

**Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English** 1

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

Table of Contents

<b>100+ FREE-TALK QUESTIONS, TOPICS, AND ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1500+ FREE-TALK QUESTIONS, TOPICS, AND ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Personal Information:</i> .....	7
<i>Interests and Hobbies</i> .....	10
<i>The Weather</i> .....	13
<i>Easy General Present Tense Topics</i> .....	14
<b>2. SIMPLE PAST TENSE.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3. SIMPLE FUTURE AND IMAGINARY FUTURE TENSE.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>Simple Future</i> .....	22
<b>would</b>	.....23
<b>4. THE CONTINUOUS TENSES.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>Present Continuous Tense</i> .....	25
<i>Past Continuous Tense</i> .....	26
<i>Future Continuous Tense</i> .....	26
<i>Present Continuous Tense Used for Future</i> .....	26
<b>5. THE PERFECT AND PERFECT CONTINUOUS TENSES.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>Present Perfect Questions Requiring Present Perfect Answers</i> .....	27
<i>Past Perfect</i> .....	28
<i>Future Perfect</i> .....	28
<i>The Perfect Continuous Tenses</i> .....	28
<i>Quick Mixed Tense Drill</i> .....	29
<b>6. PRE-INTERMEDIATE QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>(YOU SHOULD BE GOOD AT ANSWERING QUESTIONS NOW, SO NO MORE EXTRA ROOM TO WRITE YOUR ANSWERS.).....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>7. INTERMEDIATE QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>8. POST-INTERMEDIATE QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<i>Mature Topics</i> .....	54
<i>Focus on Interviewing for a Job</i> .....	56
<i>Giving Opinions</i> .....	56
<i>Focus on Technical Issues</i> .....	57
<i>Debates</i> .....	58
<i>and Role Plays</i>	.....60
<i>Chain Stories</i> .....	68
<i>Role Plays</i> .....	68
<b>9. ARTICLES AND DISCUSSIONS.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>10. JUST FOR FUN ~ FIFTY SILLY QUESTIONS.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>GAMES AND ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<i>Crazy Story</i> .....	81
<i>Describing Appearances &amp; Characteristics of People</i> .....	81
<i>Bang Bang</i> .....	81
<i>What's the Question?</i> .....	82
<i>Counting Liar Game</i> .....	82
<i>Vacation Cards</i> .....	83
<i>Truth or Lie?</i> .....	83
<i>Extreme Situations</i> .....	84
<i>The Brag Game</i> .....	85
<i>Twenty Questions</i> .....	86
<i>Stop</i> .....	86

## Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

<i>Create Your Own Similes</i> .....	86
<i>Word Grab with Songs</i> .....	87
<i>Add a Word</i> .....	87
<i>Time Indicators</i> .....	88
<i>Who am I??</i> .....	89
<i>"Tic Tac Toe" or "Noughts and Crosses"</i> .....	89
<b>VOCABULARY ~ SOME VITAL WORDS IN KOREAN</b> .....	<b>90</b>
<b>LANGUAGE FORMS (VARIOUS STRUCTURES)</b> .....	<b>91</b>
<b>SOME COMMON VERBS</b> .....	<b>93</b>
<b>GRAMMAR</b> .....	<b>95</b>
<i>Parts of Speech</i> .....	95
<i>The Three Part Sentence</i> .....	96
<i>Word Order</i> .....	97
<i>Types of adverbs and their placement in a sentence</i> .....	98
<i>Tenses in English</i> .....	99
<b>COMMON PROBLEMS AND MISTAKES</b> .....	<b>101</b>
<i>A, An, The</i> .....	101
<i>Grammar Rules for ESL students</i> .....	102
<i>Konglish Problems</i> .....	110
<i>Infinitives</i> .....	112
<i>Summary of infinitives without to</i> .....	115
<i>Use a Gerund or Infinitive?</i> .....	116
<i>Pronunciation Problems</i> .....	117
<i>Some Supplemental Grammar Issues</i> .....	117
<i>Samples of Student Mistakes</i> .....	119
<b>SPEECH IMPROVEMENT</b> .....	<b>120</b>
<i>Confused terms</i> .....	121
<i>Overused Expressions:</i> .....	121
<i>Try Using Tongue Twisters to help improve clarity</i> .....	122
<i>Famous tongue twisters:</i> .....	122
<b>CHRONIC PROBLEM AREAS -- WRITE YOUR MISTAKES IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX:</b> .....	<b>123</b>
<b>COMMON EXPRESSIONS AND IDIOMS</b> .....	<b>124</b>
<i>Greeting People</i> .....	124
<i>I like it</i> .....	124
.....	124
.....	124
<i>Male / female things</i> .....	124
.....	125
<i>Food</i> .....	125
<i>Philosophical</i> .....	125
<i>How you feel</i> .....	125
<i>Sleep</i> .....	126
<i>Work</i> .....	126
<i>Exclamations</i> .....	126
<i>Casual or friendly</i> .....	126
<i>Descriptions Good</i> .....	126
<i>Descriptions Bad</i> .....	127
<i>Drinking</i> .....	127
<i>Drugs</i> .....	127
<i>Money</i> .....	127
<i>Irritated</i> .....	127
<i>Encouragement</i> .....	128
<i>Non- friendly</i> .....	128
<i>Death</i> .....	128
<i>Miscellaneous</i> .....	128

**Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English** 3

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

<b>PHRASAL VERBS</b> .....	<b>131</b>
<b>WORKSHEET FOR FREE TALK</b> .....	<b>157</b>
<b>WRITE NEW WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS HERE:</b> .....	<b>158</b>

4 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

**100+ Free-Talk Questions, Topics, and Activities**  
**for Children**

**What?**

1. What is your name?
2. What's your brother's or sister's name?
3. What's your best friend's name?
4. What color is this (some object)?
5. What color are your eyes?
6. What color is your hair?
7. What color is the sky / an apple / etc.?
8. What time is it?
9. What time do you go to bed? What time do you wake up?
10. What is she/he doing (point to someone)?
11. What is this (point to or hold up something)?
12. What do you like to eat?
13. What is your favorite kind of pizza?
14. What is your favorite kind of vegetable?
15. What is your favorite kind of fruit?
16. What is the weather like now?
17. What is your favorite food / color / day?
18. What are you going to do tomorrow?
19. What did you do yesterday?
20. What day is this?
21. What day is after Monday?
22. What day is before Sunday?
23. What do you eat for breakfast?



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

**When?**

40. When was the last time you had your hair cut / went to the doctor / ...?
41. When did you eat breakfast / lunch / dinner?
42. When did you wake up / get here / ...?
43. When will this class end?

**Who?**

44. Who is your best friend?
45. Who is she / he? (point to someone in the class)
46. Who are they? (point to two or more people in the class)
47. Who is your English teacher?
48. Who are you with now?
49. Who is sitting next to you?

**Which? Add other ideas to underlined words**

50. Which TV show do you like the most?
51. Which fruit do you like more, bananas or apples?
52. Which hand am I holding the coin in?
53. Which is bigger, an elephant or a mouse?
54. Which is faster, a bike or a car?

**Why?**

55. Why are you learning English?
56. Why do you need to go to school?

**Are?**

57. Are you happy?
58. Are you going anywhere today?
59. Are you beautiful?
60. Are you handsome?
61. Are you hungry?
62. Are you a good swimmer / soccer player / etc.?
63. Are you skinny / fat?
64. Are you good at math / history / art?



**That / those; this / these**

65. This \_\_\_\_\_ is mine. That \_\_\_\_\_ is his / hers.  
These \_\_\_\_\_ are mine. Those \_\_\_\_\_ are hers / his.

**Is?**

66. Is this yours?
67. Is that his / hers?

**Do?**

68. Do you like to play soccer?
69. Do you like to watch TV?
70. Do you like hamburgers / pizza?
71. Do you like ice cream / cookies / candy?
72. Do you have any toys?
73. Do you have any milk / soda pop?
74. Do you have any pets
75. Do you like to ride in a car?
76. Do you like to ride on a bus?

## 6 Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

### **How?**

77. How are you?
78. How did you come to class?
79. How do you use chopsticks?
80. How do you ride a bicycle?

### **How many?**

81. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
82. How many times do you brush your teeth every day?
83. How many (hold up a few of something) do you see /are there?
84. How many pets do you have?
85. How many days are in a week?
86. How many seconds are in one minute?
87. How many minutes are in an hour?
88. How many days are in a year?

### **How much (money and measurements)?**

89. How many friends do you have?
90. How much time do you spend on your homework every night?
91. How much money is this? (show some money)
92. How much candy do you eat?

### **How Long (time and distance)?**

93. How long does it take you to go / come to school?
94. How far is your school / home from here?
95. How long (length) is this \_\_\_\_\_ ? (hold or point to something)

### **Have you ever ~**

96. ridden on an airplane / on a train / on a motorcycle?
97. been to Seoul / another country / Lotte World?

### **I have ... / I want ... / Could I have ...? ~ Students complete statements~**

98. I have a \_\_\_\_\_.
99. I want a/an \_\_\_\_\_. I would like a \_\_\_\_\_.
100. Could I have a \_\_\_\_\_ (Coke, some water, some tea ...)?
101. Mom, could I \_\_\_\_\_?

### **Describe ~**

102. a tree / a dog / a pig / a bird...
103. yourself / your friend / your teacher / your mother / your father...
104. this room / your room...
105. a car / a bus...
106. a sunset / a rainbow...
107. your personality / your friend's personality ...

### **Some activities:**

108. Draw a picture and we'll guess what it is.
109. Act like an animal and we'll guess what animal it is.
110. I'll whisper something in your ear, and you whisper in the next person's ear and continue until it gets back around to me, and we'll see if it's the same.

**1500+ Free-Talk Questions, Topics, and Activities**  
**for Adults**



1. Simple Present Tense

Present tense refers to something you do over and over or a constant state of being. Examples: "I exercise every day," and "I'm strong."

Personal Information:

1. What's your name?  
\_\_\_\_\_ . /

2. How are you today?

3. **Pronounce:** "live"<sup>1</sup> Note there is **no** long e sound ~ 'liv, as in ive

4. Where do you live?

*n an*

5. How many people are in your family?

**There're** five people in my family; my mother, father, sister,

**There are**

6. What's your phone number?

7. What's your email address?

*miku1123@neighbor.com* @=at . = dot

---

<sup>1</sup> Compare "live" to "leave." *I live in Seoul. I have to leave now.*

8 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

8. What do you do?

*m a*

*I m a*

9. What do you like to do?<sup>2</sup>

10. What school do you go to? / Where do you work?

11. What year (grade) are you in?

"I'm in the third grade of high school." "I'm a junior in middle school / high school / college."<sup>3</sup>

12. What subjects do you like?

*interesting. It really occupies my mind and makes me*

---

2

**Grammar Focus: Use of "to"**

Use "to" to designate a place = I'm going *to the store* / *to the beach* / *to my job* / *to work* / *to GPO*. You must specify the place.

Do not use "to" with: home, here, there, up-, down- NOT = I'm going to go *to home* / *to there, etc.*

Do not use "to" with a gerund (verb + -ing) NOT = I like to swimming / to eating / to reading, etc. Do not use "to" to designate a gerund. Not = I'm going to go *to swimming* / *to jogging* / *to shopping, etc*

Use "to" as part of many infinitives = I like *to watch* / *to eat* / *to go* / *to dance* / *to sing*, etc. "To" is used to designate a verb, if it's the reason for the action = *We are going to go to Colorado to ski*. *We are going to go to watch a movie*. When not a reason, the "to" is not necessary in such sentences = We are going to go (to) shop. We're gonna go (to) eat now. Exception: "We are going to go to sleep," which would not normally mean the reason for going, but simply the act of sleeping. Using "to" with infinitives is complex.

**See appendix p.111 for further discussion.**

<sup>3</sup> The terms for secondary school or college are: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior.





10 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"I usually have a ham and cheese sandwich / a submarine sandwich at Subway."

21. How long do you go to school / work every day?

22. What time do you get off from work / school?  
*-thirty<sup>B</sup>*

23. What do you do in the evening?

*and*

*s I go out*

24. What time do you usually go to bed?

-

**Interests and Hobbies**

25. What is a hobby?<sup>9</sup> Do you have any hobbies?

*Yes, I collect beer cans. Yeah, I collect coins. Sure, I like building model*

26. What summer / winter activities do you like?

*like in-*

*go snow boarding / to snow board*

27. Do you like to shop<sup>10</sup> / shopping<sup>11</sup>? What do you like to shop / shopping for?

28. Where do you like to go shopping?

-

29. When was the last time you went shopping?

---

<sup>8</sup> Don't say o'clock unless it's exactly on the hour, like one-o'clock, two-o'clock, etc.

<sup>9</sup> A hobby is **not** doing such things as watching TV, reading, or listening to music (those are past-times). A hobby is something that is **pro-active** and is usually considered to be activities that involve collecting things or making things. Sometimes the term is extended to include such things as playing a musical instrument or singing, and less commonly to sports activities. You should not say "What is your hobby?" because many people don't have a hobby.

<sup>10</sup> Infinitive ~ to + verb; used to change a verb into a noun.

<sup>11</sup> Gerund ~ verb + -ing; used to change a verb into a noun.

**Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English** 11

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

30. What do you like to spend money on the most?
31. Do you like sports?
32. What sports do you like to play?  
*-pong*
33. How often do you play sports?<sup>12</sup>
34. Do you like mountain hiking? Why?  
*, b*
35. Do you like to swim?
36. Where is the best place to go swimming around here?
37. What's your favorite beach? Tell me about it.  
*about once every summer. I like to wear a tube and float around in*
38. Do you like to snow ski / water ski?
39. Do you like to bowl?  
"Yeah, it's ok, but my highest score is only 120."  
"Oh yeah, I go bowling ~~at~~ all the tim

12 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

41. What does it mean to have a "strike" in bowling?
  42. What does it mean to have a "spare" in bowling?
  43. Do you like to play golf?
  44. How many holes are in a typical game of golf?
  45. Do you like to go fishing?
  46. Name five different kinds of fish.<sup>13</sup>
  47. Do you like to sing?
  48. Are there any singing rooms or karaoke bars nearby?
  49. Do you like to go dancing?
  50. Where is the best place to go dancing?
  51. How often do you go dancing?
  52. Do you like going to the movies<sup>14</sup>?
- c
53. What kinds of movies do you like the most?
  54. Where do you go to see movies?
  55. What's the most popular movie showing right now?
  56. Where's a really good [movie theater, place to shop, etc.]?
  57. Where is a good place to buy ice cream?
- 
58. What's your favorite kind of ice-cream?
  59. Name five different kinds of ice cream.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Tuna, cod, halibut, mackerel, sword fish, salmon, cat-fish, perch, ...

<sup>14</sup> Note, saying "theater" generally means where plays are shown.

<sup>15</sup> vanilla, chocolate, rocky road, cookies and cream, mango ... .



14 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

**Easy General Present Tense Topics**

76. What's an important city in your country? Tell us about it.
77. What forms of public transportation do you have there / here?
78. What do you like about your hometown?
79. When was the last time you were in your hometown?
80. What do you like about your school / job?
81. What do you like to wear?
82. Where do you like to buy your clothes?
83. Where is the cheapest place to buy clothes around here?
84. Where are some supermarkets near here?
85. What are some things that you go grocery shopping for?
86. Which supermarket do you think is the best?
87. **Pronounce:** dinner, 'den-nər. Note, there is no long e sound.
88. **Pronounce:** "rice" and "lice."
89. What do you like to have for dinner?
90. Do you eat rice every day?
91. Where is a good place to eat around here?
92. Do you eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day?
93. How often do you eat out?
94. Which foods do you like the most?
95. Which foods do you least like?
96. Do you like hamburgers?

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

97. What do you like on a hamburger?<sup>17</sup>
98. What is the difference between a hamburger and a cheese burger?
99. **ROLE PLAY**~ Pretend you are ordering something at McDonald's.
100. What fruit do you like to eat? Name five kinds of fruit.<sup>18</sup>
101. Would you rather have an apple, a banana, or an orange right now?
102. What is your favorite snack?
103. Do you snack between breakfast, lunch, and dinner?
104. Which do you like the best, Pepsi or Coke?
105. Do you like the Wondergirls<sup>19</sup>?
106. What is the most famous music group in your country?
107. What is your favorite music group?
108. What is your favorite place in your country?
109. What is your favorite place here?
110. What is your favorite time of day and why?
111. What is your favorite holiday?
112. What do you do on Christmas?
113. **Pronounce:** "guitar" gə-'tär. Note, there is no long e sound.
114. Do you like guitar music?
115. Who is your favorite guitar player?
116. Do you have a pet? Tell us about it.
117. **Compare** a cat to a dog.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ketchup, pickles, mustard, onions, mayonnaise, relish.

<sup>18</sup> Note: small fruits are usually pluralized, while large fruits are not: apples, oranges, grapes, watermelon, melon, mango (mango though fairly small is not usually pluralized when talking about them in general).

<sup>19</sup> Korea's popular 5 member singing and dancing group.

16 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

118. **Describe** an animal, for example an elephant.

*elephant has long tusks and a long trunk, is big, and very smart.*

119. What is something that you love doing?

120. Name all the convenience stores<sup>20</sup> in your country.

121. Do you play any musical instruments?

122. Name five different musical instruments.<sup>21</sup>

123. Do you watch much television?

124. What is your favorite TV program? When does it come on?

125. Do you like to watch the Simpsons? What other cartoons do you like?

126. Do you surf the web? What sites do you like most?

127. What kinds of things do you like to do on the Internet?

128. How often do you use the Internet?

129. Do you own a car? What kind?

130. **Remember:** we “take” medicine and vitamins, we **don't eat** them!

131. Are you taking any medicine now?

132. Do you think learning English is *a breeze*<sup>22</sup>?

133. What is the best thing about your city?

134. Where are some fun places to go in your country?

135. What is the best amusement park in your country?

136. Is the fare for taxies<sup>23</sup> very expensive here?

137. Do you like to talk on the telephone?

---

<sup>20</sup> Convenience stores are like Seven-Eleven.

<sup>21</sup> Piano, guitar, flute, violin, clarinet, harp, xylophone, recorder ...

<sup>22</sup> Easy.

<sup>23</sup> This can be spelled taxis or taxies.



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

- By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>
138. What do you like to talk about the most?
  139. Where do you feel most relaxed?
  140. Do you ever go jogging? Where? How often?
  141. Where is the best place to buy fried chicken?
  142. How often do you see your friends?
  143. Do you like to travel? Why?
  144. Where is the biggest shopping mall around here?
  145. Where can you get the best bargains around here?
  146. Do you like horror movies?
  147. Do you like science fiction movies?
  148. Where is the best place to see a movie around here?
  149. Do you always eat popcorn at movies?
  150. Do you ever sit in the balcony at the movies?
  151. Who's cuter, Korean or Japanese girls?

18 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>



## 2. Simple Past Tense

152. What is the past tense of the following words: leave, live, have, go, eat, is, swim, run, wake, see, sing, meet, and watch?
153. **Pronounce** “changed, wished, washed, watched, stopped, walked.” They are pronounced like they end with a *ta*, and have no sound -- only air.
154. Where were you born?
155. What time did you wake up this morning?
156. When did you leave your house this morning?  
“I left at about 7:45.”
157. What did you do after you left your house this morning? “*I went to* .
158. Where did you have lunch yesterday?  
“
159. What did you do yesterday?
160. What did you do the day before yesterday?
161. What did you do last night?  
“I taught my brother mathematics. I taught him algebra /  
*geometry / trigonometry / calcul*
162. How was the weather yesterday?  
“It was hot and humid.” cool, rainy, foggy, snowy,

163. When was the last time you went to the {library, movies...?}
164. When was the last time you were so hungry that you *could eat a horse*<sup>24</sup>?  
"I was really hungry last night and I ate an entire pizza."
165. Did you *eat out*<sup>25</sup> last night? What did you have?  
"Yes, I ate out at a nearby Korean restaurant in the mall."
166. What time did you go home last night? We usually use "at" with specific time expressions: *I went home at seven o'clock.*
167. What did you have for breakfast this morning?
168. What did you have for lunch today / yesterday?
169. What did you do last weekend?
170. Did you sleep well last night?
171. When was the last time you went to a singing room?
172. When was the last time that you rode in a taxi and where did you go?  
"The last time I rode in a taxi was when I landed at the airport and it took me to a hotel."
173. When was the last time you went to a zoo? What animals did you see?
174. What was the most exciting gift that you ever received? Do you still have it?  
Describe it.
175. When was the last time you went to a party? What kind of party was it?

---

<sup>24</sup> When very hungry, sometimes westerners say: "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse."

<sup>25</sup> At a restaurant.

20 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

176. What is the difference between “fun” and “funny”<sup>26</sup>?
177. Did you have fun yesterday?
178. What was a really fun experience that you had?
179. What is something really funny that you saw recently?
180. When you were a child, what things did you most enjoy?
181. What is the most expensive meal that you have ever had?
182. What is the most expensive thing you have ever purchased?
183. Were you afraid of the dark as a child?
184. Were you afraid of dogs as a child?
185. Who was your favorite teacher in elementary school?
186. When was the last time you went to an art museum or exhibit?
187. When was the last time you *blew your top*<sup>27</sup>?
188. When was the last time you got into an argument?
189. When was the last time you helped someone?
190. When was the last time you bought something in a department store?
191. When was the last time you went on a picnic?
192. What are some things to take on a picnic?
193. Where did you go for your last vacation?
194. What was the most interesting thing that you did during your last vacation?
195. When was the last time you *laughed your head off*<sup>28</sup>?
196. Where did you meet your best friend?

---

<sup>26</sup> “Fun” means having a good time. “Funny” mean something that makes you laugh.

<sup>27</sup> Got very angry, couldn't contain yourself any longer and exploded.

<sup>28</sup> Laughed very much.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

197. What is the most exciting movie that you have ever seen?

“The most exciting movie that I’ve ever seen was Terminator.”

198. What was the scariest movie you’ve ever seen?

199. What was the funniest movie you’ve ever seen?

200. Who did you meet that was interesting on your last vacation?

201. Where did you go on your last vacation?

202. What souvenirs<sup>29</sup> did you buy on your last vacation?

203. What is your favorite computer game?

204. What kind of music do you like?

205. **Tell me how** to find the post office.

206. Did you *eat like a bird*<sup>30</sup> when you were little?

---

<sup>29</sup> Things that you keep to remember a certain place, like a statue, figurine, vase, etc.

<sup>30</sup> Eat very little.

22 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>



### 3. Simple Future and Imaginary Future Tense

#### Simple Future<sup>31</sup>

207. What are you going to do tonight?
  
208. What are you going to do tomorrow?
  
209. Will you be “staying in”<sup>32</sup> this evening?
210. What are your plans for this weekend?
211. What’s the weather going to be like tomorrow?
212. Do you think the weather will be good this weekend?
213. What time will this class end?
214. Are you going to meet anyone after class?
215. Are you getting up early tomorrow?
216. What time do you have to get up tomorrow morning?
217. What are you doing tomorrow morning?
218. What are you doing tomorrow afternoon?

---

<sup>31</sup> Use “going to” not “will” for future planned events. “Will” is use for offering assistance and making a promise: “Oh, I’ll pick that up for you.” “Ok, I’ll meet you at one-o’clock.”

<sup>32</sup> Staying at home.

219. What are you going to do on your next vacation?

*stay at Dong-*

*movie*

*a*

220. What's on TV tonight?

Subjunctive Mood or Imaginary Future Tense<sup>33</sup> (Use "would" "I **would** like ...")

221. **Pronounce** ~ would, could.

222. When do you want to get married / get divorced☺?

223. If you could have your own business what would it be?

224. What are some countries that you would like to visit?

225. What would you like to have for lunch today?

226. What food would like to try?

227. What famous person would you like to spend a whole day with?

228. Would you like to be an astronaut, why?

229. If you found a wallet with \$1,000 in it, what would you do?

230. What would you like to do on your next birthday?

231. Would you like to play the drums? What are the different drum names<sup>34</sup>?

232. What would you like to have for dinner this evening?

233. If you had tomorrow off what would you do?

234. If you didn't have to work or go to school, what would you do?

---

<sup>33</sup> Imaginary future tense would incorporate the use of the word "would" very often: "I would like to go to Australia someday."

<sup>34</sup> Snare, bass, tom-toms, kettle.

24 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

235. What *make of car*<sup>35</sup> would you like to have?
236. What job would you really like to have?
237. What famous singer or musician would you most like to meet<sup>36</sup>? Why?
238. If someone gave you \$200 to spend *on living-it-up*<sup>37</sup> this evening what would you do?
239. Do you think you'll see a movie this weekend?
240. What would you like to take a class in?
241. What would you like to be doing a year from now?
242. Would you like to visit the United States?

---

<sup>35</sup> For imaginary future events, use "would": I would like to ... .

<sup>36</sup> Example: Su-Mi Jo.

<sup>37</sup> Have a great time out on the town.





#### 4. The Continuous<sup>38</sup> Tenses

##### Present Continuous Tense

243. What would you really like to be doing right now?<sup>39</sup>



244. What is that man doing?⇒

245. Make up 5 more "He is \_\_\_\_ -ing sentences".

246. What is something that you have been doing for a long time?

247. What am I doing right now? (Pantomime something)



248. Where is the ship sailing?



249. Where is she going? ⇒

<sup>38</sup> All continuous tenses use -ing.

<sup>39</sup> I would like to be \_\_\_\_ -ing. (verb +ing)

26 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

250. What do you think you wife / husband / girlfriend / boyfriend is doing right now?

251. What do you think your favorite movie star is doing right now?

252. What do you think the president of the United States is doing right now?

253. What do you think Britney Spears is doing right now?

Past Continuous Tense

254. What were you doing five minutes ago?

255. What were you doing an hour ago, in detail?

256. What do you think your classmate was doing one hour ago?

Future Continuous Tense

257. What would you like to be doing 5 years from now?

258. What are you going to be doing at around five this evening?

259. What will you be doing tomorrow between 7 and 8 p.m.?<sup>40</sup>  
"I'm going to be watching television."

Present Continuous Tense Used for Future

260. Make up similar sentences like the following: *g my dentist on*

---

<sup>40</sup> Future continuous requires going to + be + verb + ing: "I am going to be exercising tomorrow at 8 o'clock.."



## 5. The Perfect and Perfect Continuous Tenses

### Present Perfect Questions Requiring Present Perfect Answers<sup>41</sup>

**Note:** It is difficult to devise questions that must be answered exclusively in present perfect, but here are some attempts. Students should try answer using present perfect tense only.

261. How have you been feeling lately?
262. How long have you known the person sitting next to you?
263. What have you done today?<sup>42</sup>
264. What are some things that you've done this week?
265. Have you been *working out*<sup>43</sup> lately?
266. What have you been doing lately?
267. What good restaurants have you eaten at?
268. Have you been doing anything exciting lately?
269. Have you been saving for anything special?
270. What good movies have you seen lately?
271. Have you changed anything in your apartment recently?

---

<sup>41</sup> Present perfect relates a past event to the present. Therefore, it requires a time period that has not ended and uses have or has. In many cases you'll want to first give an answer in present perfect, then change to simple past. Example: Have you ever visited Los Angeles? "Yes I have, I visited it just last year."

<sup>42</sup> Questions relating to time periods that have not ended will allow you to form a longer answer remaining in the present perfect.

<sup>43</sup> Exercising.

28 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

272. Where have you most enjoyed traveling to?

273. Name all the famous people that you've seen?

Past Perfect

274. Before you got sick the last time what had you done?

275. What had you done when the police stopped you the last time?

276. Had your friends sent you an e-mail the last time you checked?

277. What had happened to cause you to decide to exercise more?

278. Before your last argument with your \_\_\_\_\_ what had \_\_\_\_\_ done?

Future Perfect

279. By this time tomorrow what important thing will you have done?<sup>44</sup>

280. By this time next week what important thing will you have done?<sup>45</sup>

281. By January, will you have worked long enough to get a bonus check?

282. Will you have saved enough money to buy a car by this time next year?

283. Will you have started studying harder by noon tomorrow?

284. Will the bus have arrived, by the time class is over?

285. Will you have gone to sleep by the time I call you tonight?

286. Will you have saved enough money by the time \_\_\_\_\_ ?

The Perfect Continuous Tenses

Present Perfect Continuous

287. Have you been here long?

288. Have you been studying English long?

*since*

---

<sup>44</sup> This sentence is future perfect. Use: I will have + past participle ...

