

Questions For Conversation Communication Practice for the Real World

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General conversation

1. Getting to Know You

- What's your name?
- Where do you live?
- How long have lived there?
- What's your job?
- Where were you born?
- Are you married, single, divorced or living with someone?
- Do you have any children? If yes, how old are they?
- What do you do in your free time?
- What kind of music do you listen to?
- Do you like it where you live? Why/why not?
- Tell me about three things that you hate
- What makes you laugh?

2. Hobbies, Interests, Free Time

- What do you do in your free time?
- How often do you ... (do, go, play etc)
- How long have you ... (done, played,)
- Are you a member of a club?
- Is your hobby expensive?
- Does anyone in your family share your hobby?
- What advice would you give someone who wanted to do your hobby?
- Do you think you will still be doing this hobby in five or ten years from now?

3. Exchanging Information

- What's your name? Could you spell it please?
- What's your address? Could you spell that please?
- What's your telephone number? Can you repeat that please?
- What's your email address? was that all one word or with a dash/a dot?
- What day is it today?
- What's the date today?
- Can we make an appointment for next week? What day is good for you? What time?

4. My Job

- What do you do? (what's your job?)
- Who do you work for?
- How long have you worked there?
- What are your responsibilities?
- What do you like about your job?

- What don't you like about your job?
- If you could do any job, what job would you choose?
- What job do you think you will be doing in five or ten years from now?
- How did you get this job (talk about qualifications, training, experience, and how you found the job, the interview etc)
- What skills do you need to do your job?

5. Work

- What is your definition of work?
- If you had enough money, would you stop working?
- What can be done about unemployment?
- Pop star, King, Novelist: do they do real work?
- What jobs would you never do, regardless of the pay?
- How difficult is it to find work in your country?
- Who has the best job in the world? Why do you think so?
- How much is the minimum wage? Is it reasonable?
- Do politicians get paid too much or too little?
- Would you go abroad to find work?

6. Family

- Are you married?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Do you get on well with your family?
- How many children do you have?
- ***You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family. Blood is thicker than water***

What do you understand from these two expressions? Do you agree or disagree?

- Were your parents strict or lenient?
- What kind of parent are you?
- Do you think the number of children a couple has should be restricted to control the population?
- Are you grandparents alive? Do you see them regularly?
- In Latin countries, people spend a lot of time with their families. Why is this? Why do Anglo-Saxons care less about their families?
- What characteristics have you inherited from your parents?

7. The Weather, Climate (and climate change)

- What's the weather like today?
- What kind of weather do you prefer?
- Do cloudy/rainy days give you the blues?
- Can you describe the climate in your country?
- What's the climate like in:
 - Saudi Arabia?
 - Brazil?
 - Alaska?
- Is global warming real? Is it too late to change things?
- What will happen in the future if global warming continues?
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8. Countries and Nationalities

- How many countries have you visited? Tell me about some of them
- Stereotypes:
What image do you have of people from:
 - the United States?
 - Russia?
 - Japan?
 - The United Kingdom?
- What's the difference between "Britain" and "England"? Is your country often misunderstood by foreigners? In what way?
- What stereotypes do other countries have about your country?
- If you could live in any country in the world, where would you live? Why?

9. Money

- What is rich? Are you rich? How much do you need to be rich?
- What do you spend your money on?
- What would you like to buy but can't afford?
- Who is responsible for the current recession?
- What would you do if you won 100 million Euros?
- Finish the proverb: "Money can't buy happiness but..."
- Is it possible to live without money? What did people do before money?
- Do you own or rent your house/apartment? Why?
- Are big bosses paid too much?
- How much is your life worth? According to whom?

10. Banks, Banking, Finance

- Who do you bank with? Are you happy with the service?
- Do you think banks charge too much for their services?
- Which of the following do you have:
 - a current/checking account?
 - a deposit account?
 - a mortgage?
 - a debit card?
 - a credit card?
 - a store card?
- Do you invest in the stock market? Do you take a lot of risks?
- Do you wish we had kept our old currencies (the Franc, the Deutsch Mark etc? Why/why not?
- Should traders' salaries be capped? What about the directors' bonuses?

11. Travelling: Planes and Airports

- How often do you travel by plane?
- Are you afraid of flying?
- How has flying changed since 11/9/2001?
- What's the worst flight you've ever taken? Tell me about it.
- What do you think about low-cost airlines? Have you used one?
- Flying is the means of transport that pollutes the most:
 - Do people travel too much? what can be done to reduce the amount of flying that people do?
- Are some airlines better than others – in what ways?
- Have you ever been involved in an 'incident' (emergency landing, technical problems, bomb alerts)?

