

"Not to worry," she said. "All you have to do is walk straight at the barrier between platforms nine and ten. Don't stop and don't be scared you'll crash into it, that's very important. Best do it at a bit of a run if you're nervous. Go on, go now before Ron."

"Er — okay," said Harry.

He pushed his trolley around and stared at the barrier. It looked very solid.

He started to walk toward it. People jostled him on their way to platforms nine and ten. Harry walked more quickly. He was going to smash right into that barrier and then he'd be in trouble — leaning forward on his cart, he broke into a heavy run — the barrier was coming nearer and nearer — he wouldn't be able to stop — the cart was out of control — he was a foot away — he closed his eyes ready for the crash —

It didn't come ... he kept on running ... he opened his eyes.

A scarlet steam engine was waiting next to a platform packed with people. A sign overhead said *Hogwarts Express*, eleven o'clock. Harry looked behind him and saw a wrought-iron archway where the barrier had been, with the words *Platform Nine and Three-Quarters* on it. He had done it.

Smoke from the engine drifted over the heads of the chattering crowd, while cats of every color wound here and there between their legs. Owls hooted to one another in a disgruntled sort of way over the babble and the scraping of heavy trunks.

The first few carriages were already packed with students, some hanging out of the window to talk to their families, some fighting over seats. Harry pushed his cart off down the platform in search of an empty seat. He passed a round-faced boy who was saying, "Gran, I've lost my toad again."