<sup>45</sup> This is future perfect tense and require will have + past participle verb: "I will have met ..."



30 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>



**6. Pre-Intermediate Questions and Activities**

(You should be good at answering questions now, so no more extra room to write your answers.)

301. What is the best method for studying English?
302. Do you watch English speaking TV programs?
303. Do you speak English outside of class?
304. Do you have any favorite words in English?
305. What's the strangest food you've ever eaten?
306. What's the most delicious food you've ever eaten?
307. **Explain** the difference between *lend*, *loan* and *borrow*<sup>46</sup>?
308. What was the most exciting time you have ever had?
309. Have you ever loaned someone money?
310. What do you like about your job / school the most?
311. Point to your {shoulder blade, collar bone, eye brow, nostrils, gums, etc.}
312. What is the best make<sup>47</sup> of car in your country?
313. **Compare** a girl to a boy<sup>48</sup>
314. What is the nicest hotel that you have ever stayed in?
315. What is an impressive thing that your country has built?
316. What was the most dangerous thing that you have ever done?
317. What is something that you are really good at doing?
318. What are all the denominations of American money?
319. When was the last time you went dancing? Where did you go? Did you have a good time?
320. What historical sites have you visited in the world?
321. Are you a day person or a night person?
322. What animal do you think is most interesting?
323. Are you always on time for appointments?
324. What do you do to try to be punctual<sup>49</sup>?
325. **Remember:** "ph" sounds like an "f": pharmacy.
326. When was the last time you went to a pharmacy?
327. What was the most interesting photograph that you have ever taken?

---

<sup>46</sup> Lend is to give something of your temporarily to someone, while borrow is to receive something temporarily. Loan is most often used in reference to money.

<sup>47</sup> The kind of car: Ford Mustang, etc.

<sup>48</sup> One difference is males have an bump in their throat that we call an Adam's Apple.

<sup>49</sup> On time for things.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

328. Speak for 1 minute without stopping.

329. **ROLE PLAY**~ You're a salesperson in a department store. Sell something.

**Note:** Most present perfect "Have you ..." questions can be answered using present perfect initially, but then are usually followed using simple past when explaining the details. For example: "Yes, I have. I went to / I once saw ..."

330. Have you ever *walked out*<sup>50</sup> on a movie?

331. Have you ever swum in the ocean? Where?

332. Have you ever taken part in a contest? Did you win?

333. Who do you think is the best looking person in the class?

334. Have you ever been around a star or celebrity?

335. Have you been reading anything interesting lately?

336. Have you ever helped a foreigner in your country?

337. Do you have a favorite beer?

338. Have you ever gone horseback riding?

339. **Pronounce** "steal / steel" and "still"<sup>51</sup>.

340. Have you been learning a new hobby lately?

341. Have you met anyone interesting lately?

"Yes I have; I met Big Bang yesterday."

342. Has it ever *crossed your mind*<sup>52</sup> that maybe learning English really isn't necessary?

"No, that hasn't ever crossed my mind. I know it's really important."

343. Have you ever tried acupuncture?

"Yes I have, but it didn't work."

"Yes, I had a sore neck and acupuncture took care of the problem."

344. Have you ever enjoyed gazing at the stars? What did you think about?

"Yes, whenever I look at the night sky, I'm just amazed at how many stars there are and how beautiful everything looks."

345. Have you ever seen an unnatural phenomenon?

346. **Explain** how to use a washing machine.

347. When was the last time that you *paid an arm and a leg*<sup>53</sup> for something?

348. What was your favorite holiday as a child? Why?

349. What was the biggest<sup>54</sup> favor that you have ever asked someone to do for you?

"I once asked someone if I could borrow his car."

350. What was the most expensive gift that you have ever purchased for someone?

351. Have you ever gotten a really *good deal*<sup>55</sup> on something?

352. What is the most popular pet in your country?<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Left the movie before it ended because you didn't like it.

<sup>51</sup> The first two are pronounced the same.

<sup>52</sup> Thought about.

<sup>53</sup> Paid very much for, more than you could really afford.

<sup>54</sup> The most difficult or biggest imposition for the other person you asked.

<sup>55</sup> Paid much less than what you had expected, or that you felt it was worth.

32 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

353. Have you ever been in an automobile accident?
354. Have you ever gone to a psychic or fortuneteller?
355. **Explain** how to use the subway system.
356. **Pronounce** "would" and "wood."<sup>57</sup>
357. Have you ever been to a world famous art museum?
358. What did you do on your last birthday?
359. **Describe** a birthday cake.
360. Have you ever played Rugby?
361. What is the loveliest lake in your country?
362. Have you ever *thrown a party*<sup>58</sup>?
363. Have you ever had a *pen pal*<sup>59</sup>?
364. Have you ever been to a techno bar?
365. What is a famous mountain near here?
366. Have you ever been to a musical?
367. Have you ever seen an opera?
368. Have you ever seen a volcano? Tell about it.
369. Have you ever lost a lot of money?
370. Have you ever done a science project?
371. Have you ever had a serious injury?
372. What's the most famous mountain in your country?



373. Describe these mountains (or some mountain).<sup>60</sup>
374. Have you ever seen a ghost?
375. Have you ever been to a play? Tell about it.
376. **Compare** summer to winter.
377. Have you ever been to a circus? Tell about it.
378. What is your idea of a true friend?
379. Have you ever lost a valuable object? Explain what happened.
380. Have you ever known anyone who was a real *pain in the neck*<sup>61</sup>?
381. Would you rather be a bird or a fish?
382. Do you have freckles?
383. Have you ever eaten a TV dinner<sup>62</sup>?
384. Has a policeman ever stopped you?
385. Have you ever had anything stolen from your house?
386. Have you ever had to borrow money, when and why?

---

<sup>56</sup> Say "The most popular pet in Korea is dogs." Not, "... is dog."

<sup>57</sup> These are homonyms

<sup>58</sup> Given a party.

<sup>59</sup> A friend usually overseas that you have never met in person, also "key pal" is used for Internet friends.

<sup>60</sup> Serene, peaceful, magnificent

<sup>61</sup> Keeps causing you a lot of problems

<sup>62</sup> An entire dinner contained in a compartmentalized container, that is usually heated in a microwave oven and served.



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

387. Who is your best friend and how did you meet?
388. Have you ever had a professional massage?
389. What is a really easy job?
390. Do you ever eat oatmeal? What flavors are there?
391. What is the most scenic place that you have ever seen?
392. Have you ever thought that you had seen a UFO?
393. Name 5 superheroes. Which one is your favorite?
394. What is the best way to lose weight?
395. Have you ever ridden on a train? Where did you go?"
396. Where would you like to go in Europe?
397. Name all the utensils used in a kitchen.
398. Do you know anyone who is a *big slob*<sup>63</sup>?
399. Have you ever tried to ice skate?  
"No, I've never tried. It seems kind'a scary."  
"Yes, I've tried it, but I kept falling down."  
"Yes, I've not only tried it, but I ice skate very well. I go ice skating all the time during the winter."
400. Have you ever eaten an American style hotdog?  
"No, I've never really wanted to."  
"We have them here in a few places, but I've never really wanted to eat one."  
"Yes, of course, who hasn't eaten a hotdog?"
401. Have you ever met a famous person?  
"No, I've never met anyone who was very famous."  
"Yes, I met \_\_\_\_\_ last \_\_\_\_\_ while I was \_\_\_\_\_."
402. Have you ever visited Los Angles (other famous city)?
403. Do you like to take pictures?
404. Have you ever ridden in a helicopter?
405. Do you like spaghetti? Where do you like to eat spaghetti?
406. What kind of shows do you like to watch?
407. Are you taking any classes right now?
408. Have you ever ridden on a subway?
409. What kinds of people do you like?
410. Have you ever been to an lmax theater?
411. Do you keep a photo album?
412. Have you ever met a movie star?
413. How do you kill time<sup>64</sup>?
414. Have you ever, sky dived, gone scuba diving, tried hang gliding, or tried bungee jumping?
415. Describe an Ostrich.
416. What is your most valuable possession? Why?
417. What frightens you the most?



<sup>63</sup> Extremely messy person; never puts things away.

<sup>64</sup> Use up extra time when you don't have much of anything important to do.

34 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

418. Tell us about your mother and father.
419. What is your favorite magazine?
420. Have you ever gotten an autograph from someone famous?
421. Have you ever been in a fistfight?
422. Who's the most famous artist in your country?
423. Have you ever eaten turkey?
424. What places have you visited in your own country?
425. What's the price of gasoline<sup>65</sup> here?
426. Excuse me could you tell me where a hospital [or whatever] is?
427. Where's a good nightclub around here?
428. **Pronounce:** "damaged" 'da-mi-jə-da
429. Have you damaged anything recently?
430. Who is your favorite movie star?
431. Where's the best place for pizza?
432. **Pronounce** ~ pool, fool, pull
433. What are some pizza toppings?<sup>66</sup>
434. What is your favorite kind of pizza?
435. **ROLE PLAY** ~ Pretend you are ordering a pizza.
436. How do you celebrate Christmas?
437. What is your idea of an ideal afternoon?
438. Where do tornados occur? Have you ever seen one?
439. Name every country that you have been to, and which one was your favorite?
- "I've been to Japan, Australia, the United States, and France."
- "The United States was my favorite."
440. Who much do you think I weigh?
441. **Explain** how to use a vending machine
442. When was the last time you received a compliment?
- "Well, I get compliments all the time because I'm very nice and charming."
443. When was the last time you forgot to do something important?
444. When was the last time you had something *on the tip of your tongue*<sup>67</sup>, but just couldn't remember?
445. Have you ever eaten at the Outback<sup>68</sup>?
446. When was the last time you were really stressed out?
447. When was the last time you had a *check-up*<sup>69</sup>?
448. Who is your favorite actor or actress?
449. Would you like to be a movie star?
450. Where are movies made in your country?

---

<sup>65</sup> Gasoline, or for short "Gas," fuels the car. Oil goes in the engine.

<sup>66</sup> pepperoni, olives, bacon, mushrooms, Canadian bacon, anchovies, bell peppers, sausage.

<sup>67</sup> Could almost remember, but can't quite remember. "His name is on the tip of my tongue."

<sup>68</sup> The Outback restaurant is an American chain restaurant having an Australian atmosphere. It is name after the area in Australia called the outback, which refers to the more desolate centralized areas of the country.

<sup>69</sup> A medical examination.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

451. Do you ever eat mango?
452. Are you popular?
453. Do you like to sketch? <sup>70</sup>
454. What kind of clothes do you like to wear?
455. **Pretend** that you are buying a ticket to see a movie?
456. What is the best department store here? Why?
457. What is something that you really need to buy?
458. Do you always wear your seat belt?
459. **Explain** how to put a seat belt on.
460. What do you usually do when you catch a cold?
461. What subject in school were you worst at?
462. Have you ever asked anyone to give you a *rain check*<sup>71</sup>?
463. Who is the most famous singer in your country?
464. Who is your favorite singer?
465. If you were a great singer what kind of music would you like to sing?
466. Have you ever eaten Indian food?
467. Tell us about who lives next door to you.
468. Who is your favorite baseball player?
469. What is a famous tourist attraction in your country?
470. Do you like your boss / teacher?
471. What is your favorite season? Why?
472. Do you like cats? Why or why not?
473. Is American food too fattening?
474. Do you have any special talents?
475. Is it easy to meet people where you live?
476. Where do you and your friends like to go out for dinner?
477. Does your cell phone have a SIM Card<sup>72</sup>?
478. Do you like it when there's thunder and lightening?
479. Tell us about your father and mother?
480. What do you do when you feel lonely?
481. Have you ever gone camping?
482. Do you usually dream? What do you dream about?
483. Have you had any nightmares lately?
484. **Explain** how to ride a bicycle.<sup>73</sup>
485. What is your favorite kind of book?
486. When was the last time *it rained cats and dogs*<sup>74</sup>?
487. **Explain** how to fry an egg.
488. Do you like snakes?



<sup>70</sup> Sketch and draw are similar, but sketch would mean to draw with a pencil or pen only.

<sup>71</sup> To keep in invitation for a later time.

<sup>72</sup> A SIM-Card is a small electronic card that contains a computer chip which allows you to use your cell phone in foreign countries.

<sup>73</sup> Use words like: first, next, then, after than ...

<sup>74</sup> Rained really heavily. At one time houses had thatched roofs--thick straw, piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the dogs, cats and other small animals (mice, rats, and bugs lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof--hence the saying "It's raining cats and dogs."

36 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

489. Is it best to be brave or be a chicken<sup>75</sup>?
490. What is the most famous island in your country?
491. **Explain** how to drive safely.
492. Who do you most admire?
493. Why do you think people are getting fatter?
494. If you were given three wishes what would you wish for?
495. What's a famous mountain in your country?
496. Did you ever have to *cough up*<sup>76</sup> a lot of money really fast?
497. Do you mind lending<sup>77</sup> things to your friends?
498. About how many CD's do you own?
499. What CD do you play the most?
500. Do you know someone who talks incessantly?
501. What was your best subject in elementary school?
502. Have you ever felt you were *skating on thin ice*<sup>78</sup>?
503. Would you like to have lived in Ancient Rome?
504. Do you own a car? Tell us about it?
505. How often do you change the oil in your car?
506. What is your favorite dessert<sup>79</sup>?
507. Name all the car companies you can think of.
508. Name some major American food and soft drink companies.
509. **Compare** glue to Scotch Tape.
510. Are you a member of any clubs?
511. **Pronounce:** "woman" 'wü-mən and "women" 'wi-mən
512. **ROLE PLAY** ~ Pretend you are ordering lunch at a place like McDonald's.

lettuce (yang sang chu),  
a hamburger only means "beef" You must say "chicken burger"  
"shrimp burger," etc. "Potatoes" are "French-fries"

513. Name some restaurants.  
"VIPS, Bennigan's, Sizzler, the Outback."
514. Would you like to visit the White House?
515. If you were a teacher what subject would you like to teach?
516. **Pronounce:** "film" Note ~ it's just one syllable, not fil-um.
517. Name the parts of a guitar. What is a fret?
518. Where do you go to buy a cup of coffee?
519. How do you like your coffee<sup>80</sup>?
520. How do you spend most of your time?

521. What do you dream about?

---

<sup>75</sup> To be a coward and avoid trouble.

<sup>76</sup> Come up with. Have to pay, but really didn't want to.

<sup>77</sup> Note: we usually lend things, but loan money.

<sup>78</sup> On the verge of causing something bad to happen.

<sup>79</sup> A dessert is not coffee, tea, soda pop; it's thinks like cake, pie, ice-cream, pudding, etc.

<sup>80</sup> Black, with cream and sugar, only sugar, only cream.

*way up high and I can feel the wind in my face. Sometimes I have*

522. Do you know how to rollerblade?<sup>81</sup>
523. **Explain** the difference between a roller skate and a rollerblade.
524. Name all the airline companies you can think of.
525. Which is the best airline to fly on?
526. Do you fly often? Where do you go?
527. Have you taken art classes
528. What is your favorite color and why?
529. What kind of reading do you like to do?
530. Do you like to read?
531. Are you a *bookworm*<sup>82</sup>?
532. If you could be invisible where would you go?
533. What do you like most about your country?
534. What is your favorite place in the city to visit?
535. What is your favorite memory of childhood?
536. Where would you really like to work?
537. Do you try to eat healthy foods?
538. What are the healthiest foods to eat?
539. Where do you do your grocery shopping?
540. **Compare** an apple to an orange
541. Would you rather eat an apple or an orange right now?
542. How much is the bus fare in your city?
543. What do you do about household pests<sup>83</sup>?
544. Do you know anyone who is a pest<sup>84</sup>?
545. **Describe** your ideal vacation
546. Would you rather work indoors or outdoors? Why?
547. Who would you ask for help if you were in a *jam*<sup>85</sup>?
548. **Describe** the most famous tourist attraction in your country
549. Would you prefer to look through a microscope or a telescope?
550. What things can you see with a microscope and what things can you see with a telescope?
551. **Describe** your apartment or house.
552. Is there a national pastime in your country?
553. What are some good things about the public transportation in your city?
554. What kind of entertainment do you have in your country?
555. What was something that cost you a *pretty penny*<sup>86</sup>?

---

<sup>81</sup> A roller blade has all the wheels in a row, while a roller skate has them on each of the four corners.

<sup>82</sup> Someone who reads a lot.

<sup>83</sup> "Pests" here means bugs, insects, spiders, ants, mosquitoes . . . .

<sup>84</sup> "Pest" here means someone who bothers you a lot, always nagging you, and hanging around you. Your little brother could be a pest.

<sup>85</sup> Had a difficult problem to deal with. Needed help to continue.

<sup>86</sup> Very expensive.

38 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

556. Do you prefer to receive money or presents as gifts?
557. What is the most popular *dish*<sup>87</sup> in your country?
558. What places do tourists like to visit in your country?
559. Can you recommend an interesting movie or book?
560. What are some things that you can say to start a conversation with people you don't know?
561. If you could be a plant, which would you choose to be?
562. Is your apartment *spick-and-span*<sup>88</sup>?
563. What numbers are considered to be lucky and unlucky in your country, and why?
564. **ROLE PLAY**~ Order something at a restaurant.
565. Are you married?
566. What are some popular foods in your country?
567. How would your life be different if you were ten years younger?
568. Is it difficult for you to *learn things by heart*?<sup>89</sup>
569. **Tell about** a movie that *was a hit*<sup>90</sup>.
570. What kind of work do you have to do at home today?
571. Do you feel that you are *safe and sound*<sup>91</sup> where you live?
572. Where is the best place to live in your country?
573. **Tell about** a pet that you have had.
574. Do you enjoy singing? What songs do you like to sing?
575. What was your worst subject in elementary school?
576. Have you ever gotten *goose bumps*<sup>92</sup> when listening to music?
577. If you could change your body, what part would you change?
578. How many teeth does a person have?<sup>93</sup>
579. What special talent would you like to have?
580. **ROLE PLAY**~ Purchase a ticket at the airport.
581. What color is scarlet<sup>94</sup>?
582. Aside for the obvious colors of Yellow, Blue, Green, Red, Pink, Orange, Purple, Black, and White; what other important color name can you think of?<sup>95</sup>
583. What is your favorite kind of music?
584. Do you like to fly?
585. What is the most common motion sickness drug?<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Prepared food.

<sup>88</sup> Very clean. There is actually a floor cleaner called "Spick and Span."

<sup>89</sup> Memorize things.

<sup>90</sup> Very popular.

<sup>91</sup> Safe. Actually, usually used after a dangerous experience: "I returned home safe and sound even though there was a blizzard raging."

<sup>92</sup> Little bumps that form on the skin when you get cold or scared.

<sup>93</sup> 32 ~ The normal **person** has 32 **teeth** including 4 Wisdom **Teeth**.

<sup>94</sup> A strong to vivid red or reddish orange.

<sup>95</sup> Maroon, Sienna, Tan, Aqua, Cyan, Azure, Beige, Crimson, Magenta, Salmon, Turquoise, Lavender.

<sup>96</sup> Dramamine®

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

586. What places in your country have you been to?
587. What's something that you are very tired of doing?
588. What's something that you are really good at doing?
589. What's something that you would be afraid of doing?
590. What kind of men / women do you like?
591. What do you like and dislike most about your country?
592. What are some Western foods that you like?
593. What countries have you been to?
594. Do you read books in English? Why not?
595. What is your favorite movie of all time?
596. What makes you feel like you are *on top of the world*<sup>97</sup>?
597. How do you keep in shape?
598. Does going to a sauna improve a person's health?
599. What celebrity would you like to spend a day with?
600. Do you have a subway system in your city? Talk about it.

---

<sup>97</sup> Feel great, everything is perfect.



## **7. Intermediate Questions and Activities**

601. What is your favorite fragrance<sup>98</sup>?
602. Do you wear any colognes or perfumes?
603. Do you have a favorite cologne or perfume?
604. What is the difference between cologne and perfume<sup>99</sup>?
605. What is the difference between fragrance and aroma<sup>100</sup>?
606. What is some food that has a great aroma?
607. Is "spam"<sup>101</sup> a big problem for you? How much do you get every day?
608. What are the requirements for renting an apartment in your city?
609. What is something that someone else wants you to do?
610. What is the best way to have a lot of friends?
611. What is the best way to get someone to leave you alone?
612. Do you have dimples?
613. If you could rid the world of one insect, which one would it be?
614. What subject do you most like to study?
615. **Describe** the most famous tourist attraction in your country
616. What do you do to try to be attractive?
617. **Tell about** an interesting dream that you have had.
618. What advice would you give someone who wants to visit your country?
619. How do most people find apartments in your city?
620. What are some things you spend a lot of time doing?
621. Have you ever had Lasik surgery?
622. **Describe** the best gift you've ever received.
623. What are some benefits of exercise?
624. Who has been the biggest influence in your life?
625. What steps do you take to stay healthy?
626. What kinds of things do you like to cook?
627. What country would you most like to live in other than the one you live in now?
628. Who do you think was the greatest military leader of all time in the world?
629. Have you ever purchased an expensive piece of artwork? What was it?

---

<sup>98</sup> A good smell like from a flower.

<sup>99</sup> Perfume is for women, cologne is for men.

<sup>100</sup> Aroma describes the smell of food most often, while fragrance describes flowers and perfumes most often.

<sup>101</sup> Unwanted messages sent to your email account.



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

630. Have you ever fallen in *love at first sight*<sup>102</sup>?
631. Would you like to eat at a sidewalk café?
632. What is vitamin E good for?
633. Have you ever seen a dolphin in person?
634. Have you ever been to a larger aquarium?
635. Do you think that most people are satisfied with their jobs?
636. What do you think are the best vitamins to take?
637. Would you ever go on a vacation by yourself?
638. What is the best thing about being married?
639. Is there anything bad about being married?
640. If you have any children, tell us about them.
641. What would you do as a last resort if you had no money?
642. Which actor is *second to none*<sup>103</sup>?
643. Has anyone ever *broken your heart*<sup>104</sup>?
644. How do you feel when someone *beats around the bush*<sup>105</sup>?
645. Do you find it hard *to make up*<sup>106</sup> with someone?
646. What is the most romantic restaurant in your city?
647. Do you consider yourself to be a "*jack of all trades*"<sup>107</sup>?
648. What would you like to talk about right now?
649. What law would you most like to break?
650. What is something you know *inside and out*<sup>108</sup>?
651. Have you been traveling lately?
652. Have you ever been to Europe? Where?
653. What should foreigners know about traveling by train in your country?
654. What is something that you would really like to accomplish in your life?
655. Do you study for the TOEIC <sup>109</sup>exam?
656. Has anyone ever given you really bad advice?
657. When was the last time that you took really *great pains*<sup>110</sup> to do something?
658. What has been your track record for staying out of trouble?
659. Have you ever traveled to Vietnam?
660. Do you find it difficult to keep a secret *under your hat*<sup>111</sup>?
661. Did you watch the last space shuttle landing?
662. When was the last time you went to an outdoor music festival?
663. Do you usually see *eye to eye*<sup>112</sup> with your best friend?
664. Is someone who is fifty years old *over the hill*<sup>113</sup>?

---

<sup>102</sup> Felt that you were in love from the moment you saw someone.

<sup>103</sup> The very best.

<sup>104</sup> Lover who has left you.

<sup>105</sup> Doesn't get to the point.

<sup>106</sup> Apologize.

<sup>107</sup> Knows how to do many jobs.

<sup>108</sup> Know and understand very well, particularly mechanical objects.

<sup>109</sup> A perfect score is 990. Most famous Korean companies want 950 or better.

<sup>110</sup> Work on something very carefully for a long time to get it right.

<sup>111</sup> Not tell anyone.

<sup>112</sup> Agree.

<sup>113</sup> Too old to do much, or have much fun.

42 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

665. **Describe** your ideal vacation
666. **Tell about** a science project that you did in school.
667. If you could publish an article what would it be about?
668. Do you try to be a *good sport*<sup>114</sup> about losing?
669. Where did you meet your spouse?
670. Tell us about your first date.
671. Have you ever gone out on a *blind date*<sup>115</sup>? How was it?
672. Where are some popular places to go on a date?
673. Should the man always pay for the date?
674. What is your dream come true?
675. What does, <sup>116</sup> mean?
676. **Describe** your ideal mate.
677. Where are some of the best places to meet people to date?
678. **ROLE PLAY** ~ Ask someone out for a date.
679. Is it easier to spell in your language or English?
680. Who was a great star that has *kicked the bucket*<sup>117</sup>?
681. **Compare** men to women.
682. What is your next goal in life?
683. What is your next educational goal?
684. **Tell about** a time when you *gave someone a hand*<sup>118</sup>.
685. When were you as *happy as a lark*<sup>119</sup>?
686. When you drive around do you ever *lose your bearings*<sup>120</sup>?
687. Have you ever tried a multilevel marketing scheme?
688. Have you ever done something in just *the nick of time*<sup>121</sup>?
689. What are some benefits of exercise?
690. Have you ever gotten *ripped off or burned*<sup>122</sup>?
691. Should everyone be expected to *pull his own weeght*<sup>123</sup>?
692. Do you like to look at paintings? What kind and why?
693. How often do you go to the dentist? What are some dental words?<sup>124</sup>
694. Do you believe there is life on other planets?
695. When was the last time you really had to *put your foot down*<sup>125</sup>?
696. What would make your life easier?
697. Do you like to make any kind of art?

---

<sup>114</sup> Take losing well.

<sup>115</sup> A blind date is one that has been arranged by someone else and where you have never seen the person before.

<sup>116</sup> It's not easy to come by.

<sup>117</sup> Died.

<sup>118</sup> Helped someone do or accomplish something; often used for something physical, but not always.

<sup>119</sup> Very care free and happy.

<sup>120</sup> Get lost and confused about which direction to go.

<sup>121</sup> Just at the last moment before time ran out.

<sup>122</sup> A really bad deal financially, got cheated.

<sup>123</sup> Support himself.

<sup>124</sup> cavity, filling, crown, incisors, molars, canine teeth, wisdom teeth, drill.

<sup>125</sup> Put a stop to something or refuse permission because you felt it was wrong or inappropriate. For example: Your young daughter wants to date a grown man, but you had to *put your foot down* and not allow it.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

698. Who is your favorite artist? Why?
699. Who's your favorite painter?
700. Do you consider yourself a good artist?
701. Have you ever formally studied music?
702. Who in the world would you most like to marry?
703. Has anyone ever given you the *cold shoulder*<sup>126</sup>?
704. Have you ever tried to find something that was *like looking for a needle in a haystack*<sup>127</sup>?
705. Have you ever had to *live on a shoestring*<sup>128</sup>?
706. Do you own a car navigation system?
707. Would you rather be very smart or very rich?
708. Who do you think is the most handsome man or beautiful woman in the world?
709. Who do you think is the happiest person in the world?
710. Name three museums in Paris.
711. What is the most difficult part about learning English?
712. **Compare** coffee to tea
713. Do you like to eavesdrop<sup>129</sup> on conversations?
714. Do you have a *green thumb*<sup>130</sup>?
715. What is something that frustrates you?
716. Why do apples turn brown after you cut them?
717. Who is an important woman in the world?
718. When was the last time that you *got dressed to kill*<sup>131</sup>?
719. Do you like both classical and pop music?
720. How do you like special effects in movies?
721. How well do you get along with others?
722. Are you concerned about global warming?
723. What's the most important industry in your country?
724. Where's the most beautiful place in your country?
725. What is the most exciting job in the world?
726. Name some types of spaghetti dishes?<sup>132</sup>
727. How is lasagna different from spaghetti? Have you ever tired it?
728. What is a silhouette?
729. Have you ever gotten a great gift or large sum of money *out of the blue*<sup>133</sup>?
730. Have you ever known someone who wouldn't take no for an answer?
731. Have you ever let a big accomplishment *go to your head*<sup>134</sup>?
732. What things do you like to *steer clear*<sup>135</sup> of?