12. Travelling: Holidays, Hotels, Sightseeing

- What kind of holiday do you prefer?
- When was the last time you went on holiday? Tell me about it
- What was the best holiday you've ever had?
- What was the worst holiday you've ever had?
- What do you take with you on holiday?
- Some people say that going on holiday is nearly as stressful as divorce or moving house. What do you think?
- What three countries would you like to visit?

13. Technology: Phones, Internet, Gadgets

- Which of the following do you own:
 - smartphone?
 - laptop computer?
 - video game console?
 - tablet?
- How much do you use them? - Are they essential for modern life?
- What did people do before they had mobile phones and internet?
- In what way is your life better for having these items?
- How has internet changed people's lives? Is it beneficial or harmful? Why?
- what do you think people will want in the future?

14. Environment: Threats and Opportunities

- What are the main environmental issues today?
- Is global warming real? Or is it just media hype?
- Global warming is good, you can enjoy a summer holiday in Britain or Scandinavia, save money on your heating bills etc. Discuss
- What are you doing for the environment?
- Do you think the government should do more for the environment?
- Are environmental groups really effective?
- What should big business do for the environment?
- Some scientists believe that humans will be extinct in the next fifty to a hundred years. What do you think about that?
- Do you have a car? How often do you use it? Should you use it less? Why don't you?
- Does your community have a recycling programme? Do you recycle?
- Do you think that wind farms are beautiful or that they are a 'blot on the landscape'?

15. Food and Drink

- France is famous for its gastronomy. Why is that?
- Do you eat snails and frog's legs? How do you prepare them?
- What's your favourite dish?
- What foods don't you like?
- Everyone says that English food is bad. What do you know about it?
- Have you been to a good restaurant lately? Tell me about it.
- Which restaurants would you recommend in your town/city? Describe them, and the food they offer.
- The world's food problems could be solved if everyone became vegetarian. Would you be prepared to give up meat?
- What do you think about American food? How often do you go to a fast food restaurant like McDonald's?

16. Food: Recipes

- What are some of the specialities in your region? How are they made?
- What was the last meal you cooked for yourself? Tell me the ingredients and how you made it.
- What's your favourite dessert?
- Can you make cakes? Which ones?
- How do you make an omelette?
- What do you think about American Food?
- If you could eat only three meals for the rest of your life, what would they be?

17. Entertainment/Socialising

- What do you usually do on the weekends?
- What did you do last weekend?
- Do you have plans for this weekend?
- Describe your perfect night out.
- Do you ever go out only with friends of the same sex (a boys' night out, girls' night out)? Why/why not?
- What kind of music do you like? Is there any music you can't stand?
- Do you like to go to concerts? Tell me about the last concert you went to.
- Can you dance? What kind of dancing do you like? What kinds of dancing are popular in your country?
- Do you ever go to the opera/ballet/theatre? Tell me about the last time you went.
- What do you do for fun when you stay at home?
- What kind of films do you like?

- Who is your best friend? How long have you known him/her and how did you meet?
- Describe a good night out.
- Do you and your friends drink a lot (of alcohol, obviously) when you go out?
- What advice would you give to a lonely person who has just moved to your town?
- What do you think about dating websites? Would you use one?
- Is social media useful for finding new friends? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- Do you have a Facebook account? How much time do you spend on it?

18. Drugs and Medicine

- What's the health service like in your country?
- Do you believe in alternative medicine like homeopathy?
- Should doctors be allowed to prescribe marijuana? Explain.
- What do you think about euthanasia?
- What do you think has been the greatest achievement in medicine?
- Which do you think is the most dangerous: alcohol or marijuana?
- Can you tell me about any recent scandals involving prescription drugs?
- Have you got any advice someone who has a cold or the 'flu?
- Have you ever had an operation or broken a bone?
- How often do you go to the doctor's?
- Are your vaccinations up to date?

19. Animals and Pets

- Do you have a pet? Tell me about it
- Which animals make the best pets: cats or dogs?
- Do you know anyone who has an unusual pet?
- Pets are supposed to be good for your health. Agree or disagree?
- Many species become extinct every year. Are we doing enough to stop this?
- Do you give money to wildlife/animal charities (eg. WWF, RSPCA etc)?
- What do you think about experimenting on animals?
- Have you ever been on a safari? Would you like to?
- Are you frightened of any animals? Which ones?

