilege rather than a default. “Thank god,” I said quietly, and a small, slightly embarrassed laugh escaped before I could decide whether to release it. It was over. *[The ordeal]* was over. I closed my eyes and let the world be allowed to continue around me, without me having to manage any of it for a while.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>[the ordeal]</i> | the exam · the storm · the long wait · the appointment · the interrogation |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q4 — COOL / NEUTRAL · low-energy neutral

18. EMBARRASSMENT / HUMILIATION

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

My face went from temperature to temperature inside the span of three seconds, and my ears developed an entirely new kind of awareness of themselves. I pulled the strings of my [garment] a centimetre tighter, as though I could persuade the fabric to enrol me in some kind of witness protection programme. “Sorry — sorry,” I said, the word arriving twice because once had not been small enough. There had been, at most, four people in [the place] when I had spoken — and at this point, none of them were pretending not to have heard. Of all the available moments in the available week, my mouth had selected this one to do something that historians would later have to research.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|-------------|--|
| [garment] | hoodie · jacket · scarf · collar |
| [the place] | the canteen · the corridor · the assembly · the meeting room |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q4 — COOL / NEUTRAL · low-energy neutral

19. CONFUSION / BEWILDERMENT

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

My brow gathered into a knot I would later need to flatten on purpose, and an unfamiliar dizziness arrived behind my eyes, the kind that comes when the world is not arranging itself in the order I had been promised. I scratched at a place behind my ear and tilted [the document] so the light caught it differently, on the off-chance the angle was the problem. “Hold on — what?” I said, addressing no one in particular, addressing the page itself. Had I missed an instruction? Was there a step that had not been printed? I reread [the line] for the third time, and for the third time it failed to declare what it wanted from me.

SWAP GUIDE

| Swap slot | Try one of these (or invent your own) |
|----------------|---|
| [the document] | the question paper · the screen · the map · the recipe · the contract |
| [the line] | the paragraph · the section · the question |

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.

Q4 — COOL / NEUTRAL · low-energy neutral

20. BOREDOM / IMPATIENCE

MEMORISE THIS PARAGRAPH WORD FOR WORD

Words in [red brackets] are SWAP SLOTS — change these to fit your scene. Everything else stays exactly as written.

My head settled into the cradle of my palm with the particular gravity reserved for the second hour of a meeting that should have been an email, and my eyes did the slow, polite slide into the middle distance. I checked the time, learned nothing new from it, and tapped a quiet, restless rhythm against [the surface]. “Is this nearly done?” I said, mostly to myself, the question tinted faintly with despair. The mind, given a wall and a clock, will start cataloguing the wall. I could list, from where I sat, all the things I would rather be doing — and the list, by now, had a table of contents.

SWAP GUIDE

Swap slot**Try one of these (or invent your own)***[the surface]*

the desk · the armrest · the windowsill · the kitchen worktop · my own knee

WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION

Pick a scene from your own life. Fill in the slots — then edit any sentence freely to fit your scene. Recite the whole paragraph aloud.