---

<sup>126</sup> Ignored by others, sometimes friends.

<sup>127</sup> Extremely difficult to find.

<sup>128</sup> On very little income.

<sup>129</sup> To listen in on people's conversations without their knowing.

<sup>130</sup> Good at growing plants.

<sup>131</sup> Really dressed up to impress others.

<sup>132</sup> Meatball, Tetrazzini, Fettuccine Alfredo,

<sup>133</sup> Unexpectedly.

<sup>134</sup> Become "big headed" about. Made you feel more important than you are, bragging.

<sup>135</sup> Avoid.

44 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

733. What type of person really turns you on?  
734. What is meant by a person's profile<sup>136</sup> (has two meanings)?  
735. What is something you feel too young / old to do?  
736. Do you prefer to be around animals or people more?  
737. Do you disinfect your computer of viruses on a regular basis?  
738. What is an antidepressant?  
739. What is a serrated<sup>137</sup> knife?  
740. Can you tell us your life story *in a nutshell*<sup>138</sup>?  
741. Do you find it difficult to throw things away?  
742. Do you try *not to cry over spilt milk*<sup>139</sup>?  
743. Do you believe that learning English will be *plain sailing*<sup>140</sup> from here on out?  
744. Which popular movie star would you most like to visit?  
745. What was your favorite subject in school?  
746. Who do you most admire in history?  
747. Do you think that liposuction is safe?  
748. Do you have a *sweet tooth*<sup>141</sup>?  
749. What is the most interesting natural geological formation in your country?  
750. Why are American movies so popular?  
751. What is your favorite way to spend an evening?  
752. Give someone in the room a compliment.  
753. Do you prefer to eat sitting on the floor or on a chair?  
754. Are you finding it more difficult to *keep your head above water*<sup>142</sup> lately?  
755. What is something that you have never done that you would like to try?  
756. What do you look for in a girlfriend or a boyfriend?  
757. Would you rather live on the beach or in the mountains?  
758. What is something that you really look forward to doing?  
759. What's something that really irritates you?  
760. **Explain** the difference between getting fired and getting laid-off.  
761. What are the most nutritional foods?  
762. Do you dilly dally when you have to do something you don't want to do<sup>143</sup>?  
763. Does it drizzle<sup>144</sup> much where you live?  
764. Do you prefer crowded noisy places or secluded quiet ones?  
765. Do you know anyone who is a real *man of means*<sup>145</sup>?  
766. Do you believe that *every dark cloud has a silver lining*<sup>146</sup>?  
767. Do you have a good sense of humor?

---

<sup>136</sup> The side view of a person's face or a personal history of the person.

<sup>137</sup> A knife with a jagged cutting edge.

<sup>138</sup> Concisely, short and to the point.

<sup>139</sup> "Don't cry over spilt milk" Don't keep regretting a past mistake.

<sup>140</sup> Continue with no more problems.

<sup>141</sup> Like to eat sweet things.

<sup>142</sup> Make enough money to get by on.

<sup>143</sup> Take your time. Do it very slowly.

<sup>144</sup> Light misty rain.

<sup>145</sup> Wealthy, affluent.

<sup>146</sup> Whenever sometime bad happens, something good becomes of it. This is something good about all bad things.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

768. Do you ever go to chat rooms on the Internet?
769. **Tell about** the most recent movie that you have seen.
770. Do you feel that you are *working for peanuts*<sup>147</sup>?
771. Are you saving money for anything in particular?
772. Who is your favorite comedian?
773. Why are bananas so good for us<sup>148</sup>?
774. Do you believe that the moon rocks are *the real McCoy*<sup>149</sup>?
775. Are you wearing any cubic zirconia<sup>150</sup>? Where did you get it?
776. Do you belong to any clubs or organizations?
777. Do you like to get up at *the crack of dawn*?<sup>151</sup>
778. Would you like to be able to read<sup>152</sup> other people's minds?
779. Can you tell about a time when you looked at something, but couldn't make *heads or tails*<sup>153</sup> out of it?
780. Who do you know that has *money to burn*?<sup>154</sup>
781. **Tell about** a really strange person that you have known.
782. Do you *get hot under the collar easily*<sup>155</sup>?
783. Do you feel that you are *on the right track*<sup>156</sup> with your career?
784. **ROLE PLAY** ~ I'm a barber; tell me how you want your hair cut.
785. What do you think is the most serious health problem in your country?
786. Are there political riots in your country?
787. Is there anyone who really *keeps you in stitches*<sup>157</sup>, who really *cracks you up*<sup>158</sup>?
788. Do you have *a chip on your shoulder*<sup>159</sup>?
789. Have you ever been the victim of a crime?
790. Have you ever witnessed a crime?
791. **ROLE PLAY**~ Your next door neighbors are making too much noise. Ask them to quiet down.
792. **ROLE PLAY**~ There was a serious accident in front of your house, call the police to report it.
793. Which is better; American cars or Japanese cars?
794. Have you ever had any type of lizard as a pet?
795. **ROLE PLAY**~ Your friend just moved into a new house, ask questions about it.

---

<sup>147</sup> Very little money.

<sup>148</sup> They have a high level of potassium and considered a near perfect food.

<sup>149</sup> Real, not fake, authentic.

<sup>150</sup> A synthetic gemstone, ZrO<sub>2</sub>, used in jewelry as an artificial diamond.

<sup>151</sup> Very early.

<sup>152</sup> To know what they are thinking.

<sup>153</sup> Had no idea what it was.

<sup>154</sup> A lot of money.

<sup>155</sup> Get angry easily.

<sup>156</sup> Going in the right direction.

<sup>157</sup> Makes you laugh.

<sup>158</sup> Makes you laugh.

<sup>159</sup> Always acting a little angry due to something unfair that has happened to you.

46 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

796. **ROLE PLAY**~ Our friend is getting drunk at a party. Tell him not to drink so much.
797. Have you ever seen an entertainer who really *brought down the house*<sup>160</sup>?
798. Have you ever *fallen head over heels*<sup>161</sup> for someone?
799. **ROLE PLAY**~ Your car is being towed away by the police.
800. Have you ever *gone Dutch*<sup>162</sup> on a date?
801. **Compare** Korea to Japan
802. Have you ever purchased a car that was *a lemon*<sup>163</sup>?
803. What kind of gas mileage does your car get?
804. Is there anything that you must always have *at your fingertips*<sup>164</sup>?
805. Are you good at *getting the hang*<sup>165</sup> of most things?
806. Who's the most famous athlete in your country?
807. Do you know anyone who has a really unusual pet?
808. Do you prefer bottled beer or draft beer?<sup>166</sup>
809. Who would you like to be stranded on a desert island with?
810. Do you think that people are friendly in your country?
811. Do you prefer to work with people or machines, why?
812. **ROLE PLAY**~ Be a sales person at a department store.
813. Do you feel that<sup>167</sup>?
814. What law would you like to make?
815. What are some typical dishes in your country?
816. What kinds of things do you like to do when you're alone?
817. **ROLE PLAY**~ Pretend you are checking in at the airport.
818. Where are some particularly beautiful places on Earth?
819. After an argument do you find it difficult to *bury the hatchet*<sup>168</sup>?
820. Would you *bend over backwards*<sup>169</sup> to help your best friend?
821. Do you think that it's a good idea to live together before getting married?
822. Who is your favorite superhero? Explain why.
823. Have you ever wanted to be a politician?
824. If you were the President of your country what problem would you work on first?
825. Does this *ring a bell*<sup>170</sup> (hum a tune)?
826. Have you ever known someone who you thought was *sharp as a tack*<sup>171</sup>?



<sup>160</sup> Was extremely popular, with much applause, standing ovation, cheering, etc.

<sup>161</sup> Just completely fallen in love with someone very quickly.

<sup>162</sup> This is where people pay their own bills (checks). The proper term is "Dutch treat," and it is actually an old slur or insult that the English used against the Dutch in the 1700s when the Dutch and the English were arch rivals. The term meant the Dutch were cheap. In other words, it meant that the idea of a "treat" for the Dutch was only that each person was expected to pay for himself.

<sup>163</sup> Could not be properly repaired. It does not mean simply old rundown cars that no longer work properly.

<sup>164</sup> Nearby.

<sup>165</sup> Becoming good at something.

<sup>166</sup> "Draft" beer is drawn from a keg. It is served in a glass or mug, not a can of bottle.

<sup>167</sup> It's difficult to teach older people now things.

<sup>168</sup> Apologize and forget about it.

<sup>169</sup> Do anything. Help very much.

<sup>170</sup> Cause you to remember something.

<sup>171</sup> Very clever, quick thinking, understands and reacts quickly.



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

827. If you could read only one person's mind whose mind would you want to read?
828. Do you like to *call the shots*<sup>172</sup>?
829. Have you ever eaten avocado<sup>173</sup>?
830. Would you like to be a pirate?
831. Where did pirates used to roam?
832. Are there pirates today?
833. Have you ever had any clothes custom made?
834. Would you marry someone from another country?
835. If you were given a chance to go to the moon would you go?
836. If you could change one thing about your spouse or significant other what would it be?
837. In which time period would you most like to live in?
838. Have you ever had a job where you had to *work like a dog*<sup>174</sup>?  
"Yeah, I had a job last year where I had to work hard outside all day long."
839. Have you ever really *creamed someone*<sup>175</sup> in a game?
840. What is more important, sight or hearing?
841. When was the last time you felt on top of the world<sup>176</sup>?
842. When was the last time you told someone to *go fly a kite, bug off, or get lost*<sup>177</sup>?
843. Do you think art is important?
844. How would you describe a sunset to a blind person?
845. If you were going to a deserted island and could only take three things with you, what would you take?
846. What is something that you feel a need to do?
847. **ROLE PLAY** ~ You are at immigration at the airport and about to leave to go abroad, but you have lost your passport.
848. What is your opinion of American football?
849. **Explain** the rules of American football.
850. Have you ever developed a photograph?
851. Have you ever f last s though you have a *sixth sense*<sup>178</sup>?
852. **Compare** a television to a radio.
853. Where can you see a good rock band in your country?
854. Would you like to have lived in the Roman Empire?
855. **CHAIN STORY** ~ One day I looked up and saw a UFO land.
856. Would you like to live in another country?
857. Who is the president of your country, and do you like him?

---

<sup>172</sup> Be the boss, tell others what to do.

<sup>173</sup> Note: You can put lemon juice on the cut portions of an avocado to keep them from going dark.

<sup>174</sup> Really work hard all the time.

<sup>175</sup> Won really big, completely dominated the game.

<sup>176</sup> Felt really great and wonderful.

<sup>177</sup> All these expressions mean "I ave me a lone. "

<sup>178</sup> An ability that goes beyond your 5 normal senses. Being able predict the future or to be able to know secret things about someone.

48 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

858. What do you daydream about?
859. **ROLE PLAY** ~ Your car is going to be repossessed because you can't make the payments. Ask the bank to give you more time.
860. Have you ever seen a really great fireworks display?
861. Are you fashion conscious?
862. What is your sign<sup>179</sup>?
863. Do you read your horoscopes?
864. What do you think about people who like to brag about themselves?
865. **ROLE PLAY** ~ I'm a counselor; tell me a problem you have.
866. **Describe** how to make a banana split.
867. Do you like to play tennis? Yes? Where and how often?
868. Who is your favorite musician?
869. What is the most popular sport in your country?
870. **ROLE PLAY** ~ You are completely lost in New York; ask someone for directions for getting to Central Park.
871. What alcoholic drinks do you like the most?
872. What does the city you live in look like?
873. What is the difference between a biography and an autobiography?
874. Do you invest in the stock market?
875. Are wealthy people happier than poor people?
876. Has there ever been a situation when you *bit off more than you could chew*<sup>180</sup>?
877. Has anyone ever *sponged off you*<sup>181</sup>?
878. Have you ever been in a severe hurricane or typhoon?
879. Have you ever taken a cruise?
880. Have you ever had a supernatural experience?
881. Name some luxury brands.
882. Name some luxury hotels.
883. What are the major industries in your country?
884. Who is smarter; conservatives, or liberals?<sup>182</sup>
885. Has there ever been a situation where you *threw the baby out with the bath water*<sup>183</sup>?
886. **ROLE PLAY**~ Ask someone if you can borrow something {money, cell phone, car, pencil, etc.
887. Do you think people drink too much in your country?
888. **Describe** the cabdrivers in your country?<sup>184</sup>
889. Where is there a place to gamble in your country?
890. Which place in the world has the best climate?
891. **Describe** American movies.

---

<sup>179</sup> Astrological or zodiac sign.

<sup>180</sup> Took on more responsibility than you could deal with.

<sup>181</sup> Repeatedly borrowed money.

<sup>182</sup> A study showed that liberals are more intelligent.

<sup>183</sup> Get rid of something good in order to get rid of something bad. The expression is "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater."

<sup>184</sup> Polite, kind, cautious, courteous, discourteous.



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

- 892. What is the loveliest lake in your country?
- 893. What is the most boring thing in the world to do?
- 894. What is your favorite flower?<sup>185</sup>
- 895. **Describe** what a sunset looks like?
- 896. Would you like to travel in time? To what time would you go?
- 897. Name some tropical fruits.



Papayas

- 898. What color do you think you look best in?



- 899. **Compare** the sun to the moon.
- 900. Do you enjoy visiting art museums? Which ones have you visited?
- 901. Do you like watching the Olympics?
- 902. Do you have any special interest in science?
- 903. Do you like modern art?
- 904. Are you any good at drawing or painting?
- 905. Do you think your country is a safe place to live in?
- 906. Do you think that anyone can predict the future?
- 907. Do you like to read / write poems?
- 908. Who is your favorite poet?
- 909. What is your favorite kind of ethnic food?
- 910. Do you like Mexican food?

---

<sup>185</sup> Daisy, Violet, Carnation, Geranium, Sunflower, Pansy, Poppy, Rose, Snapdragon, Sunflower, Lilac, Chrysanthemum, Tulip, Dandelion (a common weed).

50 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>



guacamole



tacos



enchiladas

911. Do you think women with big muscles are attractive?
912. **Compare** the United States to China
913. Who do you think admires you?
914. Are there many traffic accidents in your country?
915. **ROLE PLAY**~ Pretend that I just asked you to come over this evening.
916. Why do you think elephants are afraid of mice?
917. What is your idea of a great time?
918. What is your favorite computer game? How often do you play it?
919. What's the most important industry in your country?
920. **ROLE PLAY**~ Pretend you are ordering a western style breakfast.
921. What is the climate like you your country?
922. Do you think American movies are a bad influence on people?
923. What was the last movie you saw? Where did you see it?
924. Do you have or know of anyone with a phobia<sup>186</sup>?
925. When was the last time you *felt under the weather*?<sup>187</sup>
926. When was the last time that you *felt really bushed*?<sup>188</sup>
927. Have you *carved out your niche* in society<sup>189</sup> yet?
928. When is the last time you were *on pins and needles*?<sup>190</sup>
929. **CHAIN STORY**~ One day I saw a ghost. ...
930. When was the last time you went to a *potluck dinner*?<sup>191</sup>
931. When was the last time you really *racked your brains over*<sup>192</sup> something?
932. When was the last time you bought something that was *dirt-cheap*?<sup>193</sup>

---

<sup>186</sup> An irrational fear.

<sup>187</sup> A little ill.

<sup>188</sup> Tired.

<sup>189</sup> Found your place.

<sup>190</sup> Couldn't hardly wait for something to happen.

<sup>191</sup> Everyone brings food to share.

<sup>192</sup> Had to really think about at length.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

933. If you could be another person for a day who would you be?  
934. What do you do when people stare at you?  
935. What is something that you are *sick and tired*<sup>194</sup> of doing?  
936. Do you know anyone who is a real *big mouth*<sup>195</sup>?  
937. What do you do when a friend gets *too nosey*<sup>196</sup>?  
938. What is something that you do *as regular as clockwork*<sup>197</sup>?  
939. **CHAIN STORY**~ Once upon a time there were three bears. ...  
940. Do you feel that your work is *humdrum*<sup>198</sup>?  
941. What is something that you will never do?  
942. If you were in danger of being bitten by a shark, what would you do?  
943. **CHAIN STORY** ~ Hey, guess what I just heard! ...  
944. Do you go out with *every Tom, Dick, or Harry*<sup>199</sup>?



945. How do you prepare a cheeseburger?

946. Why are hamburgers called "hamburgers"?<sup>200</sup>  
947. What kinds of people bother you?  
948. How do you feel when people nag you?  
949. What do you know about the American flag?  
950. What do the stars and strips mean in the American flag?  
951. What unusual medical treatments or remedies do you have in your country?  
952. Have you ever wanted to say something, but you *edgewise*<sup>201</sup>?  
953. Have you ever thrown a coin into a fountain for good luck?  
954. Have you ever *hit someone up*<sup>202</sup> for some money?  
955. Do you keep a diary? Why? What do you put in it?  
956. What wild animals are there in your country?  
957. Have you ever had to <sup>203</sup> to get him to do something?  
958. **Tell about** your favorite rock groups.  
959. If you could let one person out of prison who would it be?  
960. Is it easier to be a man or a woman?  
961. **ROLE PLAY**~ Return a cell phone that doesn't work.  
962. What do you think about American Westerns?



---

<sup>193</sup> Very cheap, much less than what it was worth.

<sup>194</sup> Hate doing because you have to do it over and over.

<sup>195</sup> Just tell everything you talk to him about. Can't keep a secret, blabs everything.

<sup>196</sup> Asks too many personal questions.

<sup>197</sup> Do as a routine, probably daily.

<sup>198</sup> Boring, uninteresting, routine.

<sup>199</sup> Just anyone.

<sup>200</sup> Because they originated in Hamburg Germany and were called Hamburg steaks.

<sup>201</sup> The other person spoke so much that you never had time to speak yourself.

<sup>202</sup> Borrowed money

<sup>203</sup> Really do a lot of coaxing.

## 52 Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

963. Is there a waterfall anywhere nearby?  
964. What is the best way to save money?  
965. Would you like to be famous? Why?  
966. What kinds of things do you laugh at?  
967. If you woke up suddenly because your house was on fire what would you grab first to take out with you?  
968. Is it best to be a single man or a single woman?  
969. Would you rather live in the past, present, or future?  
970. **Tell about** the coolest nightclub that you have ever been to.  
971. Why do people like violence in movies?  
972. Who do you talk to when you need advice?  
973. What kinds of things make you nervous?  
974. Do you have *an ax to grind*<sup>204</sup>?  
975. What is the proper name for an electronic range?<sup>205</sup>  
976. Is it best to be a vegetarian?  
977. Are you and your best friend usually on the same wavelength<sup>206</sup>?  
978. What qualities must a good leader have?  
979. What does a person need to do to be happy?  
980. What is a real *bone of contention*<sup>207</sup> in your country?  
981. What famous world leader do you admire most?  
982. **Tell about** the last time that you were as *sick as a dog*<sup>208</sup>.  
983. Have you ever ridden on a toboggan<sup>209</sup>?  
984. If you could be an animal, what animal would you like to be?  
985. If you could speak any other language (besides English) which language would you like to speak?  
986. What is your favorite alcoholic drink?  
987. Have you heard anything *through the grapevine*<sup>210</sup> lately?  
988. Have you ever wanted to<sup>211</sup>?  
989. Name as many brands of beer that you can.  
990. Do you like working with your hands?  
991. What would you like to see invented?  
992. What is the difference between being fired and being laid-off?  
993. Would you like to visit the United States?  
994. What are some traditional alcoholic drinks in your country?  
995. What's the most interesting thing that you have ever done?  
996. What do you like to think about the most?  
997. *Come clean*<sup>212</sup>, have you ever been in trouble with the law?

---

<sup>204</sup> This means, do you have a grudge against someone?

<sup>205</sup> A microwave oven.

<sup>206</sup> Think the same way.

<sup>207</sup> Something controversial.

<sup>208</sup> Very sick.

<sup>209</sup> A long, narrow, runnerless sled constructed of thin boards curled upward at the front end.

<sup>210</sup> Learned about something through rumors.

<sup>211</sup> Wanted to take the place of someone else.

<sup>212</sup> Be honest – finally.



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

998. Do you have a good head for figures<sup>213</sup>?
999. What's your favorite cocktail<sup>214</sup>?
1000. Have you ever received a *Dear John letter*<sup>215</sup>?
1001. What are some different kinds of liquors?<sup>216</sup>
1002. What is your favorite nightclub?
1003. What's the main religion in your country?
1004. Name five different religions.<sup>217</sup>
1005. Do you like classical music?
1006. Do you ever go to classical concerts?
1007. **Describe** the general landscape in your country.
1008. **Describe** the most beautiful beaches in your country.

---

<sup>213</sup> Are you good at doing math in your head?

<sup>214</sup> Tom Collins, Singapore Sling, Slow Gin Fizz, Pina Colada, Black Russian, Martini, Gin and Tonic, etc.

<sup>215</sup> A letter breaking off a romantic relationship.

<sup>216</sup> Gin, vodka, whisky, tequila, rum, scotch, bourbon, cognac,

<sup>217</sup> Hindu, Catholic, Islam, Buddhism, Protestant (all non-catholic Christian religions).



## 8. Post-Intermediate Questions and Activities

### Mature Topics

1009. What do you want your legacy<sup>218</sup> to be?
1010. If you were king / queen of the world what would you do?
1011. Where in Europe would you like to go?
1012. What plans do you have for your future?
1013. Who is smarter; conservatives, or liberals?<sup>219</sup>
1014. What was the greatest event in all of history?
1015. What are some casino gambling games?<sup>220</sup>
1016. Would you like to visit Las Vegas? What would you do there? What do you think you can do and see there?
1017. Have you ever shoplifted<sup>221</sup> anything?
1018. Have you ever been in prison?
1019. How should countries handle conscious objectors?
1020. Have you ever kidnapped anyone or been kidnapped yourself?
1021. How do you decide between right and wrong?
1022. What is the most shocking news story that you have ever heard?
1023. What year of your life was the happiest?
1024. What's your *Heel?*<sup>222</sup>
1025. Do you have a retirement plan?
1026. What are some of the various retirement plans?
1027. Do you think there is too much sex in movies?
1028. Do you believe there is life on other planets?
1029. Do you believe there is life after death?
1030. What is your opinion of embryonic stem cell research?
1031. Is space travel beneficial?
1032. What is the main cause of war?
1033. Do people in your country usually have sex before they get married?
1034. What is something that you dream of doing?

---

<sup>218</sup> How would you like to be remembered?

<sup>219</sup> A study showed that liberals are more intelligent.

<sup>220</sup> Slot machines, poker, black jack, roulette ...

<sup>221</sup> Taken something from a store without paying.

<sup>222</sup> Weak point, vulnerability.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1035. Have you ever bribed a police officer? Is doing so always wrong?
1036. Is bribing always wrong?
1037. What is your opinion about premarital sex?
1038. **Explain** the political system in your country.
1039. Would you rather have a lot of money or a lot of friends?
1040. How do you feel conscientious objectors<sup>223</sup> should be treated?
1041. What do you think you will have *as much luck as a snowflake in hell*<sup>224</sup> ever accomplishing?
1042. What are some common crimes in your country?
1043. What do you think about the police department?
1044. What are some things you have to do, but don't like to do?
1045. What do you most like about yourself?
1046. Is nuclear proliferation a major problem?
1047. Is anything more important than money?
1048. Have you ever been involved in *a clinical trial*<sup>225</sup>?
1049. Did you ever take paregoric<sup>226</sup> for stomachaches as a child?
1050. Do you think money is really the root of all evil?
1051. What is your opinion of so called "adult entertainment"?
1052. Is it really necessary to take vitamin supplements?
1053. What is choline?

"Choline supplements are often taken as a form of 'smart drug' or nootropic, due to the role that the neurotransmitter acetylcholine plays in various cognition systems within the brain. Choline is a chemical precursor or "building block" needed to produce the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, and research suggests that memory, intelligence and mood are mediated at least in part by acetylcholine metabolism in the brain. The compound's quaternary amine renders it lipid insoluble and theoretically unable to cross the blood-brain barrier. However, despite choline's lipid insolubility, a choline transporter exists that allows transport across the blood-brain barrier. The major delivery form of choline — are egg yolks, soy and cooked beef, chicken, veal and turkey livers" ~ Wikipedia

1054. What is bad and good cholesterol (LDL and HDL)?

"Our body does need cholesterol to make bile salts, hormones and vitamin D. It is mainly produced by our liver. Cholesterol will build up on the artery walls when the level of cholesterol in the blood is too high. There are 2 main types of blood cholesterol: LDL (the "Bad" cholesterol) and HDL (the "Good" cholesterol).

---

<sup>223</sup> People who refuse military service on moral or religious grounds.

<sup>224</sup> Virtually no possibility.

<sup>225</sup> A medical experiment to test the usefulness of a new drug.

<sup>226</sup> Camphorated tincture of opium used especially to relieve pain



## 56 Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

High amounts of the bad LDL will deposit cholesterol on the artery walls forming plaques. More and more plaques will narrow the arteries lumen and may eventually block blood flow. Therefore LDL is considered the "Bad" cholesterol. Saturated fats and *trans* fatty acids are the most important factors that raise blood cholesterol, not dietary cholesterol! Monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats found in nuts and fish for instance, can lower the LDL level. In addition, soluble fiber found in fruits, oats, barley and legumes can also lower LDL.

The good HDL, on the other hand, takes excess cholesterol away and carries it back to the liver to be excreted. It can also remove some of the cholesterol already attached to the artery walls. Therefore HDL is considered the "Good" cholesterol as high levels of HDL in the blood can decrease the risk of heart disease. Physical activity can also raise HDL level." ~ Gloria Tsang, RD

1055. What are some things that you should do to stay healthy?

### Focus on Interviewing for a Job

- 1056. Tell us about yourself?
- 1057. Why do you want to be a /an \_\_\_\_\_?<sup>227</sup>
- 1058. Why do you feel you are qualified for this job?
- 1059. What has prepared you for this job?
- 1060. What experience have you had for this job?
- 1061. What is the main thing you are looking for in a job?
- 1062. Have you ever been disappointed with a previous job?
- 1063. Do you think you could work in an English speaking environment?
- 1064. Why should we hire you?
- 1065. What are some of your best qualities?
- 1066. What is your worst quality?
- 1067. What kind of salary and benefits are you expecting?

### Giving Opinions

- 1068. Do you think the people in North Korea are brain washed<sup>228</sup>?
- 1069. What is your idea of an ideal husband / wife?
- 1070. Do you believe that birds of a feather flock together<sup>229</sup>, or that opposites attract?
- 1071. Should a lawyer try his best to get a verdict of not guilty even if he knows his client is guilty?

<sup>227</sup> It's the only thing that I've ever really wanted to be.

<sup>228</sup> Indoctrinated to think a certain way by continual repetition of certain views and philosophies.

<sup>229</sup> People who are similar enjoy each other's company.





Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1072. What is the meaning of life?
1073. What is art?
1074. What is your opinion of interracial adoptions?
1075. What is your opinion of gay marriage?
1076. What happened to the Titanic?<sup>230</sup>
1077. Is there a lot of red tape involved in getting a visa here for the United States?
1078. What are the causes of war?
1079. Is there really a God?
1080. What is your opinion of Marxism?
1081. What's your opinion of double eyelid surgery?
1082. Are there alien beings?
1083. What does a person need to do to become a (some profession)?
1084. What do you think your country will be like in twenty-five years?
1085. Discuss Plato and the lost continent of Atlantis.
1086. Which of Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" do you like the most?
1087. What is your favorite violin concerto and why?
1088. What is your opinion of "Pictures at an Exhibition."
1089. What would you like to see happen in your country within the next ten years?
1090. What would you like to be known for in the future?