20. Politics and Government

- Are you interested in politics?
- How are government officials chosen in your country? Do you think this method is fair?
- How many different types of government can you name?
- To what extent should government interfere in the daily life of its citizens (for example: safety laws, smoking bans, warnings on alcoholic drinks)?
- What do you think is the most important political issue right now? Why is it important?
- How much does a politician's personal life effect their ability to do their job? Why do you think the media pays a lot of attention to politicians' personal lives?
- Tell about an important political event in your country's recent history.
- Is there a politician that you admire? Tell me about him or her.
- What do you think of the European Union and the Euro?
- Are governments doing enough to tackle poverty?
- Have you ever taken part in political demonstration or rally?
- Why do you think that politics is so male-dominated? Would it be better if more women were involved in politics?
- Should your government intervene in other country's affairs? Why/why not?

21. Crime and Justice

- How much crime is there where you live?
- Have you ever been a victim of a crime? Tell me about it.
- Is there more crime today than in the past? Why/why not?
- Should marijuana be legalised?
- Politicians talk a lot about security. What do you think they should do to improve security?
- White collar crime: what punishments are suitable for people who steal, embezzle, and defraud at work?
- What do you think about capital punishment (the death penalty)?
- Prisons are overcrowded and the government doesn't have enough resources to keep building new ones. What alternatives to prison can you think of?

22. Art

- What's your definition of art?
- What do you think about modern art?
- Do you visit art galleries? How often?
- Should the government sponsor arts projects? Why/why not?
- Has technology killed art?
- Only the middle and upper classes care about art. Agree or disagree? Should we try to attract the poorer classes to the arts?
- Do you have a favourite painter or style of painting? Tell me about it.

23. Movies/Cinema

- Seen any good films recently? Tell me about it/them
- How many different types of movie can you name?
- What kind of films do you like?
- How often do you go to the cinema? Do you go less often than you used to?
- What do you think about American films?
- Does your country have a film industry? Tell me about it.
- Are you influenced by film reviews in the press or on the Internet?
- Do you download films to watch on your computer? Do you still buy DVDs, or is that an obsolete technology?

24. News/Media

- Are you a "news junkie"? How often do you read/listen to the news?
- Is it important for you to know what's going on in the world?
- What's happening at the moment:
 - in your region?
 - in your country?
 - in the world?
- What are the news stories that we often hear?
- Would you like to hear more good news? Why do we only generally have bad news?
- What was the most important news event last year?
- Are journalists always objective? What do you think may influence the way they present the news?
- Are newspapers in your country politically biased?
- Do you think that the media hide some stories? What kind of stories? Why?

25. Shopping

- Where do you go shopping for food? What do you prefer, the supermarket or small shops?
- Is shopping a real pastime? Do you go shopping for fun?
- Where do you go to buy clothes?
- When shopping, what is most important, price, quality, labels?
- Do you shop online? What kind of things are OK to buy on the net? What things would you never buy online?
- Tell me about the last thing you bought.
- How important is customer service to you? Can you give me an example of a time when you received good/bad customer service?
- Do you think shops should open on Sundays? Why/why not?

26. Music

- Is music an important part of your life?
- What's your favourite kind of music?
- Are there any kinds of music that you can't stand? why not?
- What music is popular in your country at the moment?
- Is music better today than it was 20 or 30 years ago? Explain.
- Do you listen to a lot of 'Anglo-Saxon' music? What do you like about it?
- Do you have a favourite group or singer? Tell me about them
- What was the last concert you went to?
- Is live music still relevant in this era of digital music?
- Do you listen to music on your phone/MP3 player?
- What songs remind you of things that happened in the past?
- What music do you listen to when you are happy/sad/depressed/stressed?
- What do you think about illegal downloading/peer to peer sites?

27. Sports

- What sports do you do? Are you a sporty person?
- What sports are popular in your country? Can you explain why they are so popular?
- Is there too much coverage of sport in the media?
- Do you think that footballers earn too much money?
- *“Rugby is a game for hooligans played by gentlemen, football is a game for gentlemen played by hooligans”*
- Discuss.
- What can be done about performance enhancing drugs? Do you think they have ruined sports like cycling and athletics?
- What do you think about violent sports like boxing?
- What about darts, pool, snooker or shooting – are they real sports?

28. Languages

- How many languages do you speak?
- Is English a difficult language to learn?
- Do you think that regional languages (Provençal, Gaelic etc) should be taught in schools?
- Why do you think English has become the world's international language? Do you think we should use an artificial language like Esperanto?
- Did you enjoy studying languages at school? Why/why not?
- What's the best way to learn a language?
- Is there any point in studying ancient languages like Latin and Greek? Explain.
- How much do you know about the history of your language? Tell me about it.