#### Focus on Technical Issues

1091. What causes thunder?
1092. What is a glacier?
1093. What is an iceberg?
1094. What is meant by "horse power"?
1095. **Explain** what an anode and a cathode are?
1096. In what direction does electricity flow?
1097. **Explain** the theory of relativity.
1098. **Explain** the theory of evolution.
1099. **Explain** what a pulsar is.
1100. Is there such a thing as "free will"?
1101. **Explain** how a flat-screen TV works.
1102. What is the chemical formula for water?
1103. What are some chemical formulas that you know?
1104. What is the hypotenuse of a triangle?
1105. **Explain** what a comet is?
1106. What is the square root of 9?
1107. What is the cube root of 256?
1108. How fast does light travel<sup>231</sup>?

---

<sup>230</sup> The Titanic struck an iceberg in 1912, which caused a long gash in its hull.

<sup>231</sup> 186,000 miles per second.

58 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>



1109. What is this and describe it.<sup>232</sup>  
1110. Do you find astronomy interesting?  
1111. What is the name of our galaxy?  
1112. How many stars are in our galaxy?  
1113. What is a supernova?



A giant Hubble mosaic of the Crab Nebula, a supernova

remnant

1114. What is a "light year"?  
1115. **Explain** how a ship floats.  
1116. **Explain** how to scramble an egg.  
1117. **Explain** how an airplane flies.  
1118. **Explain** Archimedes' principal.  
1119. **Explain** how a compass works.  
1120. **Explain** Bernoulli's principal.  
1121. **Explain** how a thermometer works.  
1122. **Explain** how a barometer works.  
1123. **Explain** how a light bulb works.

### Debates

1124. DEBATE ~ Should capital punishment be banned?  
1125. DEBATE ~ Should all countries be allowed to have nuclear bombs?  
1126. DEBATE ~ Should abortion be legal?  
1127. DEBATE ~ Is the Bible really inspired?  
1128. DEBATE ~ Should women give up their careers when they get married?  
1129. DEBATE ~ Should pornography be banned?  
1130. DEBATE ~ Should we go to Thailand or America for a vacation?  
1131. DEBATE ~ Should little boys and little girls be treated the same?

---

<sup>232</sup> A whirlpool galaxy.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

- 1132. DEBATE ~ Should gay marriage be legal?
- 1133. DEBATE ~ Debate the FTA (Free Trade Agreement)
- 1134. DEBATE ~ Should we take our English teacher out to dinner?
- 1135. DEBATE ~ Should we build more nuclear power plants?
- 1136. DEBATE ~ Should the man wear the pants<sup>233</sup> in the family?
- 1137. DEBATE ~ Is investing money in space exploration worthwhile?
- 1138. DEBATE ~ Should private citizens be allowed to bear arms?
- 1139. DEBATE ~ Which is better, capitalism or communism?
- 1140. DEBATE ~ Which is better, capitalism or socialism?
- 1141. DEBATE ~ Is "mad-cow" disease really a problem?

---

<sup>233</sup> Be the boss.

60 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

General Discussion..., Describe ..., Explain ..., Tell About ..., Chain Stories, and Role Plays

1142. Do you have any eccentricities?
1143. **Say and continue:** Hey, guys guess what I've decided to do ...
1144. **Describe** the educational system in your country.
1145. Are you concerned about a nuclear meltdown<sup>234</sup>?
1146. How do you flirt?
1147. **Describe** a typical date in your country
1148. Who's the sexiest person alive?
1149. **Describe** something where there is more than meets the eye.
1150. Have you ever *turned the tables*<sup>235</sup> on someone?
1151. Have you ever *put all of your eggs into one basket*<sup>236</sup> and regretted it later?
1152. What kinds of people do you like?
1153. Who do you most love in the world?
1154. What makes you feel very happy?
1155. What is the real Korean name for Ginseng?<sup>237</sup>
1156. Name some composers.<sup>238</sup>
1157. What kinds of problems do teenagers have?
1158. What's more important, what people look like or their personality?
1159. If you were in sales what would you like to sell?
1160. Do you feel that *by and large*<sup>239</sup> you're a good person?
1161. How does one go about renting an apartment in your country?
1162. Were you ever in the armed forces? Tell us about it.
1163. What are the branches of the armed forces?<sup>240</sup>
1164. **Talk about** a funny experience that you have had.
1165. Would you like to meet the president of the United States?
1166. What is your opinion of the current American president?
1167. What would you do if you were President of the United States?
1168. **Describe** the best gift you've ever received.
1169. What kind of advice would you give to the president of the United States?
1170. **Talk about** a time when you felt very happy.
1171. Do you know someone who is really *wishy-washy*<sup>241</sup>?
1172. What do you do only *once in a blue moon*<sup>242</sup>?
1173. Is there a lot of *red tape*<sup>243</sup> involved in getting a passport here?

---

<sup>234</sup> This is when the nuclear material becomes so hot (due to some malfunction) in a nuclear reactor that the material actually melts through its containment and released nuclear radiation.

<sup>235</sup> Reversed a bad situation, by doing something similar to the other person.

<sup>236</sup> Have your happiness or success depend all on one thing.

<sup>237</sup> It's In-Som.

<sup>238</sup> Cherny, Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Tchaikovsky, Vivaldi, Handel, Brahms, Wagner, Schubert, Liszt

<sup>239</sup> Generally speaking

<sup>240</sup> The Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines.

<sup>241</sup> Weak willed, can be swayed easily.

<sup>242</sup> Literally: a second appearance of a full moon in a calendar month. The idiom means "rarely."

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1174. What is something you would do *come rain or shine*<sup>244</sup>?
1175. Are you a liberal or a conservative?
1176. Would you like to be a news reporter?
1177. What's big in the news right now?
1178. What are some things that are made out of brass / silver / bronze / copper / and zinc?
1179. Is there a superstition that you kind of believe in?
1180. What was your most memorable day of your life?
1181. Does talking in front of a group of people bother you? Why?
1182. **ROLE PLAY** ~ Pretend you're making an appointment for the dentist.
1183. What is the difference between the words "during" and "while."
1184. Do you think it's better to be married or single?
1185. Who has more fun, men or women?
1186. Who do you think is happier, men or women?
1187. What are some things you like to talk about when on a date?<sup>245</sup>
1188. Do you think women should be drafted<sup>246</sup> (conscripted)?
1189. Have you gone on a fast<sup>247</sup>?
1190. Have you ever *blown-up*<sup>248</sup> at someone?
1191. What is something that you would do if you were younger?
1192. **Explain** how to fix a flat tire.
1193. Do you prefer to plan well for things or just *play it by ear*<sup>249</sup>?
1194. What American makes of cars do you know of?<sup>250</sup>
1195. Is it best to be *an only child*<sup>251</sup>?
1196. What is the best way *to break the ice*<sup>252</sup> when you first meet someone?
1197. What kind of person are you?
1198. Do you believe that *the early bird catches the worm*<sup>253</sup>?
1199. What person from history would you enjoy having as a friend?
1200. When was the last time you tried to remember something and *just drew a blank*<sup>254</sup>?
1201. What do you think was the most important scientific advancement in history?
1202. What was the most important invention in history?
1203. Is there anything that you ever tried once that you would never try again?
1204. What really *drives you up the wall*<sup>255</sup>?

---

<sup>243</sup> Red tape means lots of paperwork, offices to visit, and approvals, etc. need to get something done.

<sup>244</sup> Do no matter what, always be certain to do.

<sup>245</sup> Perhaps like: things you want to do on the date..

<sup>246</sup> Forced to serve in the military.

<sup>247</sup> Not eat anything or greatly limit what you eat to nearly nothing.

<sup>248</sup> **blow up**: suddenly become very angry. "When I told Mary, I wrecked her car she **blew up**."

<sup>249</sup> Do things spontaneously. Comes from the musical term "to play by ear."

<sup>250</sup> Chevrolet, Ford, Oldsmobile, General Motors

<sup>251</sup> A child with no brothers or sisters.

<sup>252</sup> Start talking, begin being friendly.

<sup>253</sup> People who get up early are more successful.

<sup>254</sup> Couldn't recall what it was you were trying to remember.

<sup>255</sup> Annoys and irritates you.

62 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1205. Are there many different nationalities in your country?
1206. Would you like to visit the pyramids in Egypt? Why?
1207. Do you believe there's a curse on people who first entered the pyramids?
1208. Have you ever fed someone a lot of baloney<sup>256</sup> about something?
1209. When was the last time you had to *go to bat*<sup>257</sup> for someone?
1210. Have you ever *turned over a new leaf*<sup>258</sup>?
1211. Have you ever written or started to write a book?
1212. When was the last time you *got the short end of the stick*<sup>259</sup>?
1213. Have you ever experienced *déjà vu* and what do you think causes it?  
"What in the world is *déjà vu*?"  
"Yes, I think everyone has had the feeling that things have happened before."
1214. Who do you think was the greatest person who ever lived?
1215. What's the most difficult thing about being married?
1216. What do you think is the most famous painting in the world?
1217. If you could change one thing in the world what would it be?
1218. If you could commit any crime and get away with it, what would you do?
1219. If you could meet any famous person, dead or alive, who would it be and why?
1220. Do you like art? What kinds?
1221. If you had time machine where would you go?
1222. Do you know anyone who has embezzled<sup>260</sup> money?
1223. What are some things that most people are afraid of?
1224. **Discuss** the Chinese economic revolution.
1225. Do you prefer expressionism<sup>261</sup> or impressionism<sup>262</sup> as an art form?
1226. Who do you think is the richest person in the world and do you think he's happy?
1227. **Describe** a situation where a person couldn't see the forest for the trees
1228. Is it ok to *pull some strings*<sup>263</sup> to get ahead?
1229. Do you know anyone who *is a wet blanket*?<sup>264</sup>
1230. Is there anything that you'd like to *get off your chest*<sup>265</sup>?
1231. What needs to be changed the most in your country?
1232. When was the last time that things didn't *pan out*<sup>266</sup> the way you expect?

---

<sup>256</sup> False information.

<sup>257</sup> Defended someone who was in trouble

<sup>258</sup> Made a big change in your actions or attitudes to try to improve yourself.

<sup>259</sup> The worst part of a deal, the other person got more than you did.

<sup>260</sup> Stolen money (or other things) that was their responsibility to oversee, such as an accountant stealing the money of the business he is keeping track of.

<sup>261</sup> A movement in the arts during the early part of the 20th century that emphasized subjective expression of the artist's inner experiences

<sup>262</sup> A style of painting originating and developed in France during the 1870s, characterized by concentration on the immediate visual impression produced by a scene and by the use of unmixed primary colors and small strokes to simulate actual reflected light.

<sup>263</sup> Use undue influence by means or relationship that you, friends or relative may have with the people you need approval from.

<sup>264</sup> Spoils the fun for everyone else. Stays in a bad mood when others are having a good time.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1233. Do you like to take your time when doing something important?
1234. **Compare** rock music to classical music.
1235. What country has the best social welfare program?
1236. What is the most important trait a person can have?
1237. Are illegal drugs easy to get in your country?
1238. What illegal drugs have you used?
1239. Who is the greatest military hero in history?
1240. What are you tempted to do that you shouldn't do?
1241. Do you think the American "old west" was interesting?
1242. If you had the power to bring one person back from the dead, who would it be?
1243. Do you know the names of any famous photographers?
1244. Do you believe that life in the United States is easier than in your country?
1245. Who do you know that *has gotten too big for his britches*<sup>267</sup>?
1246. Name someone or something that you trust in and explain why?
1247. Do you try to *have your cake and eat it too*<sup>268</sup>?
1248. Have you ever been a toastmaster<sup>269</sup>?
- "Yes as a matter of fact; I once had to introduce everyone at an important business dinner meeting and explain what was happening."
1249. Have you ever wanted or tried to kill someone?
1250. Tell us about a time when you *went out on a limb*<sup>270</sup> to help someone?
1251. Have you ever given anyone *a taste of his own medicine*<sup>271</sup>?
1252. Have you ever felt that you were *barking up the wrong tree*<sup>272</sup>?
1253. Has anyone ever given you *a real song and dance*<sup>273</sup> about something?
1254. **Tell us** about a time when you felt you were *up the creek without a paddle*<sup>274</sup>?
1255. Have you ever purchased anything on *the black market*<sup>275</sup>?
1256. Give an example of someone making a *mountain out of a molehill*<sup>276</sup>?
1257. Have you ever had to keep a *low profile*<sup>277</sup>?
1258. Have you ever told someone *a real cock-and-bull*<sup>278</sup> story?
1259. What do you want your children to grow up to be?
1260. What would you do if you were to become totally broke (indigent)?

---

<sup>266</sup> Pan out = result. Didn't pan out means the results weren't what you expected.

<sup>267</sup> Thinks he's more important than he really is. This term is usually applied to children. "Britches" are pants.

<sup>268</sup> Have everything just the way you want it.

<sup>269</sup> The person in charge of things at a dinner party. The person who introduces other people and explains what is going on.

<sup>270</sup> Did something to help someone that made you vulnerable.

<sup>271</sup> Did something bad to him, similar to a bad thing he did to you.

<sup>272</sup> This usually means to blame the wrong person, going after the wrong person.

<sup>273</sup> Similar to "run around" just keeps making excuses why something wasn't or can't be done.

<sup>274</sup> Helpless, no way to solve a big problem that's only going to get worse.

<sup>275</sup> Something that is not legal to be sold through normal channels.

<sup>276</sup> To make a problem much worse than it really is.

<sup>277</sup> Try not to be noticed.

<sup>278</sup> A bunch of lies.

64 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1261. When was the last time you put *your foot in your mouth*<sup>279</sup>?
1262. What is something *that runs in your family*<sup>280</sup>?
1263. Do you know anyone who is a *real smart aleck*<sup>281</sup>?
1264. Do you know anyone who is a *real wise guy*<sup>282</sup>?
1265. What is the latest scandal in your country? Do you think what you are hearing is *only the tip of the iceberg*?<sup>283</sup>
1266. Where are some good places to go on a honeymoon?
1267. What is the smartest thing that you have ever done?
1268. Where do you plan to live after you retire?
1269. What are some compliments that you get from other people?
1270. Do you know anyone who is a real playboy?
1271. What is something that you really *got a kick out of*<sup>284</sup>?
1272. Does your car have a lot of *wear and tear*<sup>285</sup> on it?
1273. Do you believe that *you can tell a book by its cover*<sup>286</sup>?
1274. How important is a college degree?
1275. What do you think is the purpose of life?
1276. If you could travel in space where would you like to go?
1277. Do you believe that there are things in our universe that cannot be explained?
1278. What has been your most phenomenal (extraordinary) experience?
1279. What is something that has made you feel indignant?
1280. Do you feel that the last election in your country was *fair and square*<sup>287</sup>?
1281. Do you think that having a progressive income tax<sup>288</sup> helps level the playing field<sup>289</sup>?
1282. Do you know anyone is *apron strings*<sup>290</sup>?
1283. What is something that you would really like to *get your teeth into*<sup>291</sup>?
1284. Do you like to do things *on the spur of the moment*<sup>292</sup>?
1285. What is something that someone can do that really *gets under your skin*<sup>293</sup>?
1286. Do you know anyone who is *on an ego trip*<sup>294</sup>?
1287. If you were very wealthy would you become a great philanthropist<sup>295</sup>?

---

<sup>279</sup> Said something you regretted.

<sup>280</sup> A genetic characteristic.

<sup>281</sup> Likes to say clever, but somewhat insulting things

<sup>282</sup> Pretty much the same as smart aleck.

<sup>283</sup> Only a small part of the problem is apparent, the problem is actually much larger.

<sup>284</sup> Lots of humorous enjoyment.

<sup>285</sup> Signs of age.

<sup>286</sup> Expression is "You can't tell a book by its cover." Cannot know a person's character by his or her appearance.

<sup>287</sup> Honest.

<sup>288</sup> Taxing people at continually higher percentages as their income rises.

<sup>289</sup> Makes things more fair for everyone.

<sup>290</sup> An adult man who is still controlled by his mother.

<sup>291</sup> Really want to learn about and get involved with.

<sup>292</sup> With no planning.

<sup>293</sup> Bothers you.

<sup>294</sup> Thinks he's great. Likes to talk about himself.



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1288. What things influence the stock market?
1289. What are you most thankful for?
1290. Who is the most powerful leader in the world?
1291. How can we best preserve the environment?
1292. Why do people usually think the *grass looks greener on the other side*<sup>296</sup>?
1293. Is it all right for teachers to socialize with their students?
1294. What are the main things that men and women fight about?
1295. What's your opinion of slapstick comedy<sup>297</sup>?
1296. Is beauty subjective opinion or objective fact?
1297. Have you ever lambasted<sup>298</sup> someone?
1298. What is necessary to be happy?
1299. Other than a diamond what is your favorite precious stone?
1300. What scientist do you admire most?
1301. Have you ever need to go to an ENT<sup>299</sup> doctor?
1302. What is the most important thing that you would like to accomplish in your life?
1303. If you could speak English fluently what would you do?
1304. Have you ever been to the cultural center here?
1305. Have you ever been bailed out of jail?
1306. Is food from McDonald's and other fast food restaurants really bad for us, or they getting a *bad rap*<sup>300</sup>?
1307. Do you know any politicians that have been caught accepting bribes?
1308. Do you anyplace that's been pummeled by a typhoon lately?
1309. Do you find it difficult *to make ends meet*<sup>301</sup>?
1310. What makes people happy?
1311. If someone was after you, where would you hide?
1312. How should a man treat a woman on the first date?
1313. What is the best way to stay young?
1314. What are some good qualities about your mother?
1315. Is there a match making service in your city? Have you ever used it?
1316. Is the economy getting better or worse in your country?
1317. What law would you like to see made?
1318. Why do you think foreigners visit your country?
1319. Do you play pool or billiards? Explain how they are played.
1320. Is global warming really a big problem?
1321. Do you have any phobias<sup>302</sup>?
1322. When to you drink Champagne?

---

<sup>295</sup> A very rich person who enjoys giving his money away to charitable causes.

<sup>296</sup> Thinks that others usually have it better. Never satisfied. Always wants to change his situation.

<sup>297</sup> Physical comedy where people hit one another.

<sup>298</sup> Strongly attack someone verbally.

<sup>299</sup> ENT stands for Ears, Nose, and Throat.

<sup>300</sup> A bad rap mean unfairly criticized.

<sup>301</sup> Make enough money to get from month to month.

<sup>302</sup> Acrophobia=fear of heights, Claustrophobia=fear of small confined areas, hydrophobia=fear of water Anthophobia=fear of flowers, Aviophobia=fear of flying, Venstraphobia=fear of beautiful women, Panophobia=fear of everything,.

66 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1323. Do you believe in ESP<sup>303</sup>?
1324. If you were asked to speak to a graduating class what would you say?
1325. Did your president win *by a landslide*<sup>304</sup>?
1326. What is the best way to mend a broken heart?
1327. Are you in debt?
1328. Do you believe in ghosts or spirits? Have you ever seen one?
1329. If you could change one thing in the world what would it be?
1330. If you could be any animal for a day, which one would it be?
1331. Would you like to be immortal?
1332. Would you like to be infamous?
1333. Do you feel that sooner or later you'll get what you want out of life?
1334. Is there a place to play miniature golf in your country?
1335. What is the difference between European movies and American movies?
1336. What makes a good husband / wife?
1337. Would you come to the aid of someone who was being attacked?
1338. Do you buy stocks, and if so have you made money with them?
1339. Do you feel that a woman's place is in the home?
1340. Do you believe that it's ok <sup>305</sup> when you're trying to *get to the top*<sup>306</sup>?
1341. Where are a couple of the most interesting places in the world to visit?
1342. What kinds of jokes do you like?
1343. What age would you most like to be and why?
1344. What art form do you like best?
1345. **Say and continue:** Hey, guys guess what I've decided to do! ...
1346. If you were a candy, what candy would you be?
1347. **Describe** a perfect fantasy world
1348. **Describe** the ideal home that you would like to live in.
1349. **Describe** a situation where a *trees*<sup>307</sup>.
1350. **Describe** something where *there is more than meets the eye*<sup>308</sup>.
1351. **Describe** the educational system in your country.
1352. **Describe** the service you usually get in stores in your country.
1353. **Talk about** the person you admire the most.
1354. **Talk about** something that you will never forget.
1355. **Tell about** a Catch 22<sup>309</sup> situation that you have experienced.
1356. **Tell about** something that you were going to do but got so nervous that you got *cold feet*<sup>310</sup>.

---

<sup>303</sup> ESP means extra sensory perception or the ability to read minds or in some way sense things beyond what can be sensed by the normal five senses.

<sup>304</sup> By most of the vote; by a huge margin.

<sup>305</sup> Hurt other people in some way.

<sup>306</sup> Advance yourself.

<sup>307</sup> To get so involved in the details that the whole or big situation can't be seen, though it should be obvious.

<sup>308</sup> More to the situation that is at first apparent.

<sup>309</sup> A circular problem, like you can't get a job without experience and you can't get experience without a job.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1357. **Tell about** a time when someone was rude to you.
1358. **Tell about** someone who you really *hit it off with*<sup>311</sup>.
1359. **Tell** a joke.
1360. **Tell** us a ghost story.
1361. **Tell about** a dilemma that you have been in.
1362. **Tell about** your president.
1363. It is good for a nation to be bilingual?
1364. Does your country have a space program?
1365. **Tell** everything you know about the sun.
1366. **Tell** something about someone else in the class.
1367. **Tell about** a movie star or singer who was a *flash in the pan*<sup>312</sup>.
1368. **Tell about** a fantasy that you have.
1369. **Tell about** a time when you had a *really close call*<sup>313</sup>.
1370. **Tell about** a *pet peeve*.<sup>314</sup>
1371. **Tell about** something that you *take great pains to do*<sup>315</sup>.
1372. **Tell about** a time in your life when someone really *let the cat out of the bag*<sup>316</sup>.
1373. **Tell about** the funniest person that you have ever known.
1374. **Tell about** the last time that you really *ainted the town red*<sup>317</sup>.
1375. **Tell about** an interesting place that you have visited.
1376. **Tell about** an interesting dream that you have had.
1377. **Tell about** a time when you had to stop what you were doing and *start all over from scratch*<sup>318</sup>.
1378. **Tell about** a star that was a *flash in the pan*<sup>319</sup>.
1379. **Tell about** a nightmare that you have had.
1380. **Tell about** a bad experience where you felt you were *in the same boat*<sup>320</sup> with someone else.
1381. **Tell about** a place that is really *out of this world*<sup>321</sup>.
1382. **Tell about** a famous crime in your country.
1383. **Tell about** a belief that just *water*<sup>322</sup>.
1384. **Tell about** the first time that you ever kissed someone.
1385. **Tell about** the wildest party that you have ever been to.
1386. **Tell about** a friend who you are always *on the same wavelength with*<sup>323</sup>.

---

<sup>310</sup> Too afraid to do.

<sup>311</sup> Became friends very rapidly

<sup>312</sup> Famous, but for only a short time.

<sup>313</sup> Came close to being injured.

<sup>314</sup> Something that bothers you (gets on your nerves).

<sup>315</sup> Takes great attention, effort, and possibly time as well.

<sup>316</sup> Told an important secret.

<sup>317</sup> Whet out from place to place having a great time, drinking, dancing, eating, and spending money.

<sup>318</sup> Start from the beginning.

<sup>319</sup> Popular for just a short time.

<sup>320</sup> In the same bad situation as another person.

<sup>321</sup> Incredibly wonderful.

<sup>322</sup> That doesn't make sense and probably isn't true.

<sup>323</sup> Thinks about the same things in the same way. Has the same understanding of things.

68 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1387. **Tell about** a situation where something was *the straw that broke the*  
<sup>324</sup>

1388. **Tell about** an upcoming major event to be held in your country.

1389. **Compare** living in a house to living in an apartment.

1390. **Compare** a doctor to a lawyer.

1391. **Compare** being single to being married

1392. **Compare** yourself now to twenty years ago

1393. **Compare** love and lust.

Chain Stories

1394. **CHAIN STORY** ~ Hey, have I got some good news! ...

1395. **CHAIN STORY** ~ I went outside and found a time machine. ...

1396. **CHAIN STORY**~ One day I decided to get on a train and kept getting off a various places. ...

1397. **CHAIN STORY**~ The other day I saw the most beautiful girl / handsome man that I have ever seen. ...

1398. **CHAIN STORY**~ One day I decided to visit a nudist camp. ...

1399. **CHAIN STORY**~ One day I just started walking. ...

1400. **CHAIN STORY**~ Once upon a time there was a beautiful Princess. ...

1401. **CHAIN STORY**~ I woke up one day and found myself in ancient Rome. ...

1402. **CHAIN STORY**~ Somehow I must escape from this prison. ...

1403. **CHAIN STORY**~ It was late at night and I heard a scream. ...

1404. **CHAIN STORY**~ A big storm came and my boat got stranded on a deserted island. ...

1405. **CHAIN STORY**~ I drank a secret potion that made me invisible.

Role Plays

1406. **ROLE PLAY**~ Tell your friend that you just won a million dollars.

1407. **ROLE PLAY**~ Your friend thinks that she is pregnant and is asking you for advice.

1408. **ROLE PLAY**~ You are failing an important class and you are asking your counselor what you should do.

1409. **ROLE PLAY**~ Your friend wants to get married. You think he is too young. Tell him he should wait awhile.

1410. **ROLE PLAY**~ Two of your best friends are fighting about who is the best looking, go over and settle the issue.

1411. **ROLE PLAY**~ Your friend is getting too fat, discuss the problem with him

1412. **ROLE PLAY**~ You see someone stealing a car, go up to him and ask him to stop.

1413. **ROLE PLAY**~ Your friend is having trouble making friends, give him advice.

---

<sup>324</sup> A final small event in a series of events that causes something bad or undesirable to happen.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1414. **ROLE PLAY**~ Students get into groups of three or more and pretend they are extraordinary people, either real or fictitious; Superman, Columbus, etc.
1415. **ROLE PLAY**~ Be an airline pilot [both a normal flight and an emergency].



## 9. Articles and Discussions

### 1416. **Talk about** the Grand Canyon

The **Grand Canyon** is a colorful steep-sided gorge carved by the Colorado River in the U.S. state of Arizona. It is largely contained within the Grand Canyon National Park — one of the first national parks in the United States. President Theodore Roosevelt was a major proponent of preservation of the Grand Canyon area, and visited on numerous occasions to hunt and enjoy the scenery.



South Rim December 2006



September Storm on the South Rim, 2007

The canyon, created by the Colorado River over a period of 6 million years, is 277 miles (446 km) long, ranges in width from 4 to 18 miles (6.4 to 29 km) and attains a depth of more than a mile (1.6 km). Nearly two billion years of the Earth's history have been exposed as the Colorado River and its tributaries cut their channels through layer after layer of rock while the Colorado Plateau was uplifted.

During prehistory, the area was inhabited by Native Americans who built settlements within the canyon and its many caves. The Pueblo people considered the Grand Canyon ("Ongtupqa" in Hopi language) a holy site and made pilgrimages to it.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

The first European known to have viewed the Grand Canyon was García López de Cárdenas from Spain, who arrived in 1540.<sup>[1]</sup>

The Grand Canyon was largely unexplored until after the U.S. Civil War. In 1869, Major John Wesley Powell, a one-armed Civil War veteran with a thirst for science and adventure, made the first recorded journey through the canyon on the Colorado River. He accomplished this trek with nine men in four small wooden boats, though only six men completed the journey. Powell referred to the sedimentary rock units exposed in the canyon as "leaves in a great story book".

#### 1417. **Talk about** Alaska?

**Alaska** (Russian: Аляска) is a state in the United States of America, in the extreme northwest portion of the North American continent. It is the largest U.S. state by area (by a substantial margin), and one of the wealthiest and most racially diverse.

The area that became Alaska was purchased from Russian interests on March 30, 1867. The land went through several administrative changes before becoming an organized

## 72 Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
territory on May 11, 1912 and the 49th state of the U.S. on January 3, 1959. The name "Alaska" is derived from the Aleut *alaxsxaq*, meaning "the mainland", or more literally "the object towards which the action of the sea is directed"

### 1418. **Talk about** the American old west.

The **American Old West** comprises the history, myths, legends, stories, beliefs and cultural meanings that collected around the Western United States in the 19th century. Most often the term refers to the late 19th century, between the American Civil War and the 1890 closing of the frontier. Terms **Old West** and **Wild West** refer to life beyond the settled frontier. While this terminology could logically place the setting as far back as the American colonial period, it is usually meant to signify the area from the "*Frontier Strip*" (i.e., the six U.S. states from North Dakota south to Texas) west to the Pacific Ocean. Sometimes the tier of states just east of the Frontier strip (Minnesota to Louisiana) are also seen as the "Wild West" because of their stance as gateways.

As the setting for numerous works of fiction, the period and region quickly became so popular that it now defines its own genre, the "Western."

Historical revisionism has noted that certain interests (notably cowboys, Indians, businessmen, and the United States government) repeatedly clashed in these conflicts, and a few accounts refer to them as a "western civil war of incorporation" that established United States authority over the region. Violent small scale range wars between settlers, such as the Pleasant Valley War, Lincoln County War, and Johnson County Range War appear to have been common. Accounts of corrupt and criminalised justice systems are also common.

### 1419. **Discuss** allergies.

**Allergy** is a disorder of the immune system that is often called atopy. Allergic reactions occur to environmental substances known as allergens; these reactions are acquired, predictable and rapid. Strictly, allergy is one of four forms of hypersensitivity and is called *type I* (or *immediate*) hypersensitivity. It is characterized by excessive activation of certain white blood cells called mast cells and basophils by a type of antibody, known as IgE, resulting in an extreme inflammatory response. Common allergic reactions include eczema, hives, hay fever, asthma, food allergies, and reactions to the venom of stinging insects such as wasps and bees.<sup>[1]</sup>

Mild allergies like hay fever, are highly prevalent in the human population and cause symptoms such as allergic conjunctivitis and runny nose. Similarly, conditions such as asthma are common, in which allergy plays a major role. In some people, severe allergies to environmental or dietary allergens, or to medication, occur that may result in life-threatening anaphylactic reactions and potentially death.



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

A variety of tests now exist to diagnose allergic conditions; these include testing the skin for responses to known allergens or analyzing the blood for the presence and levels of allergen-specific IgE. Treatments for allergies include allergen avoidance, use of antihistamines, steroids or other oral medications, immunotherapy to desensitize the response to allergen, and targeted therapy.

1420. Which city do you think is the most interesting Paris, London, or Amsterdam?

**Amsterdam** is the capital of the Netherlands. The name is a derivative from Amstel dam, pointing to the city's origin: a dam in the river Amstel. The city is known for its historic port, the Rijksmuseum, the red-light district (*de Wallen*), the liberal coffeeshops, and the canals which have led to Amsterdam being termed the "Venice of the North". During the Dutch Golden Age, Amsterdam was one of the most important ports in the world, with innovative developments in trade, and became the leading centre for finance and diamonds.

The city, founded in the late 12th century as a small fishing village, has grown to become the largest city in the Netherlands with a population of 743,104 inhabitants, spread over at least 172 nationalities.

1421. **Discuss** Europe

**Europe** is one of the seven traditional continents of the Earth. Physically and geologically, Europe is the westernmost peninsula of Eurasia, west of Asia. Europe is bounded to the north by the Arctic Ocean, to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, to the south by the Mediterranean Sea, to the southeast by the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea and the waterways connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. To the east, Europe is generally divided from Asia by the water divide of the Ural Mountains, the Ural River, and by the Caspian Sea.<sup>[1]</sup>

Europe is the world's second-smallest continent in terms of area, covering about 10,180,000 square kilometers (3,930,000 sq mi) or 2.0% of the Earth's surface. The only continent smaller than Europe is Australia. Of Europe's 48 countries, Russia is the largest by both area and population, while the Vatican is the smallest. Europe is the third most populous continent after Asia and Africa with a population of 710,000,000 or about 11% of the world's population. However, the term *continent* can refer to a cultural and political distinction or a physiographic one, leading to various perspectives about Europe's precise borders, area and population.

Europe is the birthplace of Western culture. European nations played a predominant role in global affairs from the 16th century onwards, especially after the beginning of colonization. By the 17th and 18th centuries European nations controlled most of Africa, the Americas, and large portions of Asia. World War I and World War II led to a decline

74 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
 in European dominance in world affairs as the United States and Soviet Union took preeminence. The Cold War between those two superpowers divided Europe along the Iron Curtain. European integration led to the formation of the Council of Europe and the European Union in Western Europe, both of which have been expanding eastward since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.



1422. **Discuss** Types of Wine.

Types Of Wine		
<u>Red Wines</u>	<u>White Wines</u>	<u>Other Wines</u>
<u>Cabernet</u>	<u>Chablis</u>	<u>Champagne</u>
<u>Sauvignon</u>	<u>Chardonna</u>	<u>Rose</u>
	<u>Semillon</u>	
	<u>Viognier</u>	
		<u>Port</u>
		<u>Sherry</u>
		<u>Vermouth</u>

- 1423. **Discuss** Asia
- 1424. **Discuss** Types of Cocktails
- 1425. **Discuss** Space exploration
- 1426. **Discuss** the U.S.
- 1427. **Discuss** Current News Topics
- 1428. **Discuss** the Stock Market

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

- 1429. **Discuss** World History
- 1430. **Discuss** Genetically Altered Food
- 1431. **Discuss** Classical Music
- 1432. **Discuss** Paranormal<sup>325</sup> Experiences.
- 1433. **Discuss** Theories of Where the Universe Came From
- 1434. **Discuss** Oriental Medicine
- 1435. **Discuss** Medicine
- 1436. **Discuss** Ancient Civilizations
- 1437. **Discuss** Travel
- 1438. **Discuss** Diets<sup>326</sup>
- 1439. **Discuss** types of beer: Some Types of Beer ... LAGERS, ALES, DRY BEERS, DRAUGHT, STOUT BEERS

**Beer** is the world's oldest and most widely consumed alcoholic beverage and the third most popular drink overall after water and tea. It is produced by the brewing and fermentation of starches, mainly derived from cereals — the most common of which is malted barley, although wheat, corn, and rice are also widely used. Most beer is flavored with hops, which add bitterness and act as a natural preservative, though other flavorings such as herbs or fruit may occasionally be included. Alcoholic beverages fermented from non-starch sources such as grape juice (wine) or honey (mead) or distilled after fermentation are not classified as beer.

Some of mankind's earliest known writings refer to the production and distribution of beer: the Code of Hammurabi included laws regulating beer and beer parlors, and *The Hymn to Ninkasi*, a prayer to the Mesopotamian Goddess of Beer, served as both a prayer and as a method of remembering the recipe for beer in a culture with few literate people.<sup>[5][6]</sup> Today, the brewing industry is a global business, consisting of several dominant multinational companies and many thousands of smaller producers ranging from brewpubs to regional breweries.

The basics of brewing beer are shared across national and cultural boundaries, and are commonly categorized into two main types — the globally popular pale lagers and the regionally distinct ales which are further categorized into other varieties such as pale ale, stout and brown ale. The strength of beer may range from less than 1% abv (alcohol by volume) to over 20% abv in rare cases, though is usually around 4% to 6% abv.

Beer forms part of the culture of various beer drinking nations, and has acquired various social traditions and associations, such as beer festivals and a rich pub culture involving activities such as pub crawling or pub games such as bar billiards.

---

<sup>325</sup> Para- means *beyond*. A paranormal experience is an experience that cannot be explained with currently understood principles of science.

<sup>326</sup> The Atkins diet, the Mediterranean diet, the Stillman's diet

76 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.markesl.com>

1440. **Discuss** Movies and Movie Stars

1441. Who do you think the person below is?<sup>327</sup>



1442. Who is the lady below<sup>328</sup>?



1443. Find information about her and discuss her.

1444. Who founded United Artists<sup>329</sup>?

1445. Discuss movie stars. Some Super Stars include... Woody Allen \* Charles Bronson \* Robert DeNiro \* Clint Eastwood \* Gene Hackman \* Diane Keaton \* Ali MacGraw \* Liza Minnelli \* Jack Nicholson \* Ryan O'Neal \* Al

---

<sup>327</sup> Florence Lawrence 1890 – 1938, is credited with being the first movie star, but she is all but forgotten now.

<sup>328</sup> Mary Pickford 1892 -1979, the world's second movie star. At the age of only 21 she was the highest paid actress in the world. She was also co-founder of the film studio United Artists and one of the original 36 founders of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Known as "America's Sweetheart," "Little Mary" and "The girl with the curls," she was one of the first Canadian pioneers in early Hollywood and one of film's greatest pioneers. Her influence in the development of film acting was enormous. Because her international fame was triggered by moving images, she is a watershed figure in the history of modern celebrity. And as one of silent film's most important performers and producers, her contract demands were central to shaping the Hollywood industry. In consideration of her contributions to American cinema, the American Film Institute named Pickford 24th among the greatest female stars of all time.

<sup>329</sup> United Artists was founded in 1919 by Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and D.W. Griffith.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
Pacino \* Robert Redford \* Burt Reynolds \* The Super Stars of the 1980s  
include... Kevin Costner \* Tom Cruise \* Michael Douglas \* Harrison Ford \*  
Mel Gibson \* Goldie Hawn \* Dustin Hoffman \* Steve Martin \* Eddie Murphy  
\* Meg Ryan \* Arnold Schwarzenegger \* Sly Stallone \* Kathleen Turner \*  
Sigourney Weaver \* The Super Stars of the 1990s include... Sandra  
Bullock \* Jim Carrey \* Jackie Chan \* Billy Crystal \* Cameron Diaz \* Jodie  
Foster \* Whoopi Goldberg \* Tom Hanks \* Anthony Hopkins \* Samuel L.  
Jackson \* Demi Moore \* Mike Myers \* Gwyneth Paltrow \* Michelle Pfeiffer \*  
Brad Pitt \* Keanu Reeves \* Julia Roberts \* Adam Sandler \* Will Smith \*  
Wesley Snipes \* Ben Stiller \* Sharon Stone \* John Travolta \* Denzel  
Washington \* Robin Williams \* Bruce Willis \* Current Stars include...  
Pierce Brosnan \* Nicolas Cage \* George Clooney \* Matt Damon \* Johnny  
Depp \* Leonardo DiCaprio \* Angelina Jolie \* Nicole Kidman \* Jennifer  
Lopez \* Uma Thurman \* Daniel Craig \* Catherine Zeta-Jones

### 10. Just for Fun ~ Fifty Silly Questions

1. Why does the sun lighten our hair, but darken our skin?
2. Why can't women put on mascara with their mouth closed?
3. Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of the bottle?
4. Why don't you ever see the headline Psychic Wins Lottery?
5. Why is abbreviated such a long word?
6. Why is a boxing ring square?
7. Why is it considered necessary to nail down the lid of a coffin?
8. Why is it that doctors call what they do practice?
9. Why is it that rain drops but snow falls?
10. Why is it that to stop Microsoft Windows, you have to click on Start?
11. Why is it that when you're driving and looking for an address, you turn down the volume on the radio?
12. Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavor and dishwashing liquid made with real lemons?
13. Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?
14. Why is the third hand on the watch called a second hand?
15. Why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called rush hour?
16. Why isn't there a special name for the tops of your feet?
17. Why isn't there mouse-flavored cat food?
18. If you throw a cat out of the car window, does it become kitty litter?
19. If you take an Asian person and spin him around several times does he become disoriented?
20. Is it OK to use the AM radio after noon?

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

21. What do people in China call their good plates?
22. What do you call a male ladybug?
23. What hair color do they put on the driver's license of a bald man?
24. Why do they sterilize the needle for lethal injections?
25. Why do they call it a pair of pants, but only 1 bra?
26. Why is it called tourist season if we can't shoot at them?
27. Why do you need a driver's license to buy liquor when you can't drink and drive?
28. Why isn't phonetic spelled the way it sounds?
29. Why are there Interstates in Hawaii?
30. Why are there flotation devices in the seats of planes instead of parachutes?
31. Why are cigarettes sold at gas stations where smoking is prohibited?
32. Have you ever imagined a world without hypothetical situations?
33. How does the guy who drives the snowplow get to work?
34. If the 7-11 is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, why does it have locks on the door?
35. You know that indestructible black box that is used on airplanes? Why don't they make the whole plane out of it?
36. If a firefighter fights fire and a crime fighter fights crime, what does a freedom fighter fight?
37. If they squeeze olives to get olive oil, how do they get baby oil?
38. If a cow laughs, does milk come out of her nose?
39. If you are driving at the speed of light and you turn your headlights on, what happens?
40. Why do they put Braille dots on the keypad of a drive-up ATM?

80 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

41. Why is it that when you transport something by car it is called shipment, but when you transport something by ship it's called cargo?
42. Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?
43. Why are they called apartments when they are all stuck together?
44. If con is the opposite of pro, is Congress the opposite of progress?
45. If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport the terminal?
46. Can blind people see their dreams?
47. Why is "bra" singular and "panties" plural?
48. What disease did cured ham actually have?
49. Why does a round pizza come in a square box?
50. Why is it called a pair of pants where there is only one?

***End of Questions***



## Appendix

### Games and Activities

#### Crazy Story

**Level:** Any Level

This is an activity to help students speak in class and be more creative.

- Ask students to write a word on a piece of paper and tell them not to show anyone. This word should be a verb (or whatever should be reviewed).
- The teacher starts telling a story, then stops and chooses a student.
- That student will continue the story and must use his/her word. This student then chooses the next student to continue the story.
- The last student must end the story.
- After the story is over, the students then try to guess what words each student has written on his/her paper. The student who guesses the most words wins the game.

#### Describing Appearances & Characteristics of People

**Level:** Easy to Medium (Low to low intermediate)

Each student is given one sheet of paper. One student sits at the front of a room. He/she describes a person in the class and the rest of the class draws the person being described.

Once the student has finished describing that person, then the class tries to guess the person's identity. Once the person is known, the drawing should be shared with the class.

#### Bang Bang

**Level:** Easy

This can be played using teams or just individuals. For teams, divide the group into two teams. Explain that they are cowboys and they are involved in a duel. One student from each team comes to the front. Get them to pretend to draw their pistols. Say "how do you say..." and a word in their mother tongue. The first child to give the proper translation and shouts "bang" pretending to shoot his opponent is the winner. He remains standing and the other one sits down. Give 1 point for the right answer and 5 extra points if they manage to "kill" 4 opponents in a row. For just individual play, one student can just pick any other student in the class as his dueling partner and the winner picks the next person and so on until there is only one person left in the class.

Naturally, instead of say the word in the students' mother tongue, it would be possible to use a picture or to say a definition or description.

## 82 Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

What's the Question?

**Level:** Any Level

**Type of Activity:** listening and speaking

**Purpose:** review question forms

### **Procedure:**

Form two teams (three will work, but two seems to add just the right amount of competitive tension).

Explain the game, with a few examples of answers in search of questions. Ask, "What's the question?" and get students to correctly say the corresponding questions for your answer.

Have two players--one from each team--come to the front. Style it like a game show if you like, with the students standing side-by-side. If you have access to bells or buzzers, it's even more fun.

Next, read an answer to a question and say, 'What's the question?' The fastest player to respond wins a point for her/his team. New contestants come to the front for a new round.

### Counting Liar Game

**Level:** Any Level

This game is similar to the Alphabet Liar game except it deals with numbers and adding the "S" sound at the end of plural nouns, all you need is a deck of cards.

Divide the students into groups of 4 to 6. Deal all the cards from the deck to the students. The player who has the 2 of Spades begins. This player puts down his 2 of spades and any other 2 he has in his hand FACE DOWN in a pile and proceeds to say "one 2" or "two 2'ssss" then next player proceeds to put down his 3, then 4, then 5 etc...

Let's say the player doesn't have the card he is supposed to put down, for example a 3, the player must try to "lie" or fool the other players into thinking he has the card so he can play... if other students have any doubt they shout "liar" if the player was lying he then pick up the pile at the center of the table. If the player who is accused of lying was telling the truth it is the player who accused him who must pick up the pile in the center.

All players MUST put down a card when it is their turn, even if they do not have the required card. The game is over when one of the players has no more cards.

I use this game to help practice the "s" sound at the end of plural nouns cause most students have a tendency to say "there are 2 dog" rather than "there are 2 dogsssss" this game really helps the message get through. \*\*\*For better explanations see the alphabet liar game.\*\*\*

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

Vacation Cards

**Level:** Medium to Difficult

For this activity you will need a deck of cards, and an imaginative theme that could be crafted into some sort of story. For example, I choose "send the teacher on a vacation". On the board or overhead projector make a list like the following. (You could ask your student for input.)

- A-exciting
- 2-depressing
- 3-expensive
- 4-heroic
- 5-romantic
- 6-fantastic
- 7-sad
- 8-almost fatal
- 9-cheap
- 10-dramatic
- J-happy
- Q-weird
- K-change one option

Prompt the students a little to get them started; perhaps offer a beginning to the story. They then must continue making an oral story by drawing one card and continuing the story along those lines. For example, if they get 4, then the teacher/protagonist must do something heroic or some kind of heroic event must occur. If the students draw a K (or whatever card you stipulate), then they can change one option. This seems to help keep the momentum in the game. Continue through all cards, with the stipulation that the story must be concluded by the end of the deck. Obviously there is a lot of room for variation here. Your word list and theme could be related to your unit of study.

My students really enjoyed this game; it is most interesting if you personalize it and insert yourself or a student (assuming he/she wouldn't mind).

Truth or Lie?

**Level:** Any Level

Based on a group of three (it can be done in pairs, or fours if you write some more questions), each student has a piece of paper with five questions on it (see below) and takes it in turns to ask the person on their left one of their questions. The student answering the question must answer 'Yes I have.' regardless of the truth. The student who asked the question can then ask as many further questions as he likes in order to help him decide whether the truth is being told or not. Obviously, sometimes they'll be telling the truth. The third student can also join in with questions, thereby 'ganging up' on student B. Listen how students fabricate stories in an attempt to avoid questions! When the first student feels he's heard enough he says 'No further questions' and writes 'True' or 'False'

84 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
next to the question. The game then carries on (student B asks a question to student C and so on) When all the questions have been asked the papers are passed to the left for marking i.e. the truth is revealed. The highest score out of five wins.  
This game will really open your eyes to people's ability to LIE.  
Here are the questions. You can use different ones, obviously.

Have you ever?  
spoken to a famous person?  
danced on a table in a public place?  
been trapped in a lift?  
taken an illegal drug?  
sung karaoke?

Have you ever?  
appeared on television?  
left a bar or restaurant without paying?  
written graffiti on a wall?  
appeared in a photograph in a newspaper?  
chased a criminal?

Have you ever?  
done a very dangerous sport?  
won a medal or trophy?  
missed a flight?  
stayed in a five-star hotel?  
swum naked in the sea?

A typical exchange might be something like:

- Have you ever swum naked in the sea?
- Yes I have.
- Where did you do it?
- Erm. On holiday in Majorca.
- Who were you with?
- Some friends.
- What were their names?
- Erm...etc.

Extreme Situations

**Level:** Medium to Difficult

The point of this activity is to make difficult questions involving choosing a course of action in extreme situations. Usually these situations will involve feelings, prejudices, ethics, etc.

Examples 1:

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
You are on a deserted island. There is a motor boat and you are the only one who knows how to drive it. It is up to you to decide which people of the following people you are going to take with you in the boat. There is space for only you and 3 more people.

Here they are:

- a prostitute
- a drug addict
- a dying old man
- a doctor convicted of malpractice
- a child pornographer
- a convicted criminal
- (Note: You should adjust the list to suit the students in your class. Delete some if you find them offensive. Add others that you think would generate good discussion.)

Example 2:

You find a wallet with \$50,000 and the ID of its owner. That money is exactly the amount of money you need to cover the expenses of a delicate operation for your daughter. She needs that operation to survive. What would you do with the money?

And you can create new extreme questions to challenge students to speak.

The Brag Game

**Level:** Medium

This is a simple game I've made up to practice Present Perfect. You make up about 20-30 sentences in Present Perfect describing various activities one would share to brag. For example: "I've eaten lunch with Al Gore".

"Spielberg has asked me to play in his next movie". Students draw a slip of paper with a statement like that, he/she says it aloud to the group and they try to outdo him/her by thinking up a statement which would be more impressive. It might look something like this:

Student1: "I've eaten lunch with Al Gore"

S2: So what? I've eaten lunch with Bill Clinton!"

S3: So what? I've eaten lunch with Al Gore and Bill Clinton"

S4: So what? I've eaten Gore and Clinton for lunch"

When they can't come up with something, they just say WOW looking impressed and move on to the next statement.

S1: Spielberg has asked me to play in his new movie.

S2: So what? I've asked Spielberg to play in MY new movie.

S3: WOW

86 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

Twenty Questions

**Level:** Any Level

Using 3X5 file cards I cut and pasted a number of articles from a catalogue. I write on the board questions such as

Would I find this in the house? (If not assume it is outside)

Does it weigh more than 10 pounds?

Does it have wheels?

Does it have a motor?

Does it make noise?

Do you have one ?

Would you like one?

Can you eat it?

Can you wear it?

Is it used in the summer? (if not therefore it is used in winter)

Students work in pairs and may answer only YES or NO and keep track of the number of questions. You can use many more questions perhaps using words that are new or different.

Stop

**Level:** Medium to Difficult

STEP 1:

On the top of a page each student writes the following: category names:

NAME, PLACE, ACTION, ANIMAL, OBJECT, FRUIT/VEGGY and TOTAL.

STEP 2:

Someone starts saying the alphabet, A, B, C...etc. then someone else interrupts the alphabet-teller shouting: STOP!!!

STEP 3:

Let us suppose the alphabet-teller was interrupted on letter "K". All the participants in the game would try to find words that start with "K" to fill out the category chart. For example one may write: Kansas for "PLACE", koala for "ANIMAL", key for "OBJECT", kiwi for "FRUIT" and so on.

STEP 4:

The participant that finishes filling all categories first shouts STOP!! And all the others should stop writing.

STEP 5:

The participants compare their words. The words repeated by two players are worth 50 points. The words repeated by three or more are worth 25. The words that are not repeated by anyone are worth 100 points. The empty categories are "0". Each player adds up all the points he got for the letter in turn and put the result in the "TOTAL" At the end of the game all the subtotals are added and the one who gets the highest score is the winner.

Create Your Own Similes

**Level:** Easy to Medium

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

1. Present a few similes and the sample sentences to the class. Write the sentences with underline.  
Ex. - The baby's skin was as white as snow.  
- Finishing up the project by himself, the boy was as  
- proud as a peacock.
2. Prepare flashcards with one adjective on each. Students pick out one card in turn and create similes by using the adjective on the card. Emphasize that unique ideas are welcome. Instructor shouldn't be judgmental, and accept any similes as long as they are logical.  
Ex. - as big as Mt. Fuji / as soft as a cotton candy  
Students compare their ideas and discuss which ones are interesting or funny.
3. If time allows play a song which includes a simile, for example the jazz song "As deep as the ocean" and discuss the usage and effectiveness of the simile.

This activity fosters students' creativity and encourages their active participation in the lesson.

#### Word Grab with Songs

**Level:** Any Level

This is a wonderful activity if you think your class needs waking up a little.

Choose a song that the students have or have not heard before. Choose 10-15 pieces of vocabulary from the song and write them on separate pieces of paper. With lower level groups you may want to pronounce the words with the students first. Stick each word to the board with putty (blue tack). Put the students into 2 teams each one in a line before the board. Play the song. When the 2 students at the front of their line hear a word in the song that is on the board they must race each other to grab that word from the board (this can get quite violent!). They then go to the back of the line and it's up to the next pair. The team with the most words wins.

I don't usually stop the tape so don't choose words that come one after the other. If you want to make it more difficult you can put red herrings up. You can usually play the song a couple of times until they get all the words.

#### Add a Word

**Level:** Any Level

**Rationale:** Students practice grammar and syntax.

**Materials:** None.

**Levels:** All levels, though better for more advanced students, because the game is more fun at a quick pace.

**Method:** One student begins a sentence by saying only one word. A second student must say a word which continues the sentence. A third must continue, and so on, until someone says a word that does not fit syntactically or grammatically. If the sentence comes to a

## 88 Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
logical end without error, the next student may say "period" and begin a new sentence with a new word.

The teacher may suggest a topic to get things started. What the students say may also be recorded and played back, so the class can discuss the error that stopped the sentence.

Example:

Teacher: The topic is 'pets'.

First student: "My . . ."

Second student: ". . . dog"

Third student: ". . . has . . ."

Fourth student: ". . . spots . . ."

Fifth student: ". . . brown . . ."

The sentence would stop here. The teacher would ask the students why, hoping someone explains that the adjective 'brown' normally comes before and not after the noun 'spots'.

### Time Indicators

**Level:** Any Level

Rationale: Students practice using different subject pronouns, verb tenses, and the time words and phrases that go with them. They must also be able to recognize different forms of the same verb, especially irregular verbs.

Materials: None.

Levels: All. Beginners can play using only four verb tenses (present, past, future, and present progressive). More advanced can play using all the tenses.

Method: One student says a time word or phrase (e.g. next year, a few days ago). A second student must complete a sentence using the proper verb tense. That student then says a different time word or phrase. A third student uses it to form a sentence, but may not use the same verb or subject pronoun the second student used.

Verb tenses may be repeated if necessary, but verbs may not, and subject pronouns may be repeated only after they have all been used once.

The game can continue as long as the teacher wants, though two runs through all the subject pronouns is an appropriate length. The teacher may write the full sentences on the board, but should at least keep track of which subject pronouns and verbs have been used.

Example:

First student: "At the moment . . ."

Second student: ". . . I am sitting in a classroom."



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

Second student: "Last year . . ."

Third student: ". . . they went to Europe."

Third student: "Every day . . ."

Fourth student: ". . . she takes the bus to work."

Who am I??

**Level:** Any Level

You can use this with any subject. Write the names of famous people (mixed nationalities) on small pieces of paper. Tape a name on the forehead of each student. The individual student should not see his or her paper, but the others should. Then, like with 20 questions, only yes or no questions should be asked. Perhaps start with yourself and ask "Am I am man?" If the answer is yes, I can ask again, but if the answer is no, it's the next person's turn. Play until everyone has guessed who he or she is! This can be played with nationalities, countries, household objects, anything and it's a gas, especially for adult students!!

"Tic Tac Toe" or "Noughts and Crosses"

**Level:** Any Level

This is a good game for a revision or for a reader's discussion. Divide the class into two groups. Draw a grid of nine squares on the board and write a number on each square (from 1 to 9). Prepare nine questions and set one question for each number. The groups call out the numbers and if they answer the question correctly, they get the point. The goal of the game is to make a line (horizontal, vertical or diagonal).

**Vocabulary ~ Some Vital Words in Korean**

Parts of Speech	Classroom world
Noun 명사	Absent 결석하는
Proper noun 고유명사	Annoying 괴롭힘
Common noun 보통명사	Restroom (public building) 화장실
Pronoun 대명사	Cafeteria 카페테리아
Possessive Pronoun	Restaurant 대중음식점
소유대명사	Classroom 교실
Adjective 형용사	Dormitory 기숙사
Possessive Adjective	Hall 강당
소유 형용사	Late 늦은
Verb 동사	Louder 큰 소리로
Adverb 부사	Office 사무실
Preposition 전치사	Professional Business Office 집무실
Conjunction 결합	Practice 연습
Interjection 감탄사	Principal 원장
	Principle 원리
	Repeat 반복
	Study 학문
	Tardy 지각
	Translate 번역하십시요
	Vocabulary 어휘

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

## Language Forms (various structures)

### Questions

Auxiliary verbs: are, is, do, does, have, has, was, were, did.