29. Appearance, Clothes

- What's your style? Tell me about the clothes you like to wear.
- What clothes do you wear to work? Is there a dress code or uniform?
- What do you think about fashion? Are you a 'fashion victim'?
- What do clothes say about a person? Do you judge people by the way they are dressed?
- Can you tell me about the current trends in your country?

- Do you have a 'best-dressed man/woman' contest in your country? Who has won it recently?
- Where do you buy your clothes?
- Have you ever bought clothes in a second-hand or charity shop?

30. Personalities

- What kind of person are you?
- What would your mother/father/boyfriend/girlfriend say about you?
- What qualities do you look for in friends/partners?
- What kind of people can't you stand?
- Are you an introvert or an extrovert (shy or outgoing)?
- What kind of personality is required for the following professions:
 - Engineer?
 - Teacher?
 - Lawyer?
 - Salesperson?
 - Librarian?
 - Soldier?
 - Politician?

31. Cars, Vehicles

- Do you own a car? How often do you use it?
- What was the first car you ever had?
- Do you think that cars should be banned from city centres?
- If you had the money to buy any car you wanted, what car would you buy?
- Can you ride a motorbike?
- Do you buy new cars or second hand ones?
- Have you ever been in a car accident? Tell me about it.
- Do you respect the 'highway code'? Have you ever been fined for a driving offence?

32. Science

- Which scientists have had the most impact on the world?
- In what ways has science changed the world we live in today?
- What do you think about GM food (genetically modified)? Is science trying to 'play God'?
- Has current science got its priorities right? For example, should more money be spent on finding a solution to hunger and malnutrition as opposed to stem cell or cancer research?
- Are you confident that science will find the answers to our most urgent problems (global warming, disease, famine, facebook etc.)? Discuss.
- How long do you think it will be before science finds a cure for cancer?

2. Other Activities

46. Invitations

Imagine that you could invite anyone, living or dead, to a dinner party. Choose five famous people that you would like (or would have liked) to meet and explain your choices.

What you like to talk to them about? Think of some questions that you could ask to get the conversations going.

47. Desert Island Disks

This is a radio programme from the BBC. You are to spend a year alone on a desert island and can take only five records to listen to for the year.

Choose your five and talk about how the music has influenced you or what memories you associate with the music.

You can also take two books. Which books would you take? Explain why you like them.

48. Survival

Imagine you had to spend a month on a desert island in the Pacific. Here is a list of things you might like to take with you, but you can only choose six. Which ones would you choose, and why?

1. *A pencil and some paper*
2. *A magnifying glass*
3. *20 metres of rope*
4. *a guitar*
5. *a blanket*
6. *a knife and fork*
7. *a bottle of whisky*
8. *a compass*
9. *an atlas*
10. *an axe*
11. *an empty bottle*
12. *a box of matches*
13. *a digital camera*
14. *a mirror*
15. *a dictionary*

49. Fortunately, Unfortunately

Tell a story, starting each sentence with unfortunately or fortunately (take turns with your teacher):

I was invited to a party – unfortunately, it was in New York.

Fortunately, I had already bought a plane ticket.
Unfortunately, the plane crashed into the ocean.
Fortunately, everyone survived.
Unfortunately...

50. What would you do...? (conditionals)

...if you found 1000€ in an unmarked envelope?

... if your house was burning down and you had a few minutes to save a few things?

... if you only had 24 hours to live?

... if you could go back in time and change one event/invention?

... if you could solve one problem in the world?

... if you could solve one problem in your life?

... if you dreamt that your best friend was going to have a terrible accident?

51. Have you ever... ? (present perfect)

... been to an English-speaking country?

... met someone famous?

... eaten something strange (like snake, monkey brains etc.)?

... had a serious accident?

... left a restaurant without paying?

... broken the law?

... performed in a show or a concert?

... been skinny dipping (=swimming naked)?

Think of some more questions to ask your teacher.

52. What to look for in a job

Which of the following criteria would be important for you if you were to change jobs? Rank them in order of importance:

- learning new skills
- close to where I live
- the opportunity to travelling
- good chances of promotion
- the salary
- the benefits, perks
- good relationships with colleagues
- the working environment (comfort, facilities etc.)
- the interest of the work
- being able to help others
- having authority, to be able to give orders to others
- the company's ethical standards (corporate responsibility)
- social status
- being autonomous/able to make decisions