### Present Simple

Used for: 1) repeated actions 2) Things that are permanent or ongoing for the time-being 3) A state of being ~

"We go out every weekend."

"I work at the post office."

"My sister is very kind."

### Present Continuous

Used for: 1) Things that are happening right now. 2) Ongoing situations, but may not be occurring right now. 3) To describe change. 4) Future plans that are very definite; ones that have already been arranged ~

"Don't bother me; I'm talking on the phone."

"Yes, grandmother, I'm going to college."

"The economy is getting better."

"I'm going to Thailand tomorrow; I already have the plane tickets."

### Comparing Past and Present

I used to \_\_\_\_\_, but now I \_\_\_\_\_.

### Past Simple

Used for acts completed in the past. Acts can be of any length. Verbs can take regular (-ed) and irregular forms (spelling change, or no change at all) ~

"I caught a cold"

"I dropped the plate."

"I used to play tennis when I was in college."

"I was in the Army for five years."

### Past Continuous

Used for: 1) Continuous acts in the past. 2) To describe the background of a situation that occurred in the past. 3) To describe a situation where one is interrupted. 4) To describe past actions that were not completed ~

"I was living in Los Angeles then."

"The wind was blowing and the stars were shining."

## 92 Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"I was just driving down the street officer, when out of nowhere a car came and smashed into me."

"I was attending college."

### Comparatives and Superlatives

Adjectives that end in -er; the -est

#### Comparisons

Not / isn't as .... as .....

..... is more ..... than .....

..... is less ..... than .....

#### Present Perfect

Have / has + Past Participle ~ Speaks of the past in relation to the present.

#### For, since, ago, before

**For**: refers to an ongoing act; **since**: refers to a starting point; **ago**: refers to a time in the past; **before**: refers to one act occurring before another.

#### Present Perfect Continuous

Refers to a continuous act in the past that impacts the present, "I don't want to go because I've already seen it."

#### Relative clauses

A **relative clause** is a subordinate clause that modifies a noun. For example, the noun phrase *the man who wasn't there* contains the noun *man*, which is modified by the relative clause *who wasn't there*

#### Quantifiers

A type of determiner that tell how many or how much: lots of trees, several books, a great deal of confusion

#### See, watch, look

**See** refers to the sense of sight. "I can see that"

**Watch** refers to concentrating on something that's moving, or keeping guard over something, "Could you watch my things while I'm gone."

**Look** refers to the initial act of seeing. "Look, there's a shooting star." "Yes, I see it!" It also means to examine; "I'm just looking over this report," "Oh, you hurt your arm, let me take a look at it."

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

**Some Common Verbs**

Present (plural, I, you)	Present (singular)	Past	Present Participle (requires a "be" verb)	Past Participle (P.P.) (requires have, has, or had)
act	acts	acted	acting	acted
arrive	arrives	arrived	arriving	arrived
break	breaks	broke	breaking	broken
bring	brings	brought	bringing	brought
brush	brushes	brushed	brushing	brushed
build	builds	built	building	built
buy	buys	bought	buying	bought
call	calls	called	calling	called
carry	carries	carried	carrying	carried
catch	catches	caught	catching	caught
clean	cleans	cleaned	cleaning	cleaned
climb	climbs	climbed	climbing	climbed
close	closes	closed	closing	closed
come	comes	came	coming	come
cry	cries	cried	crying	cried
cut	cuts	cut	cutting	cut
do	does	did	doing	done
draw	draws	drew	drawing	drawn
drink	drinks	drank	drinking	drunk
eat	eats	ate	eating	eaten
fall	falls	fell	falling	fallen
fight	fights	fought	fighting	fought
fly	flies	flew	flying	flown
get	gets	got	getting	gotten
give	gives	gave	giving	given
go	goes	went	going	gone
grow	grows	grew	growing	grown
have	has	had	having	had
hear	hears	heard	hearing	heard
hit	hits	hit	hitting	hit
hop	hops	hopped	hopping	hopped
hold	holds	held	holding	held
jump	jumps	jumped	jumping	jumped
keep	keeps	kept	keeping	kept
kick	kicks	kicked	kicking	kicked
know	knows	knew	knowing	known
laugh	laughs	laughed	laughing	laughed

94 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

learn	learns	learned	learning	learned
look	looks	looked	looking	looked
make	makes	made	making	made
meet	meets	met	meeting	met
open	opens	opened	opening	opened
pack	packs	packed	packing	packed
paint	paints	ainted	painting	ainted
play	plays	played	playing	played
pull	pulls	pulled	pulling	pulled
push	pushes	pushed	pushing	pushed
put	puts	put	putting	put
read	reads	read	reading	read
ride	rides	rode	riding	ridden
run	runs	ran	running	ran
say	says	said	saying	said
see	sees	saw	seeing	seen
send	sends	sent	sending	sent
set	sets	set	setting	set
shout	shouts	shouted	shouting	shouted
sing	sings	sang	singing	sung
sit	sits	sat	sitting	sat
sleep	sleeps	slept	sleeping	slept
smell	smells	smelled	smelling	smelled
speak	speaks	spoke	speaking	spoken
stop	stops	stopped	stopping	stopped
stand	stands	stood	standing	stood
swim	swims	swam	swimming	swum
talk	talks	talked	talking	talked
taste	tastes	tasted	tasting	tasted
teach	teaches	taught	teaching	taught
tell	tells	told	telling	told
throw	throws	threw	throwing	thrown
touch	touches	touched	touching	touched
travel	travels	traveled	traveling	traveled
understand	understands	understood	understanding	traveled
wait	waits	waited	waiting	waited
wake	wakes	woke	waking	woken
walk	walks	walked	walking	walked
wash	washes	washed	washing	washed
watch	watches	watched	watching	watched
write	writes	wrote	writing	written

Linking verbs are: the “be verbs”: be, been, will be, is, are, was, were, have, has, had; sense words: looks, smells, feels, tastes, sounds; and: might, become, appear, remain, and seem.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

## Grammar

Most of the grammar difficulty for free talk students is in the area of word order. This section on grammar has been included to show how individual words evolve into complete sentences.

### Parts of Speech

Nouns: Names persons, places, things, or abstract ideas

Henry	Canada	fork	love
-------	--------	------	------

Adjectives: Describes nouns or pronouns.

blue, big, dark, . . . (a, an, & the are special adjectives called articles)
--

Pronouns: Takes the place of pronouns.

I, He, she, it, whatever, they, them, . . .
---

Verbs: Two types -- Tells either what a noun does (action verb) or its state of being (linking verb). Verbs are conjugated into five classes: The first three are the principle forms.

Present (I, you & plural)	past	past participle	present participle	s-form (singular form)
run	ran	ran	running	runs
speak	spoke	spoken	speaking	speaks
live	lived	lived	living	lives

Adverbs: Describes or answers a question about verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. They express time, manner, place, or degree:

very, well, now, quickly      See adverb chart – next page
--

Prepositions: Gives the relationship (spatial or temporal (time)) between two nouns:

in, by, to, on, since, . . .
------------------------------

### Connecting words are prepositions and conjunctions.

Conjunctions: Joins words, phrases, or clauses:

and, but, because, nor, . . .
-------------------------------

Interjections: Expresses emotion:

wow!	Gee!	Oh my God!
------	------	------------

The Three Part Sentence  
Subject – Verb – Complement

A sentence is often divided into subject & predicate. The predicate can also be further divided into verb & complement, giving a sentence three basic parts. The complement is considered to be anything after the verb that completes the meaning of the sentence. There are six basic types of complements: none, direct object, indirect object, predicate nominative, predicate adjective, and object complement.

Subject	Predicate	
	Verb	Complement
John type 1	objected. (verb intransitive)	none
John type2	threw (transitive verb)	the ball (d.o.). direct object (noun or pronoun) The direct object receives the action of the verb.
John type 3	threw (transitive verb)	Bob (i.o.) the ball (d.o.). / the ball (d.o.) to Bob (i.o.) indirect object with direct object (noun or pronoun)
John type 4	became (linking verb)	a doctor (p.n.). predicate nominative or noun (noun or pronoun) The predicate nominative renames the subject
John type 5	became (linking verb)	angry (p.a.). predicate adjective (adjective) The predicate adjective describes/modifies the subject
John Type 6	named (transitive verb)	the dog spot (o.c.). objective complement (renames or describes the object and is a noun, pronoun, or adjective)



Word Order

Subject Area		Verb Area				Complement		
Adverb: Comment Opinion Connecting, etc.	(adj+) Noun or Pronoun	Helping Verbs  Modal verbs  "Be" verbs	Adverb of:  Indefinite Frequency  Focus  Degree, etc.	Main Verb	Adverb of:  Manner  Ind. Freq.	(adv+) (adj+)  Noun  Pronoun or Just Adjective alone	Adverb of place	Adverb of Time Definite Freq.
Fortunately	I	would	always	do		my home- work	at school	every day
	He		often	yells	loudly			
As for me	I			am	always	On time		
	She	has	often	gone		to that store	In Seoul	
	I	am	usually	sleep- ing				when you call
Luckily	my father			is		a very brave man		

\* The "Be" verbs are: be, am, is, are, was, were, been, being.

Types of adverbs and their placement in a sentence

<u>Beginning</u>		<u>Sub-ject</u>		<u>**Verb/object</u>		<u>End</u>		
<i>Indefinite Frequency</i>	Sometimes, Normally, Occasionally, Usually		<i>*Indefinite Frequency</i>	sometimes normally, usually, occasionally,		<i>Indefinite Frequency</i>	sometimes, normally, usually, occasionally,	
<i>Negative Indefinite Frequency</i>	Not once, Never, rarely, (subject must follow an auxiliary verb)			often, regularly, always, never, rarely, seldom, hardly ever,			often, regularly briefly, again	
<i>Connecting</i>	As a result, Similarly, As you can see, Furthermore, Nevertheless, Consequently,		<i>Focus</i>	just, even, only	<i>Manner (There are many more)</i>	sweetly, well, badly, beautifully, slowly, quickly, meekly,	<i>Definite Frequency</i>	daily, hourly, monthly, weekly, etc
<i>Comment</i>	Presumably, Unfortunately, Incidentally, Typically,		<i>Degree</i>	very, completely, totally, quite, rather, really, slightly	<i>Degree adverbs when followed by a manner adverb</i>	very, quite, fairly, rather, slightly, too, very, so	<i>Place (These are sometimes placed at the beginning.)</i>	on the table. in the kitchen, in the car, here, there, outside, inside, etc
<i>Time</i>	In October, Finally, Now, Recently, Soon, Yesterday, Tomorrow,		<i>Time</i>	recently, finally, already, still,			<i>Time</i>	in October, finally, now, recently, soon, yesterday, tomorrow
<i>Viewpoint</i>	Scientifically, Logically, As far as I'm concerned,		<i>Negative</i>	didn't, not (usually precedes another adverb or follows did, does or will)				
<i>Question adverbs</i>	When, Where,							

\*Adverbs of frequency and others in this column go between the auxiliary verb and the main verb, or after a "be" verb.

"I would often go fishing when I was a child."

"He is usually on time."

\*\*When there is an object, adverbs of manner follow the object, not the verb.

"She sang to me softly, every night."

-----  
Example sentences:

*As a matter of fact, I usually go to the one downtown, every evening.*

*There is a really beautiful house up on the hill.*

*As for me, I'd really rather just eat here.*

Tenses in English

- 1 Present (speaks of actions that repeat themselves, a state of being, or an ongoing circumstance)

*I eat breakfast every day; She is kind; I m in college.*

- 2 Past (speaks of an event that has ended in the past)

*I ate breakfast this morning.*

- 3 Future (speaks of a future event)

*I \_\_\_\_\_ clock.*

=====

- 4 Present Perfect (speaks of an event that may or may not continue to the present in a time period that has not ended.)

*I have eaten. I have always eaten breakfast.*

- 5 Past Perfect (speaks of two related past events, one of which occurred before the other)

*I had already eaten before lunch.*

- 6 Future Perfect (speaks of two future events, one occurs by the time the other one occurs, which is often a point in time)

*I will have eaten by noon.*

100 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

7 Present Continuous (speaks of an ongoing action in the present, is often used for definitely arraigned future events). **Continuous tenses usually require a time frame in which the action occurs.**

*I am eating [now]; I m going to New York tomorrow. .*

8 Past Continuous (speaks of an ongoing action in the past)

*I was eating **when you called**.*

9 Future Continuous (speaks of an ongoing action in the future)

*I will be eating **if you come now** **at that time**.*

=====

10 Present Perfect Continuous (speaks of a time period that has not ended and a continuous action that may or may not have ended).

*I s been raining. (recently, but perhaps not now); I ve been studying **for two hours**.*

11 Past Perfect Continuous (relates a past ongoing action with another event in the past)

*I had been eating before he arrived.*

12 Future Perfect Continuous (relates a future ongoing action with a future time or event)

*I will have been eating for ten minutes by the time you get here.*

Common Problems and Mistakes

**A, An, The**

Most nouns require an article or some other determiner -- "The" is definite, while "a/an" is indefinite.	
a	the
<p><b>"a, an" ~ just one (countable noun) of many</b></p> <p>"Hand me a paper clip." "I'd like to eat an apple." "Could you tell me where a doctor is?" "We need to find a store."</p> <p><i>(Pronounce "an" like the "an" in "and" -- not "un")</i>  <i>When speaking quickly "an" can be minimize to sound somewhat like un or en.</i></p> <p><b>When to use "an"</b>                      Use "an" when the following word has the <u>sound</u> of: a, e, i, o, u. <b>Note: The sound is what is important.</b></p> <p align="center">An FBI man.                      A University                      An hour                      An MP3 player.</p> <p>"a" and "an" are usually used with countable nouns, but there are some exceptions:</p> <p>degree or amount ~ "Come a little closer." "... a great deal of work." "... a great fortune." "Just give me a little bit."</p> <p>"a" can also be used to distinguish particular kinds of things that we don't usually count: "... a vivid imagination." "... a dynamic personality." "... a great meal." "I had a great time."</p>	<p><b>The ~ specific singulars, plurals, or uncountables.</b>                      Everyone knows which one or ones being spoken of: "Please hand me the book," (the one you are pointing at or looking at). "Please pass the sugar."</p> <p><b>The ~ Second time spoken of</b>                      "Please get me <u>a</u> glass of water, and put <u>the</u> glass on this table."</p> <p><b>The ~ Uniqueness</b>                      the moon / the sun / the sky / the Earth.</p> <p><b>The ~ The only one nearby</b>                      "I'm going to the zoo." "I'm going to the beach." "I'm going to the library." "I'm going to go fishing at the pond."</p> <p><b>The ~ Generic (The name is symbolic of all of them.)</b>                      "I love to see the ocean." "I love the beach."                      Could also include such things as: doctor or dentist; or public services such as police station, fire station, or even library.</p> <p><b>The ~ The one we always use</b>                      "I'm going to the store / the doctor / the dentist / the library / the market / the shoe store."</p> <p><b>The ~ Superlatives</b>                      The most ..., the tallest, the prettiest, etc.</p> <p><b>The ~ Expressions using "of"</b>                      "I had the time of my life." "He was the life of the party."</p> <p><b>The ~ Part of a system</b>                      "Let's take the subway / the bus." (Bus could also be "a bus" depending on how specific or nonspecific you want it to sound. "Taxi" would usually be "a taxi," but could be "the taxi" if it's setting right there in front of you.</p>
<p><b><u>Using "the" with proper nouns.</u> Most proper nouns do not use "the," but many businesses do as well as a few countries, and some geological features. Native speakers develop a "feeling" when to use "the" with proper nouns. It is difficult to come up with definite rules for all situations, but the following should cover most situations:</b></p> <p><b>Cities</b> ~ Do not use "the" ~ I'm going to Seoul, not <u>the</u> Seoul. <b>No city name</b> has "the" in front of it.</p> <p><b>Countries</b> ~ Only countries that have a plural sound such as those that end in "s" or use the word "united" in their name use "the": <i>the</i> United States, <i>the</i> Philippians, <i>the</i> United Kingdom, <i>the</i> United Arab Emirate. "The Congo" is an exception, but "the" is sometimes not used with Congo anymore. We <b>don't</b> say the Korea, or the Japan, etc.</p> <p><b>Plurals in general</b> ~ All plural proper nouns are preceded by "the," even people's names: the Joneses, the Smiths.</p> <p><b>Stores</b> ~ If the name sounds like something tangible (something that can be seen or touched) then use "the.": "I'm going to <b>the</b> Galleria / <b>the</b> Broadway." If the name is just contrived or named after a person, then do not use "the": "I'm going to Lotte / Say / Costco / Carrefour / E-Mart / Sears / Macy's / JC Penney / Woolworth." Naturally if the name is followed by "store" or "department store" then you add the "the": "The Sears Department Store."</p> <p><b>Hotels</b> ~ With hotels a person's name is usually preceded with "the" as well as names that sound like a physical thing: "Let's stay at the Ritz / the Hilton / the Star / the Flamingo" But, names like Star 66 / Circus Circus / Ballys," have no "the."</p> <p><b>Rivers and Beaches</b> ~ Rivers use "the," but beaches do not: The Han River vs. Hyundai Beach.</p> <p><b>Islands</b> ~ Do not use "the" for islands unless they are plural: the Hawaiian islands.</p> <p><b>Other issues</b> ~ <b>If the proper noun is used like an adjective, there is no "the"</b> ~ Carnegie Hall or Rockefeller Center. However, in the following the use of an actual adjective with the proper noun, such as "opera" or "cultural," requires the use of "the": The Sydney Opera House or The Saejeong Cultural Center.</p> <p><b>Mountains</b> ~ Use "the" for mountain ranges, but not for single mountains: the Rocky Mountains vs. Mt. St. Helens.</p> <p><b>Planets</b> ~ <b>"The"</b> is only used with Earth. Note: "Earth" is capitalized only when spoken of as one of the nine planets.</p>	

**Grammar Rules for ESL students**

- 1) **Pluralize words when you are talking about them in general:**  
 Not: "I like dog," or "I like a dog." But:> "I like dogs"  
 Not: "I like to see movies and read a book." But:> "I like to see movies and read books. You can emphasis a particular type: "I like to read a good book."
- 2) **"I like to sing a song" or "I like to read a book" ~ should be corrected to just be "I like to sing," and "I like to read."** We can assume you sing *songs* and read *books*.
- 3) **Don't put "was" before another complete verb:**  
 Not: "I was ran yesterday." But:> "I ran yesterday." Please never say someone "... was died." That sounds especially strange.
- 4) **Present Participles (verb + -ing) need a "be" verb in front of them.**  
 Not: "I reading a book," But:> "I'm reading a book."
- 5) **Use "too" with positive statements and "neither" with negatives statements:**  
 "I like Kimchi," "I do too"; "I don't like Kimchi," "Me neither / Neither do I."
- 6) **Use "to" with only the basic form of the verb:** Not: "I want to running." But:> "I want to run," No -ing. Exceptions: "I look forward to seeing you."
- 7) **Don't use "to" with past tense verbs, only present tense.**  
 Not: "I like to ran." But:> "I like to run."
- 8) **Don't use "a" or "the" before meal names:** Not: "I ate a breakfast this morning," But:> "I ate breakfast this morning."
- 9) **Don't repeat the subject in the form of a pronoun directly after the subject.**  
 Not: "Americans they are very fat." But:> "Americans are very fat."
- 10) **Don't use "a," "an," or "the" to mean generalizations except in scholarly or very formal situations.**  
 Not "I like to read a book." But:> "I like to read books."  
 Not "The cat is a beautiful animal." But:> "Cats are beautiful animals."  
*Scholarly:* Used before a singular noun indicating that the noun is generic: *The wolf is an endangered species. A cat is a feline.*
- 11) **Going somewhere specific requires the preposition "to" except for "home."**  
**Do not use "to" for places using "up" or "down." Do not use "to" with non-specific words like "abroad" or "overseas. Do not use "to" with pronouns.**  
 Not: "I'm going Gwangju." But:> "I'm going to Gwangju."  
 Not: "I'm going to home." But:> "I'm going home."  
 Not: "I'm going to downtown." But:> "I'm going downtown."  
 Not: "I'm going to there." But:> "I'm going there."
- 12) **Don't incorrectly place verbs in the "subject" or "complement" of the sentence.**  
 Not: "I like sing." But:> "I like to sing." Or, "I like singing." (Turn the verb into a noun by using "to" in front of it, or by adding "-ing" -- not all verbs can use both methods.) Note: some verbs can produce a secondary verb (infinitive without "to"), such as *help, make, let, and verbs of perception (see below)*. >> "My mother made me *eat* the hamburger," "I watched him *fall*."

(See next page)

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

Subject	Verb	Complement
Nouns or pronouns including modifying adjectives	Verbs, verb phrases, and phrasal verbs	Objects, indirect objects, predicate adjectives. predicate nominative or object compliment
Use infinitive or gerunds here		Use infinitives or gerunds here.

**13) Don't leave out the "do" part of "don't."** "Not" is not a helping verb.

Not: "I not have any money." But:> "I don't have any money."

**14) Put a "determiner" in front of most nouns (a, an, the, my, his, her, some, much, your).**

Not: "I like teacher." But:> "I like my teacher."

Not: "My father is truck driver." But:> "My father is a truck driver."

**15) Don't put "very" before verbs.**

Not: "I very like you." But:> "I like you very much."

**16) Don't use two "determiners"**

Not: "I'm having a my birthday party." But:> "I'm having my birthday party."

**17) When making a negative statement begin with a negative word:** Not:

"Everybody doesn't want to go." **But:** "Nobody wants to go."

**18) Don't use adverbs in place of adjectives.**

Not: "He is very kindly." But:> "He is very kind." (Saying, "The kindly old man..." is ok)

<p><b>Instructions:</b> Choose the correct answer.</p> <p><b>Q1 - She played ____.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> beautiful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> beautifully</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> beautifully</p> <p><b>Q2 - The TV's far too ____.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> loud</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> loudly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Either could be used here.</p> <p><b>Q3 - She speaks so very ____.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> quick</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> quickly</p> <p><b>Q4 - She's a ____ learner.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> quick</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> quickly</p>	<p><b>Q9 - He should pass the test ____.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> easy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> easily</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> easilly</p> <p><b>Q10 - He's really lazy and ____ tries.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> hard</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> hardly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Either could be used here.</p> <p><b>Q11 - The newspapers were very ____ of the scheme.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> critical</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> critically</p> <p><b>Q12 - He's ____ ill.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> critical</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> critically</p>
--	--

104 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

<p><b>Q5 - I know them quite ____.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> good</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> well</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Either could be used here.</p> <p><b>Q6 - Check your work ____.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> careful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> carefully</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> carefully</p> <p><b>Q7 - I've been having a lot of headaches ____.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> late</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> lately</p> <p><b>Q8 - He's a ____ actor.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> terrible</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> terribly</p>	<p><b>Q13 - I don't ____ agree with you.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> full</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> fully</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> fully</p> <p><b>Q14 - I was ____ shocked.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> complete</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> completely</p> <p><b>Q15 - It was a ____ mess.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> complete</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> completely</p> <p><b>Q16 - They messed things up ____.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> complete</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> completely</p> <p><b>Q17 - It was a ____ day for us all.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> sad</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> sadly</p>
---	---

**19) Use “going to,” not “will” for planned future events.**

Not: “I will go to Seoul tomorrow.” But:> “I m going to go to Seoul tomorrow.”

**20) Use “would” when talking about future imaginary things.**

Not: “I like to have a big house in the country.” But:> “I would like to have a big house in the country.”

**21) Use “have to” not “should” for things that are mandatory. “Should” means: it’s just a good idea, but you don’t have to do it.**

Not: “I should pick up my mother at the airport.” But:> “I have to pick up my mother at the airport.” Don’t say “must;” “must” is stronger than “have to” and is used in “emphatic” (forceful) statements or by people in authority.

**22) Don’t say “wide” when you mean big. Say “big” when you mean big and “wide” when you mean wide; i.e., “The board is 10 feet long and 8 inches wide.”**

**23) “I envy you” ~ is not natural English. Say “I’m so jealous” or “That really makes me jealous,” “That makes me so jealous.”**

**24) Don’t say “until” when you mean “by” ~ “By” means no later than. “Until” means a continuous action that happens up to a specific time, but not after: “I’ll finish studying by 9:00.” “I’ll study until 9:00.”**



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

**Instructions:** "By" and "until" are two words that are often confused by learners. Students should take the following test:

<p><b>Q1 - I'll keep phoning ____ you pay me.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q2 - It's open from 7am ____ 5pm.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q3 - It must be finished ____ Friday afternoon.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q4 - She'll be staying at the hotel ____ Friday.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q5 - She'll be here at five, ____ which time you mustn't leave the room.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q6 - I'll be ready ____ the time you get here.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q7 - I'll stay here ____ five o'clock.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q8 - She'll be here at five, ____ which time I expect you to have finished the work</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p>	<p><b>Q9 - I'll have it ready ____ four o'clock at the latest.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Either could be used here.</p> <p><b>Q10 - ____ the time I get to Phoenix, she'll be getting up.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> By</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Until</p> <p><b>Q11 - We'd better wait ____ Tony's here.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q12 - She had promised to be back ____ five o'clock.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q13 - The application must be in ____ the 1st.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q14 - Don't move ____ I tell you.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p> <p><b>Q15 - Once he starts a decorating job he won't stop ____ it's finished.</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> until</p>
---	---

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

- 25) Using “until” to mean having done something to the present** ~ It is common for ESL students to say things such as: “I’ve studied music until now.” When one understands “until” to mean to do something for a period of time and then stop, the sentence does not convey the desired meaning. It implies that the person is no longer studying music. Saying “up to [till] now” is better, but most native speakers would rephrase the entire statement and say “I’ve been studying music for X years,” or “I’ve been studying since I was X years old.”
- 26) Try not to always use “so” to replace “very,” “a lot,” or “really.”** Instead of saying “The Wonder Girls are so popular,” try saying “The Wonder Girls are really popular.” “So” has a conjunctive feeling and tends to imply more information is coming, thus can give many sentences a feeling of not being finished. Using “a lot” is very common: “I like it a lot”; however “a lot” is not considered to be a real word by grammarians and is not usually found in dictionaries.
- 27) Use the proper preposition ~ Preposition usage can be confusing; you must study them**

Take this preposition quiz (answers are on the next page)

1. You can sit  the table. Dinner is ready.
2. What's wrong  John today? He looks so sad.
3. I got married  her last year.
4. What do you usually do  the weekends?
5. Today is the 15th  January.
6. This birthday present is  your sister.
7. There are many stories  vampires.
8. There are four  us in the family.
9. She goes  the movies every Saturday.
10. My parents are  vacation in Europe.
11. I rode  the car / taxi / van.
12. I rode  the bus / plane / train / motorcycle.
13. Let's have a look  your collection of coins.

**Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English** 107

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

14. It sometimes snows  November.
15. I often go visit our grandma  the evening.
16. My birthday is  June.
17. My birthday is  June 21<sup>st</sup>.
18. I went to school  Harvard university.
19. Please put this  the corner.
20. I am  my last year of college.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

(Answers to preposition quiz: at, with, to, on, of, for or from, about, of, to, on, in, on, at, in, in, in, on, at, in, in.)

**28) Don't say "the next day" when you meant "tomorrow."**

Not: "I'll see you the next day." But;> "I'll see you tomorrow."

**29) Multiple singular nouns following a "be" verb don't make it plural. It remains singular:**

Not: "There are my brother and sister." But;> "There is my brother and sister."

**30) Not all compound subjects form a plural verb.** We would not say "Here are my passport and registration card," but instead would say "Here **is** my passport and registration card." We would not say "There are my pencil and paper," but instead would say "There **is** my pencil and paper." We would not say "Thunder and lightening were frightening to me," but instead would say "Thunder and lightening **was** frightening to me." Such compound subjects are so closely related in the context spoken of that they become "conjoined" into a single idea or subject.

**31) The plural of person is usually "people."** Only use "persons" when you are emphasizing each person of the group. Ex. "The persons responsible for committing the crime will be apprehended."

**32) "In these days" ~ Should be just "These day," "Now-a-days," or "recently."**

**33) "Almost" means "nearly" and must be followed by a quantity, most commonly "all."** Don't say, "Almost my friends like fashionable clothes"; say "Almost **all** my friends like fashionable clothes." Using specific numbers like "Almost 90 people came to the party," is grammatical, but could sound a little strange depending in context (If the person is certain the amount was not over 90 people, then he would probable the know the exact number and just say the exact number.) If one is estimating, one would say "About 90 people came ... ." Saying "Nearly [or almost] "half" would probably be acceptable in most situations. Note: Only use "Almost all ...," with positive statement. For negative statements say "Almost **nobody** or no one ... ."

**34) "Most of" refers to a subset of a group.** Don't say "Most of Koreans like dogs," say "Most Koreans like dogs." (leave out the "of") "Most of .." is used to limit the group: "However, most of the Koreans I know prefer cats."

**35) later ~** We don't say "See you two weeks **later**" or "Come back two weeks **later**." You should say "See you **in** two weeks" or "...two weeks **from now**..." "Come back **in** two weeks." "Later" is a comparative adjective and requires the comparing of two time periods: "Mary came five minutes later than Joan." The expression "I'll see you later" is alright. Also **do not say "Come back in two weeks later."** Saying "after" is not usually used with a time period in second person (referring to the person being spoken to), but could probably sound acceptable as long as the word *after* comes before the time phrase, not after. Not: "Came two days after," but instead say "Come back after two days."

**36) Don't put "the" in front of city names.** Just say "I'm going to Gwangju," not "I'm going to the Kwangju."

**37) Everyone, everybody ~** Any word or phrase with "every" is always singular: "Everyone *likes* good food."

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

- 38) **“fun” vs. “funny”** ~ Something is fun if it's enjoyable in a happy exciting way. Something is “funny” if it makes us laugh. The amusement park ride was fun, not funny. The man was funny (he made us laugh).
- 39) **“bored” vs. “boring”** ~ A person gets bored from watching or doing something that's boring. We don't say “I'm boring,” we say “I'm bored.”
- 40) **“said like that”** ~ We don't say “He said *like* that.” We just say “He said that”. – no “like.
- 41) **Don't use “more” with comparative adjectives.**  
Not: I like it more better than that one. But:> I like it better than that one.
- 42) **“recommend”** ~ Don't say “I recommend to you ...” We recommend information, so the word recommend is followed by “that”: “I recommend that you lose weight.” However “that” is understood even when not said, so it is considered optional: “I recommend you lose weight.”
- 43) **play vs. go** ~ We “play” most sports that are games, but just do others. We play tennis, basketball, soccer, badminton, pool, etc. We don't play swimming, running, skiing, or skating. With golf, we use both terms, “I'm going to play golf,” or “Let's go golfing.” Exception: We don't play bowling; we just go bowling (though it's clearly a game).
- 44) **noon and midnight** ~ Noon is PM, midnight is AM.
- 45) **diligent** ~ This word is very rarely used. Try saying, “He is hard working,” or “He works hard.”
- 46) **red color** ~ When speaking of a color, don't use the word “color”; just say the name of the color: “The car is red,” not “The car is red color.”
- 47) **“drunk” vs. “drunken”** ~ Native speakers never use the word “drunken”: “I'm drunk,” “We got drunk,” “The drunk man ...” Always use “drunk.”
- 48) **clever** ~ Don't say “clever” when you mean “smart.” These words are not the same. “Clever” means thinking in an original way, having a good idea, or thinking in an imaginative way. If a person is intelligent then just say “smart.” If he did something original that the average person would not have thought of, then say “clever.”
- 49) **“I need to lose my weight.”** “My weight” is all of your weight. Just say; “I need to lose weight / some weight.”
- 50) **“... before”** “I saw him five years **before**.” Say: “I saw him five years **ago**.”
- 51) **“Close from here”** This should be **“Close to here”** compare: **“...far from here.”** Also, don't use “to” with the word “near.” Say “It's near the post office,” not “It's near *to* the post office.”
- 52) **A, an, or one, is singular.** Never say “an hours,” “one hours,” “one years,” etc.
- 53) **Saying “It's good for your health”** is not as natural as saying “It's healthy.”
- 54) **“Eat medicine”** ~ We **take** medicine or vitamins; we don't eat them.
- 55) **I'm a good cooker,** should be “I'm a good **cook**”
- 56) **We don't say “I got married with her.”** We say “I got married **to** her.”
- 57) **“Food” is not usually countable.** Don't say “I liked all the foods.” Say “I liked all the food.”
- 58) **Distinguish between eating and drinking.** We drink liquids, we don't eat liquids.

## 110 Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

- 59) Until now means something continued up to now, but then changed.** You shouldn't say "I've studied math until now" because that sounds like you no longer study math. Saying "Up to [till] now," sounds better, but most native speakers would rephrase the entire sentence and say something like "I've studied math for X years" or "I've studied math since \_\_\_\_\_."
- 60) Respectively** ~ This word is used to clarify the relationships of two sets of things. For instance, "The glass, plate, and fork cost two-dollars, four-dollars and one-dollar respectively," (the two sets of items are listed in the same respective order). This is confusing to many ESL students, which can be seen in the following quote taken from a book published by Korean Herald: "Three of them crashed in the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon respectively." "Respectively" in the foregoing sentence makes no sense because there is no one-to-one correspondence between planes and buildings.
- 61) Especially I** ~ Adverbs of focus should be placed directly in front of the main verb of the sentence or the exact word they modify. We do not say, "Especially I like chocolate ice-cream." Instead say: "**I especially** like chocolate ice-cream."

### Konglish Problems

- 62) black eyes** ~ Nobody has "black eyes." Say "My eyes are brown (or dark-brown)."
- 63) oil** ~ This is often used to mean gasoline in Korea. Motor oil goes directly in the engine. Gasoline or "gas" is what we put into our fuel tanks.
- 64) Are you ok?** ~ Don't say this when you mean "Is that alright with you?" Say: "Is that ok?" "Are you ok?" means: Are you hurt?, or Have you been injured
- 65) department** ~ This is Konglish for department store. When talking to a native speaker of English, you must include the word "store."
- 66) night** ~ This is Konglish for nightclub. You should say "nightclub."
- 67) cup** ~ This is Konglish for glass (A cup has a handle or is made of paper or plastic): "A glass of Coke."
- 68) toast** ~ This is Konglish for a toasted sandwich. You should just say "sandwich" and "please toast the bread."
- 69) hip** ~ This is Konglish for "butt." We have two hips – where the bones are.
- 70) toilet** ~ bathroom – restroom (Say "restroom" for public buildings and "bathroom" for homes.) Saying "toilet" sounds a little impolite
- 71) handle** ~ This is Konglish for steering wheel.
- 72) cunning** ~ Should be "cheating." Cunning means a planned, skillful, and subtle, deceptiveness: "The bank robbers were cunning."
- 73) dessert** ~ is not coffee, cider, tea, or cola. It's only: ice cream, cake, pie, banana splits, or something else that is sweet and something you eat after having dinner.
- 74) car number** ~ Konglish for License plate number.
- 75) jelly** ~ Konglish for Jell-o. Jelly is made from fruit juice and is what we spread on bread or toast. Jam is similar, but is made from boiled fruit and has pieces of the actually fruit in it. The dessert is called by its brand name: Jell-o, not jelly.
- 76) hand phone** ~ Not a bad name actually, but Americans say *cell phone* or *mobile phone*.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

- 77) **hobby** ~ A hobby is NOT just anything you do in your spare time. “**hob·by**<sup>1</sup> *n.* *pl. hob·bies* An activity or interest *pursued outside one's regular occupation* and engaged in primarily for pleasure.” So, it is something that is **pursued** and is somewhat like an occupation. It's not going to movies, listening to music, watching TV, or reading books. Hobbies are things that are pro-active, not passive. Hobbies involve work! Things like collecting stamps or coins, making models, doing ceramics, wood working, and photography are hobbies. Playing a musical instrument or involvement in sports are usually not considered true hobbies, but rather are skills.
- 78) **“I have a promise / plan .”** ~ This is Konglish for “I have an appointment” (usually for a doctor or dentist, etc.), “I have something to do,” or “I already have plans.” “Do you have any plans?”
- 79) **sign pen** ~ Konglish for marker
- 80) **having an “event.”** ~ This is Konglish for having a “special” or having a “sale.”
- 81) **sharp** ~ is Konglish for “mechanical pencil.”
- 82) **back-mirror** ~ Konglish for “rear-view-mirror.”
- 83) **potatoes** (at fast food restaurants) ~ Potatoes that are cut and deep fried are called “French fries” or just “fries,” not potatoes: “I would like a cheese burger and fries, please.”
- 84) **coating** ~ Koreans say “coating” for lamination. The word “coating” would be used for liquids that dry and cover or protect; solids bonded together are **laminated**.
- 85) **hot dog** ~ In Korea the hotdogs that come on a stick are called “hotdogs,” but western people call them “corndogs” because they are covered with corn batter. A hot dog refers to a hot dog (the meat) in a hot dog bun to westerners.

## **Infinitives**

Infinitives are the base form of any verb. Therefore, infinitives ARE verbs, but can be used as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs when placed in other parts of the sentence than the normal structural verb position. Infinitives often require the particle or marker "**to**", but not always.

Knowing how to use infinitives and when to use or not to use "**to**" with an infinitive can be difficult for students of ESL, but here are some guidelines:

### **1**

Used as a noun

**To sleep** is the only thing on my mind. (With the "**to**" the sentence more directly focuses on sleep as an objectively spoken of subject, rather than the act of sleeping).

**Sleep** is the only thing on my mind. (**Sleep** here is a true noun, not an infinitive, yet more closely refers to the act of sleeping.)

**To sleep / sleep** functions as a noun because it is the subject of the sentence.

No matter how interesting the horror movie was, Mary turned her head and refused **to look**.

**To look** functions as a noun because it is the direct object for the verb **refused**, and requires "**to**".

### **2**

Used as an adjective requires "**to**".

Wherever John goes, he always brings a magazine **to read**.

**To read** functions as an adjective because it modifies magazine and requires "**to**".



### 3

Used as an adverb requires **"to"**.

William left the apartment **to throw** the trash into the dumpster.

**To throw** functions as an adverb because it explains *why* William left the apartment, and requires **"to"**.

My brother and I went to Colorado **to ski**.

**To ski** functions as an adverb because it explains *why* my brother and I went to Colorado, and requires **"to"**.

### 4

Used with certain main verbs does **not** require **"to"**.

An infinitive does not take the marker **"to"** when certain main verbs are used. These verbs are: **see, hear, feel, watch, notice, make, help, and let.**

The pattern is as follows:

**SPECIAL VERB + DIRECT OBJECT + INFINITIVE (- TO)**

My mother made me **eat** the spinach.

**Eat** serves as a verb because it is the verb of the object **me**.

**5**

When an infinitive is used as an act the subject will do at a later time, the **"to"** is usually considered superfluous; that is, not necessary, unless emphasis is desired. Some statements take the **"to"** better than others.

My friend and I are going to go **(to)** eat. (**"To"** is not required, but may be desirable in some situations where one wants to emphasize what one is going to do; "Hey mom, we're supposed to go **to eat** now!")

**Note:** In statements like, I'm going **to run**, requires **"to"**, but here the **"to"** is part of the verb phrase "am going to" and is not a marker for the infinitive **run**.

Here are examples where **"to"** would usually sound awkward and needless:

We are going to go **(to)** run.

I'm going to go **(to)** swim.

I'm going to go **(to)** rest now.

**Exception:** We are going to go **to sleep** now ~ would be quite common because **to sleep** is an expression of its own. Though, it is also possible to simply say: We are going to go **sleep** now. **To sleep** would place more emphasis on the act of falling asleep, while **sleep** would place more emphasis on the act of actually sleeping.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

**Summary of infinitives without to**

**after auxiliaries/modals (these verbs are still part of the main verb phrase and still serve as the main verb)**

can	He <b>can run</b> very fast.
could	As a boy he <b>could run</b> very fast.
may	I <b>may fly</b> to Africa this summer.
might	I <b>might fly</b> to Africa this summer.
must	I <b>must go</b> now.
mustn't	You <b>mustn't smoke</b> here.
needn't	You <b>needn't go</b> .
shall	We <b>shall sing</b> a song.
should	We <b>should sing</b> a song.
will	She <b>will cook</b> a meal for his birthday.
would	She <b>would cook</b> a meal for his birthday.

**after do**

do	I <b>don't know</b> .
----	-----------------------

**after the following expressions:**

had better	You <b>had better clean up</b> your room.
would rather	Susan <b>would rather study</b> for her exam tomorrow.
why should we not	<b>Why should we not go</b> by car?
why not	<b>Why not ask</b> your neighbor for help?
why should we	<b>Why should we go</b> by car?

**The following produce a secondary verb in the complement of the sentence:**

would sooner	I <b>would sooner read</b> a book than <b>watch</b> this film.
--------------	--

**after verbs of perception + object:**

see	They <b>saw him climb</b> up the latter.
hear	I <b>heard Rodger sing</b> a song.
feel	She <b>feels the rain fall</b> on her face.
watch	He <b>watched the thieves steal</b> a car.
notice	Melody <b>noticed the boy climb</b> the tree.

**after make + object:**

make	She <b>made Peggy and Samantha clean</b> the room.
------	--

**after help + object:**

help	Father <b>helped me build</b> a tree house.
------	---

**after let + object:**

let	Sandy <b>let her child go</b> out alone.
let's	<b>Let's go</b> for a <b>walk</b> through the park.

116 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

**Use a Gerund or Infinitive?**

Gerunds are similar to infinitives, but use an -ing ending. They are not always interchangeable. The main verb of the sentence determines whether or not you should use a gerund or infinitive.

These verbs can be followed by either a gerund or an infinitive:

begin, can't bear, can't stand, continue, hate, hesitate, intend, like, love, prefer, pretend, and start. *Note: Gerunds sound slightly more casual than infinitives.*

These verbs can only take an Infinitive:

agree (I agree to work for you)  
ask (He asked to mow my lawn.)  
assent  
beg  
claim  
decide  
expect  
have  
hope  
manage  
mean  
offer  
plan  
pretend  
promise  
refuse  
say  
wait  
want  
wish

These verbs can only take a Gerund:

admit (I admit stealing your purse)  
adore (I adore listening to classical music.)  
appreciate  
avoid  
consider  
deny  
detest  
discuss  
dislike  
enjoy  
escape  
finish  
imagine  
keep  
mind  
miss  
postpone  
practice  
put off  
quit  
recall  
recollect  
resent  
resist  
risk  
suggest  
tolerate  
understand

Complete meaning change:

forget, remember, stop, try  
He stopped to eat.  
He stopped eating.  
He remembered to eat.  
He remembered eating.

**Pronunciation Problems**

<b>sh, ch, k, p, ss followed by –ed</b> ▷▷   Pronounce the –ed like a ta with no sound.
---

Finished, watched, washed, wished, baked, knocked, barked, capped,
--

- Ball, doll, fall,** ~ pronounce “all.”   **Walk, work** ~ pronounce the “r” in work
- Dog** ~ not dohg with a long “o”. Hog, bog, frog: hahg, bahg, frahg.
- Live vs. Leave** ~ “live” has no long e sound.
- An** ~ is “an” like in the work “and,” not “un.”
- How about you** ~ pronounce the “t”, not How about you.
- Asks** ~ As-kssss (no sound for the kssss)
- Supermarket** ~ not shupermarket; City - not shity; superman, boxing, MBC, CBS
- Warm** ~ not wahm (pronounce your r’s)
- Eggs** ~ not ae-gges, but aegez
- Dinner** ~ say den-er, not deener (no long e sound)
- You vs. Jew** ~ Don’t pronounce You like Jew.
- Pool vs. Pull** ~ Pool has the oo sound, while pull is more like el.
- Film** ~ not fil-um. It’s just ONE syllable “film” not “fil-um”.
- Wood, would** ~ Not oo, but woa. Pronounce the “w” stongly.
- Women** ~ woman – women. The “o” changes its sound to an “e.”
- Vitamin** ~ “vitamin” has a long “I” sound.
- Book, foot, look** ~ No OO sound.
- Thought vs. sought** ~ Don’t pronounce “thought” with an “s.”
- Church, beach, trash, fish,** No –y sound at the end.
- “R” “L”** ~ Work, rice, lice, really,
- “f” “p”** ~ fish, piss,
- Sounds that are not in the Korean language:** **F** ~ friend, **V** ~ victory, **W** ~ wide, **Z** ~ zebra, zoo
- Zoo** ~ ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ oo Pronounce the Z strongly.

**Some Supplemental Grammar Issues**

<b>When not to use plural “be” verbs:</b>	<b>Correct</b>
Here are my passport and alien registration card. (There are two items, but not of the same thing or of the same group) There are my mother and father.  Five set of tennis are enough for me	Here is my passport and alien registration card.  There is my mother and father. There are my parents. Five sets of tennis <b>is</b> enough for me (Use “is” because playing 5 sets was a <u>single</u> experience.)
<b>Using <u>a</u>, <u>an</u>, or <u>the</u> for generalizations:</b>	
I like a hamburger. (This is too general for “a”.)	I like hamburgers. However, “I like <b>a</b> hamburger with pickles” is ok because

118 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

<p>I like <i>a</i> dog. (This is too general for “a”.)</p> <p>Horses evolved from the prehistoric animal called a Dawn Horse. (This is ok, but using “the” would be more scientific sounding.)</p> <p>The horse is fun to ride. (“The” here doesn’t work for a generalization because it’s not a scientific statement.)</p>	<p>hamburgers that will get pickles are more specific than “all hamburgers”. I like dogs. However, “I like a faithful dog” is ok because it is specifically talking about a particular kind of dog you like.)</p> <p><b>The</b> horse evolved from the .... (Use “The” and sometimes “a or an” for scientific generalizations)</p> <p>Horses are fun to ride. (For ordinary language pluralize when speaking in generalizations.)</p>
<p><b>Use of “much” (non-countable) and “many” (countable)</b></p>	
<p>We had too much things to do.</p> <p>We have lost too much things.</p> <p>You have very many money.</p>	<p>We had too <b>many</b> things to do. (“Things” always refers to something that is countable, so it always goes with “many”, except in the expression “... too much of a good thing ...: “Too much of a good thing can kill you.)</p> <p>We have lost too <b>many</b> things.</p> <p>We have lost too <b>much</b> of the Korean culture.</p> <p>We have lost too <b>many</b> customs of the Korean culture.</p> <p>You have very <b>much</b> money. (“Money” is non-countable.)</p>
<p>...these days. (ok, but over used)</p>	<p>...recently.</p>
<p>...and also...</p>	<p>Don’t place these words together. .. and <b>I</b> also... (Use to <u>distinguish</u> two items.)</p> <p>I sell shoes, and I also sell neckties. I not only sell shoes, but I also sell neckties.</p>
<p>I catch a cold.</p>	<p>I caught a cold?</p>
<p>Almost my friends ...</p>	<p>Almost <b>all</b> my friends ...</p>
<p>Just I Only I Especially I</p>	<p>Put adverbs of focus before the verb: “I only like science fiction movies”</p>
<p>Play = Have a good time.</p>	

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

**Samples of Student Mistakes**

Here is a list of typical student mistakes. Students should add their own mistakes to the list.

The bus driver, he drove too fast.

The bus driver drove too fast.

I had a great time, I'm feeling very funny.

I had a great time I'm feeling very happy.

Squash is not difficult to me.

Squash is not difficult for me.

I came to here.

I came here.

I went to home

I went home.

I recommend you to go84.864 76.84.86r

120 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
Speech Improvement

This section contains words that are difficult to pronounce or difficult to distinguish for many ESL students.

Compare the following word in each column. Students should practice differentiating the sounds.	
leave (long e) lever pool (pooh) fool goose food roof poor (tour) deposit important order	live (short i) liver pull (pudding) full  pour (or) deficit impotent odor

No ooh sound like in Pooh

wood, would, could -- Get the full "w" sound, practice saying woof (like the sound a dog makes)  
 foot, book, look  
 football

Work on sounds that are not in Korean

F, V, W, Z			
F	friend	W	wide
V	victory	Z	zebra, zoo

Other mispronounced words

film	judge	strange
milk	firm	early
correct	dinner	sheep
sunshine	women	ship

Don't pronounce l's like r's

Really (not rearry)  
 ball (not bar)  
 doll (not dar)



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

Many –ed words are pronounced like -t with no sound for the t, only air, such words often have sh or ch before the ed:

finished – say finisht

washed – say washt

wished – say wisht

watched -- say watcht

Don't put "y" sounds after sh and ch words

church (not churchy)      ash (not ashy)

beach (not beachy)      trash (not trashy)

English (not Englishy)      fish (not fishy)

Common problem areas

Don't put "a" sounds after words

We must(a) act(a) now.

Don't put thinking sounds after words

(ah) Well, I (ah) think (ah) that (ah) . . .

Confused terms

drunken vs. drunk ("drunken" is not commonly used, just say "drunk")

loan / lend vs. borrow (loan is to give, borrow is to receive)

I have a promise (s/b I have an appointment, or I've already make plans. Note: plans is pluralized.)

I recommend to you . . . (s/b I recommend that you, or I recommend you . . .)

Overused Expressions:

So (use: very or really) Use "so" when you are going to give an explanation, compare two things, or making an exclamation.

In my case (use: As for me, or as far as I'm concerned, or just don't say anything)

These days (use: lately, recently, or now-a-days)

122 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

Try Using Tongue Twisters to help improve clarity

Larry really wrote a letter to the zoo.

A big black bug bit a big black bear, and made the big black bear bleed blood.

Freshly fried flying fish.

Famous tongue twisters:

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.  
Did Peter Piper pick a peck of pickled peppers?  
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,  
where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

She sells seashells by the seashore.  
The shells she sells are surely seashells.  
So if she sells shells on the seashore,  
I'm sure she sells seashore shells.

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck  
if a woodchuck could chuck wood?  
He would chuck; he would, as much as he could;  
and chuck as much wood as a woodchuck would  
if a woodchuck could chuck wood.

Chronic Problem Areas -- Write your mistakes in the appropriate box:

Not putting a, an, or the before countable nouns.	
Trailing sounds: was(a), went(a) . . .	
Following -ch and -sh words with a vowel sound: beach(y), English(y) . . .	
Negative transference of oo and long e sounds from Korean to English.	
Intonation (improper rhythm and stress)	
Improper tense	
Present tense misuse. The simple present usually means something done over and over, not once, so you need to pluralize the object: I watch movies. I like dogs, etc. . . .	
Wrong or omitted preposition I went to Gwangju. However, we do not use "to" with "home."	
Using B instead of V	
Pronouncing -ed like -ed instead of ta  I wash(ed) my car. I washta my car.	

## Common Expressions and Idioms

### Greeting People

What's up?

What's happenen'

So what's goin' on?

How's it goin'?

### I like it

Out'a sight!

Far out!

Awesome

I'm crazy about it.

That's bad.

That was a trip / what a trip!

That's the bomb (really great)

I'm really into that.

Cool! That's really cool

Neat! That's really neat

It blew me away (I was blown away)

It was breathtaking. (a wonderful view of something like the beach)

### I don't like it

That's a bummer / What a bummer.

That really sucks / That sucks

What a hassle (It's difficult)

That's messed up. (It's not fair / unjust)

### It's easy

It's a snap

It's a cinch

It's a breeze

It's a piece of cake

It's as easy as taking candy from a baby.

### Male / female things

He/she stood me up. (didn't show up for the date)

Guy / chick (boy / girl, man / woman)

Sugar daddy (an older man who spends a lot of money on young girls)

She's foxy (good looking in a kind of sly way)

She's a real babe. (good looking)

He's a hunk. (built well)

Cheesecake (refers to the legs, especially thighs, of an attractive woman's legs)

Beefcake (response to cheesecake – muscular males bodies)

She's a dish (exceptionally good looking in many ways)

He's really macho (strong and muscular)

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

She turns me on. (sexually excites me)  
Check her out. (examine her visually)  
I've got a crush on her/him. (infatuated with)  
I've got the "hots" for her/him (sexually excited)  
Making out (heavy kissing and petting)  
Getting it on. (heavy kissing and petting)

I don't believe it

No way!  
You're putting me on.  
You've got to be kidding.  
Get outta here!  
You're pulling me leg  
That sounds far fetched.

Food

Let's grab a bite. (get a quick meal)  
Let's chow down. (let's eat)  
chow / grub (food)

Philosophical

Where there's a will, there's a way. (If you want to do something badly enough, you'll find a way to do it.)  
Live and let live. (live your own life that way you want, but don't criticize others for living a different lifestyle)  
All's fair in love and war. (love affairs are as unmerciful as war, anything goes, no rules)  
Time heals all wounds. (enough time will heal all misfortunes)  
A friend in need is a friend indeed (people who need something, especially, will cling to you)  
How time flies when you're having fun. (time seems to go by quickly when you're enjoying yourself)  
Birds of a feather flock together (people with similar characteristics, especially physical, tend to like to be together)  
Cleanliness is next to Godliness (being clean is very important)  
No news is good news (getting no news is often better than getting news when the news could be bad)

How you feel

I'm bushed (tired)  
I'm beat. (tired)  
I'm pooped. (tired)  
I feel down. (depressed)  
I'm up for that (want to do it)  
I feel a little under the weather. (a little sick)  
I got cold feet. (wouldn't do it, go scared)  
Cooped-up (from chicken coop, a small area that makes you feel uncomfortable)

126 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

~ "I'm so cooped-up in this small apartment)

I feel like a fish out of water (not competent to deal with the situation, not trained or experienced for the situation ~ "When I went to the formal dinner party I felt like a fish out of water. I didn't know what to do."

I put my foot in my mouth (saying something that you then regret)

Hot under the collar (angry ~ "My boss was a bit hot under the collar today.)

It makes my blood boil (very angry)

Tell me about it. (I feel the same way as you, I know all too well.)

Sleep

I'm gonna hit the sheets. (go to bed)

I think I'll turn in. (go to bed)

I'm gonna hit the sack. (go to bed)

I'm gonna catch some Z's (sleep for awhile)

I'm gonna hit the hay (go to bed)

I slept like a log. (slept very well)

I tossed and turned all night (couldn't sleep, kept moving around)

Work

I got fired. (You lost your job because you did something wrong or bad.)

I got laid off (Lost your job through no fault of your own; the job ceased to exist.)

The business is in the black (making a profit)

The business is in the red. (losing money)

Pulled it off (accomplished something important)

Boss. (The person who tells you what to do at work.)

Exclamations

No way!

Check it out! (look at that!)

Oh, boy!

Oh, brother!

Good lord!

Oh my God!

Casual or friendly

Stay in touch (stay in contact)

See you around (see you sometime)

I hear you. (I agree with you, at least understand what you mean)

Let's get down (really enjoy something)

Let's boogie (let's leave)

You bet. (agree)

No charge (no problem, don't mention it)

I don't want to wear out my welcome. (don't want to stay too long)

Later. (see you later)

Descriptions – Good

An eager beaver (work hard)

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

State of the art (modern technology)

On the cutting edge (the very latest technology)

Descriptions – Bad

You're yellow (a coward)

He's an egghead (very intelligent, but boring)

Nerd / dork / geek (lacking social skills, uninteresting)

He's a loser

You're chicken (coward)

He's green. (inexperienced)

He's wet behind the ears. (inexperienced)

He's wishy-washy (easily influenced)

He's a yes man (agrees with anything his boss says)

He's a couch potato (sits on the couch all day watching TV)

He's bull-headed (stubborn)

He's a pain in the neck. (constantly irritating)

Lollygag, lollygagging (to be wasting time) "Stop lollygagging"

Drinking

Booze (liquor)

Got drunk

Tie one on (got drunk)

I got smashed (got drunk)

Plastered (drunk)

It's on the house (the bar will pay for your drink.)

Drugs

Loaded (high on drugs)

Spaced out (high on drugs)

Money

A buck (one dollar)

Broke (no money)

I'm flat broke (completely without money)

Cheap-skate (spends little money)

I made a bundle of money. (made a lot of money)

He's a tight wad. (won't spend much money)

It set me back [some amount]. (It cost that amount)

That cost me an arm and a leg. (very expensive)

That's my bread and butter. (make a living)

A fin (very old expression for a five-dollar bill)

It's on me. (I'll pay for the drink or food)

Foot the bill (pay or it ~ "I'll foot the bill for the dinner.")

Irritated

He was really bent out of shape. (behaving angrily)

He really bugs me. (really bothers me)

128 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

He blew his top (got very angry)

He gets under my skin. (I find him or her irritating much of the time)

He really rubs me the wrong way. (same as above)

Get lost (get away from me)

Cut me some slack (don't be so strict with me, stop being so critical)

Encouragement

Hang in there.

Keep your chin up. (stay brave in the face of adversity)

Keep a stiff upper lip. (literally: don't cry, but means be brave and confident in the face of adversity)

Keep your fingers crossed (hope for the best)

Non- friendly

Nit-wit (stupid)

Moron (stupid)

Do you want a piece of me? (do you want to fight)

Get lost (go away)

Go fly a kite (go away)

Take a hike (go away)

Screw you

Fuck you.

Dumb fuck

Go to hell

Kiss my ass

You asshole

bastard (describes an obnoxious man)

bitch (describes an obnoxious woman)

jerk (commonly used to describe obnoxious or undependable men)

mother fucker (very foul)

Death

Pushing up the daises (been buried)

Kick the bucket (died)

Cashed in (died)

Checked out (died)

Miscellaneous

A head for figures (good at math)

He doesn't measure up (not as good as it should be)

An old hand (very experienced)

He's worth his weight in gold (very worthwhile, a great asset to have around)

Worth his salt (worthwhile)

Piecemeal (to do something a little at a time)

He's a chip off the old block (just like his father in attitudes)

It's in the bag (as good as accomplished)

Scot free (escaped deserved punishment) ~ "He got off scot-free."



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

Don't beat around the bush. (get to the point)

I'm outta here. (leaving quickly, a quick goodbye)

That beats me. (baffles me)

Keep an eye on it. (watch it, guard it)

Take a load off. (relax, sit down)

I did it by the skin of my teeth. (just barely)

A buff (have an keen interest in something ~ "I'm a real baseball buff.")

In the buff (naked ~ she likes to go around in the buff at the beach.)

I beat my brains out over that. (thought about it for a long time)

I crammed for the exam. (studied very hard for a short time before the exam)

Let's call it a day. (stop work and go home)

A chain reaction. (One thing cause something to happen, then that causes something else to happen, and so on.)

I bit off more than I could chew. (took on more responsibility than could be handled)

The bottom line is... (the essential e

130 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

You nearly scared me to death. (frightened me very much)

Give me a hand (give me some help)

Get it off your chest (talk about something that's bothering you)

A green thumb (good at growing plants)

Had them in stitches (had them laughing hard)

Know the ropes (experienced in how to get things done)

A last resort (the last thing to me done when all else fails)

He's got something up his sleeve (something deceptive, tricky, ulterior motive)

I laughed my head off (laughed a lot)

That won't fly (not logical, won't be accepted)

On the run (hiding from the police)

I'll take a rain check on that. (decline an invitation, but agree to do it as some later unspecified time)

Let's paint the town red (go out and have a great time, drinking and dancing, etc.)

A skeleton in my closet (an old potentially damaging secret)

A square deal, fair and square (an honest business deal, fair to all)

Worlds apart (completely disagree)

Crash (sleep)

Dutch treat or going Dutch (each person pays his own way when going out in a group)

That's in the ballpark. (seems close to being correct)

Enough is enough (stop doing that)

Par for the course (average)

Off the beaten path (not in a well traveled location)

Across the tracks (in a poor area of town)

Needle in a haystack (difficult to find)

It takes two to tango. (takes two people to have an argument, both are responsible)

It serves you right. (got what you deserved)

He got what he deserved. (was justly punished)

I wouldn't want to be in his shoes. (in his situation)

Spill the beans (tell a secret that has a big effect)

Two peas in a pod (cozy and comfortable)

Flabbergasted (shocked, surprised, stunned)

You can say that again (I really agree with you; does not mean to actually repeat)

Idiomatic conversation:

*My new wheels set me back a pretty penny.  
lift. No problem. Thanks. No charge.*

;

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

Phrasal Verbs

(From: ESLCafe <http://www.eslcafe.com>)

A

act up (no object): misbehave (for people); not work properly (for machines).

"The babysitter had a difficult time. The children acted up all evening."

"I guess I'd better take my car to the garage. It's been acting up lately."

act like (inseparable): behave in a way that's like \_\_\_\_\_ .

"What's wrong with Bob? He's acting like an idiot."

Note: This phrasal verb is very informal.

add up (1. no object): logically fit together.

"His theory is hard to believe, but his research adds up."

Note: This phrasal verb is often negative.

"His theory seems, at first, to be plausible, but the facts in his research don't add up."

add up (2. separable): find the total.

"What's the total of those bills? Could you add them up and see?"

add up to (inseparable): to total.

"The bills add up to \$734.96. That's more than I expected!"

ask out (separable): ask for a date.

"Nancy has a new boy friend. Joe asked her out last night."

B

back down (no object): not follow a threat.

"Tom was going to call the police when I told him I'd wrecked his car, but he backed down when I said I'd pay for the damages."

back off (no object): not follow a threat.

"Tom was ready to call the police when I told him I'd wrecked his car, but he backed off when I said I'd pay for the damages."

back up (1. no object): move backward; move in reverse.

132 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.markesl.com>

"You missed the lines in the parking space. You'll have to back up and try again."

"The people waiting in line are too close to the door. We won't be able to open it unless they back up."

back up (2. separable): drive a vehicle backwards (in reverse).

"You're too close! Back your car up so I can open the garage door."

back up (3. separable): confirm a story, facts, or information.

"If you don't believe me, talk to Dave. He'll back me up."

back up (4. separable): make a "protection" copy to use if there are problems with the original.

"When my computer crashed, I lost many of my files. It's a good thing I backed them up."

beg off (no object): decline an invitation; ask to be excused from doing something.

"At first Lily said she would be at the party. Later she begged off."

blow up (1. separable): inflate.

"We need lots of balloons for the party. Will you blow them up?"

blow up (2. separable): explode; destroy by exploding.

A: "That old building really came down quickly!"

B: "That's because the construction company used dynamite to blow it up."

blow up (3. no object): suddenly become very angry.

"When I told Jerry that I'd had an accident with his car, he blew up."

bone up on (inseparable): review / study thoroughly for a short time.

"If you're going to travel to Peru, you'd better bone up on your Spanish."

break down (1. separable): separate something into component parts.

"We spent a lot of money at the supermarket. When we broke the total cost down, we spent more on cleaning supplies than food."

break down (2. no object): stop working / functioning.

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"Sharon will be late for work today. Her car broke down on the freeway."

break in (1. often no object; with an object, break into--inseparable): enter by using force (and breaking a lock, window, etc.)

"Jane's apartment was burglarized last night. Someone broke in while Jane was at the movies." / "Somebody broke into Jane's apartment while she was at the movies."

break in (2. separable): wear something new until it's / they're comfortable.

"These are nice shoes, but they're too stiff. I hope it doesn't take too long to break them in."

break in (3. separable): train; get someone / something accustomed to a new routine.

"I hope I can learn my new job quickly. The manager hasn't scheduled much time for breaking me in."

break up (1. no object): disperse; scatter.

"What time did the party break up last night?"

break up (2. usually no object; with an object, break up with [inseparable]): end a personal relationship.

"Tim and Julie aren't going steady any more. They got really angry with each other and broke up."

"Have you heard the news? Julie broke up with Tim!"

"I'm sorry to hear that their marriage broke up. I'm sure the divorce will be difficult for the children."

bring / take back (separable): return something.

"Yes, you can borrow my pen, don't forget to bring it back to me when you're finished."

"This book is due tomorrow. I guess I should take it back to the library."

bring off (separable): accomplish something difficult; accomplish something people had considered impossible or unlikely.

"No one thought Chuck could get an A in that course, but he brought it off. "

bring up (1. separable): mention (as a topic of discussion).

134 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"We planned to discuss overtime pay in the meeting. Why didn't someone bring that topic up?"

bring up (2. separable): raise; rear.

"Lucy's parents died when she was a baby. Her grandparents brought her up."

brush up on (inseparable): review / study thoroughly for a short time.

"If you're going to travel to Peru, you'd better brush up on your Spanish."

burn down (no object): become destroyed / consumed by fire.

Note: For upright things--trees, buildings, etc.--only.

"Lightning struck Mr. Kennedy's barn last night. It burned down before the fire fighters arrived."

burn up (1. no object): become destroyed / consumed by fire.

Note: For people and non-upright things only.

"All of Mr. Kennedy's hay burned up when his barn burned down."

burn up (2. separable): cause someone to become very angry.

"Did you hear how rudely Fred talked to me? That really burned me up!"

butt in (no object): impolitely interrupt (a conversation, an action).

"Hey, you! Don't butt in! Wait for your turn!"

butter up (separable): praise someone excessively with the hope of getting some benefit.

"I guess Marty really wants to be promoted. He's been buttering his boss up all week."

C

call off (separable): cancel something that has been scheduled.

"We don't have school today. The mayor called classes off because of the snow."

call on (inseparable): ask someone for an answer in class.

"I don't know why the teacher never calls on you. You always know the answer."

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

calm down (with or without an object; with an object, separable): become calm / less agitated or upset; help someone become calm / less agitated or upset.

"Why are you so upset? Suzie didn't intend to spill orange juice on you. Calm down!"

"I know Ralph is upset, but can you calm him down? He's making so much noise that he's irritating everyone in the office."

(not) care for (1. inseparable): like; want.

Note: This phrasal verb is usually negative, though it may be used affirmatively in questions.

A: "Would you care for something to drink? We have coffee, tea, or orange juice."

B: "Could I have water, please? I don't care for coffee, tea, or juice."

care for (2. inseparable): take care of; supply care to; attend / watch..

"Amy's father got out of the hospital last week. The family is caring for him at home."

catch on (no object): develop understanding or knowledge of something.

"Bill had never used a computer until he took this class, but he caught on very quickly and is now one of the best students."

catch up (with) (often without an object; with an object, inseparable): stop being behind.

"Terry stopped to rest for a few minutes. He'll catch up / catch up with us later."

check in (to) (inseparable): register for / at a hotel, conference, etc.; let someone know officially that you have arrived.

"My plane will arrive around 5:00 PM. I should be able to check into the hotel by 6:00 or 6:30."

"When you arrive at the convention, be sure to check in at the registration desk."

check off (separable): make a mark to indicate that something on a list has been completed.

"Here are the things you need to do. Please check each one off when you've finished it."

136 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
check out (of) (1. inseparable): follow procedures for leaving (a hotel, etc.)

"Don't forget to take your room key to the front desk when you check out (when you check out of the hotel)."

check out (2. separable): follow procedures for borrowing something (usually for a limited period of time).

"I'm sorry, but you can't take that encyclopedia home. The library won't allow you to check reference books out."

check out (3. separable): visually examine someone or something

"Hey, check her out!" "Check out that cool sports car!"

check out (4. separable): examine something to see if it needs to be repaired.

"My car is making a strange noise, could you please check it out for me?"

cheer up (separable): help someone feel less worried / depressed / sad.

"Suzie's brother was depressed about not getting a promotion, so she sent him a funny card to cheer him up."

chew out (separable): scold someone severely; berate.

"Tom's father was really angry when Tom didn't come home until 3:00 AM. He chewed Tom out and then said Tom had to stay at home for two weeks."

chicken out (no object): lose the courage or confidence to do something--often at the last minute.

"Sam said he was going to ask Lulu for a date, but he chickened out."

chip in (inseparable): contribute / donate (often money) to something done by a group.

"We're going to buy a birthday cake for our boss and I'm collecting donations. Do you want to chip in?"

clam up (inseparable): suddenly become quiet / refuse to talk about something.

"Lila wouldn't talk about the accident. When I asked her what happened, she clamed up."

come across (inseparable): find (unexpectedly).

"I've lost my extra car keys. If you come across them while your're cleaning the room, please put them in a safe place."

come down with \_\_\_\_\_ (inseparable): become ill with \_\_\_\_\_ .



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"George won't be at the office today. He came down with the flu over the weekend."

come to (1. inseparable): total.

"Your charges come to \$124.38. Will you pay by check, in cash, or with a credit card?"

come to (2. no object): regain consciousness.

"When I told Gina that she'd won a million dollars, she fainted. When she came to, I told her it was a joke and she almost hit me!"

count on (inseparable): depend on; trust that something will happen or that someone will do as expected.

"I'm counting on you to wake me up tomorrow. I know I won't hear the alarm."

cross out (separable): show that something written is wrong or unnecessary by making an X across it.

"We can't afford to buy everything on your shopping list, so I've crossed all the unnecessary things out."

cut back (on) (often without an object; with an object, cut back on [inseparable]): use less of something.

"You drink too much coffee. You should cut back."

"You should cut back on the amount of coffee that you drink."

D

do in (1. separable): cause to become very tired.

"Those three games of tennis yesterday afternoon really did me in. I slept for ten hours after I got home."

do in (2. separable): to kill; to murder.

"The said that the murdered man was done in between 10 and 11 o'clock last night."

do over (separable): do something again.

"Oh, no! I forgot to save my report before I turned the computer off! Now I'll have to do it over!"

138 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

drag on (no object): last much longer than expected or is necessary.

"I thought the meeting would be a short one, but it dragged on for more than three hours."

draw up (separable): create a formal document.

"The Ajax and Tip-Top Banks have decided to merge. Their lawyers will draw all the official documents up sometime this month."

drop off (separable): deliver something; deliver someone (by giving him/her a ride).

"Yes, I can take those letters to the post office. I'll drop them off as I go home from work."

"You don't have to take a taxi. You live fairly close to me, so I'll be happy to drop you off."

drop in (on) (inseparable): visit informally (and usually without scheduling a specific time).

"If you're in town next month, we'd love to see you. Please try to drop in. (Please try to drop in on us.)"

drop by (inseparable): visit informally (and usually without scheduling a specific time).

"If you're in town next month, we'd love to see you. Please try to drop by the house."

drop out (of) (inseparable): stop attending / leave school or an organization.

"No, Paul isn't at the university. He dropped out. / He dropped out of school."

draw out (separable): prolong something (usually far beyond the normal limits).

"I thought that speech would never end. The speaker could have said everything important in about five minutes, but he drew the speech out for over an hour!"

**E**

eat out (no object): have a meal in a restaurant.

"I'm too tired to cook tonight. Why don't we eat out?"

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
egg on (separable): urge / encourage greatly toward doing something (usually something negative).

"At first Bob and Chuck were just having a mild argument, but Bob's friends egged them on until they started fighting."

end up (1. no object): finally arrive at; arrive at an unexpected place.

"We got lost last night and ended up in the next town."

end up (2. no object): arrive somewhere as a result or consequence.

"You're working too hard. If you don't take it easy, you'll end up in the hospital!"

## F

face up to (inseparable): admit to; take responsibility for.

"You can't pretend that you're doing OK in this course, Joe. Sooner or later, you'll have to face up to the fact that you're failing it."

fall through (no object): not happen. (Note: describes something that was planned but didn't happen.)

"We had originally intended to go to Mexico for our vacation, but our trip fell through when I got sick."

fall through (no object): not happen. (Note: describes something that was planned but didn't happen.)

"We had originally intended to go to Mexico for our vacation, but our trip fell through when I got sick."

feel up to (inseparable): feel strong enough or comfortable enough to do something.

"I know the accident was a terrible shock. Do you feel up to talking about it?"

figure out (1. separable): logically find the answer to a problem; solve a problem by thinking about it carefully.

"For a long time I couldn't understand the last problem, but I finally figured it out."

figure out (2. separable): understand why someone behaves the way she/he does.

140 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"I can't figure Margie out. Sometimes she's very warm and friendly and sometimes she acts as if she doesn't know me."

fill in (1. separable): add information to a form.

"The office needs to know your home address and phone number. Could you fill them in on this form?"

fill in (on) (2. separable): supply information that someone doesn't know.

"I wasn't able to attend the meeting yesterday, but I understand that it was important. Could you fill me in? / Could you fill me in on what was discussed?"

fill in for (inseparable): temporarily do someone else's work; temporarily substitute for another person.

"Professor Newton is in the hospital and won't be able to teach for the rest of the term. Do you know who's going to fill in for her?"

fill out (1. separable): complete a form by adding required information.

"Of course I completed my application! I filled it out and mailed it over three weeks ago!"

fill out (2. no object): become less thin; gain weight.

"Jerry used to be really skinny, but in the last year he's begun to fill out."

find out (about) (inseparable): learn / get information (about).

"I'm sorry that you didn't know the meeting had been canceled. I didn't find out (find out about it) myself until just a few minutes ago."

**G**

get across (separable): make something understood; communicate something understandably.

"Alan is really intelligent but sometimes he has problems getting his ideas across."

get along (with) (inseparable): have a friendly relationship (with); be friendly (toward).

"Why can't you and your sister get along? Everyone else gets along with her just fine!"

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
get around (1. inseparable): avoid having to do something.

"Teresa got around the required math classes by doing well on a math proficiency test."

get around (2. no object): move from place to place.

"She doesn't have a car. She gets around by bicycle, bus, or taxi."

get around to (inseparable): do something eventually.

"I really should wash the dishes, but I don't feel like it. Maybe I'll get around to them tomorrow morning."

get by (no object): survive, financially, in a difficult situation.

"It's going to be hard to pay the rent now that you've lost your job, but somehow we'll get by."

get in (1. inseparable): enter a small, closed vehicle.

"I don't know where Carole was going. She just got in her car and drove away."

get in (2. no object): arrive.

"Do you know what time Fred's plane gets in?"

get on (inseparable): enter a large, closed vehicle.

"I'm sorry, but you're too late to say goodbye to Angela. She got on the plane about 20 minutes ago."

get off (1. inseparable): leave a large, closed vehicle.

"When you get off the bus, cross the street, turn right on Oak Street, and keep going until you're at the corner of Oak and Lincoln Boulevard."

get off (2. separable): be excused (for a period of time) from work, class, or other regularly scheduled activities.

"Some schools got President's Day off but ours didn't. We had classes as usual."

get off (3. separable): make it possible for someone to avoid punishment.

"Everyone knew he was guilty, but his lawyer was clever and got him off."

get out of (1. inseparable): leave a small, closed vehicle.

142 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"There's something wrong with the garage door opener. You'll have to get out of the car and open it by hand."

get out of (2. inseparable): escape having to do something.

"Lisa said she had a terrible headache and got out of giving her speech today."

get over (1. no object): finish. (Note: for individual activities, not ones that happen again and again.)

"What time do your classes get over?"

get over (2. inseparable): recover from an illness or painful experience.

"Katy was really upset when she failed the test. She thought she would never get over feeling so stupid."

get rid of (1. inseparable): dispose of; give away or throw away.

"That shirt is really ugly. Why don't you get rid of it?"

get rid of (2. inseparable): dismiss someone; fire someone from a job; cause someone to leave.

"The treasurer of the XYZ company was spending too much money so the company president got rid of him."

get up (usually no object; with an object, separable): leave bed after sleeping and begin your daily activities.

"You'll have to get up much earlier than usual tomorrow. We have to leave by no later than 6:00 AM."

"I know I won't hear the alarm tomorrow morning. Can you get me up at 6:00 AM?"

give up (1. separable): stop doing something (usually a habit).

"He knows smoking isn't good for his health, but he can't give it up."

give up (2. no object): decide not to try (unsuccessfully) to solve a problem.

A: "What's black and white and red all over?"

B: "I give up. What?"

A: "An embarrassed zebra!"

go out with (inseparable): have a date with.

"You went out with Sharon last night, didn't you?"

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

go with (1. no object): look pleasing together. (Note: for clothes, furniture, etc.)

"You should buy that shirt. It will go well with your dark brown suit."

go with (2. no object): date regularly and steadily.

"Is Gina going with Jim? I see them together all the time."

goof off (no object): be lazy; do nothing in particular.

A: "Do you have any special plans for your vacation?"

B: "No. I'm just going to stay home and goof off."

grow up (1. no object): spend the years between being a child and being an adult.

"Did you know that Frank grew up in Malaysia?"

grow up (2. no object): behave responsibly; behave as an adult, not a child.

A: "Lee really irritates me sometimes. He's really silly and childish."

B: "I agree. I wish he would grow up."

H

hand in (separable): submit homework, an assignment, etc.

"You'd better get started on your report. You know that you have to hand it in at 8:30 tomorrow morning!"

hand out (separable): distribute.

"Why don't you have a course description and list of assignments? The teacher handed them out on the first day of class."

hang up (no object): end a phone conversation by replacing the receiver.

"I'd like to talk longer, but I'd better hang up. My sister needs to make a call."

have to do with (inseparable): be about.

"This class has to do with the behavior of people in groups."

hold up (1. separable): raise; lift to a higher-than-normal position.

"The winner of the race proudly held his trophy up for all to see."

hold up (2. separable): delay.

144 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"I'm sorry I'm late. There was an accident on the freeway and traffic held me up."

hold up (3. separable): rob; threaten someone with harm unless he/she gives her/his money or other valuable things.

"Sarah is very upset. When she was walking home last night, two men held her up and took her purse and jewelry."

iron out (separable): mutually reach an agreement; mutually resolve difficulties

"Yes, I know we disagree on lots of things, Susan, but we can iron them out."

**J**

jack up (1. separable): raise / life by using a jack.

"We'll have to jack the back of the car up before we can change the tire."

jack up (2. separable): raise (used for prices).

"The car dealer bought my old Ford for \$750 and jacked the price up to \$1,500 when they sold it."

jump all over (inseparable): severely scold someone; berate someone.

"Arthur is really upset. His boss jumped all over him because he's been late for work three times this week."

**K**

keep on (1. inseparable--followed by an -ing verb): continue

"I'm not ready to stop yet. I think I'll keep on working for a while."

keep on (someone) (2. inseparable): continue to remind someone to do something until he/she does it (even if this irritates her/him).

"Bill's very forgetful. You'll have to keep on him or he'll never do all the things you want him to do."

kick out (separable): expel; force someone to leave because of his/her poor performance or unacceptable behavior.

"Jim's club kicked him out because he didn't pay his dues or come to meetings."

knock out (separable): make unconscious.

"The boxing match ended when one boxer knocked the other one out."



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"That medicine really knocked me out. I slept for 14 hours straight!"

knock oneself out (separable): work much harder than normal or than what is expected.

"We completed the project on time because of Chuck. He knocked himself out to be sure we didn't miss the deadline."

L

lay off (separable): dismiss someone from a job because of lack of work or money (not because of poor performance)

"I feel really sorry Sally's family. Her father was laid off yesterday."

leave out (separable): forget; omit.

"Oh, no! When I made the list of those who attended the meeting, I left your name out!"

let down (separable): disappoint.

"I know I let you down when I didn't do what I promised. I'm really sorry."

let up (no object): become less intense or slower.

"It's been raining hard for a long time. Will it ever let up?"

look back on (inseparable): remember; reflect on / consider something in the past.

"When they looked back on their many years together, they realized that their marriage had been a very happy one."

look down on (inseparable): hold in contempt; regard as inferior.

"It's not surprising that Fred has few friends. He seems to look down on anyone who doesn't like the same things that he does."

look forward to (inseparable): anticipate pleasantly; think about a pleasant thing before it happens

"I'm really looking forward to vacation. I can't wait for it to begin!"

look in on (inseparable): visit in order to check something's / someone's condition.

"My father just came home from the hospital. I plan to look in on him today after I finish work."

look into (inseparable): investigate / get more details about something.

"Someone said there was a meeting at 9:30 but I haven't heard anything about it. Shall I look into it?"

look like (inseparable): resemble (in appearance).

"Does he look like his father or his mother?"

look over (separable): check; review.

"I think I may have some typos in this report. Could you look it over?"

look up (1. separable): find something in a reference work.

"I'm sorry, but I don't know what that word means. I'll have to look it up."

look up (2. separable): find where someone lives or works and visit him/her.

"Thanks for giving me your brother's address. When I'm in Chicago next month, I'll be sure to look him up."

look up to (inseparable): respect.

"Everyone looks up to Joyce because she always makes time to help others."

luck out (no object): be unexpectedly lucky.

"Gloria was worried because she wasn't prepared to give a report at the meeting, but she lucked out because the meeting was postponed."

## M

make fun of (inseparable): make jokes about (usually unkindly).

"I agree that Bob looks ridiculous since he shaved his head, but don't make fun of him. You'll hurt his feelings."

make up (1. separable): invent / create (imaginary) information.

"Judy's story is hard to believe. I'm sure she made it up."

make up (2. separable): compensate for something missed or not done by doing extra or equivalent work.

"I'm sorry I missed the test. May I make it up?"

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
make up (with) (3. inseparable): re-establish a friendly relationship by admitting guilt.

"Jack and his girlfriend were very angry with each other, but last night they finally made up."

"Jack and his girlfriend were very angry with each other, but last night they finally made up with each other."

make out (separable): see / hear something well enough to understand what it means. (Note: often negative.)

"Ruth's writing is very small. I almost need a magnify glass to make it out."

"What were the last two examples that he gave? I couldn't make them out."

make for (1. inseparable): go to or toward.

"Her teen-aged children are always hungry. As soon as they arrive home from school, they make for the refrigerator."

make for (2. inseparable): result in; cause.

"Many hands make for light work. (If many people work together, there's less work for everyone.)"

mark up (separable): increase the price (for resale).

"Mrs. White's import shop is profitable because she buys things inexpensively and then marks them up."

mark down (separable): reduce the price (as an incentive to buy).

"These shoes were really a bargain! The store marked them down by 40%!"

mix up (separable): cause to become confused.

"I didn't complete the assignment because I didn't know how. The directions mixed me up."

N

nod off (no object): fall sleep (usually unintentionally).

"The speech was so boring that several people in the audience nodded off before it was finished."

148 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

P

pan out (no object): succeed; happen as expected (for plans). (Note: almost always negative when in statements.)

"I'll be here next week after all. My trip to Chicago didn't pan out."

pass away (no object): die.

"I was very sorry to hear that your grandfather passed away."

pass out (1. no object): faint; lose consciousness.

"When Ella heard that she'd won a million dollars, she was so shocked that she passed out."

pass out (2. separable): distribute.

"Everyone in the room needs one of these information sheets. Who will help me pass them out?"

pick out (separable): choose; select.

"Billy's grandmother especially liked her birthday card because Billy had picked it out himself."

pick up (1. separable): lift; take up.

"Those books don't belong on the floor. Will you help me pick them up?"

pick up (2. separable): arrange to meet someone and give her/him a ride.

"Of course we can go there together. What time should I pick you up?"

pick up (3. separable): get; buy.

"The children just drank the last of the milk. Could you pick some more up on your way home this evening?"

pick up (4. separable): refresh; revitalize.

"He was feeling a little tired, so he drank a glass of orange juice. It picked him up enough to finish his work."

pick on (inseparable): bully; intentionally try to make someone upset.

"You should be ashamed of teasing your little brother, Bob! Pick on someone your own size!"

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
pitch in (no object): help; join together to accomplish something.

"We'll be finished soon if everyone pitches in."

pull over (no object): drive a vehicle to the side of the road.

"When the policeman indicated that I should pull over, I knew he was going to give me a ticket."

put away (separable): return something to the proper place.

"I just took these clothes out of the dryer. Will you help me put them away?"

put off (1. separable): postpone; delay; avoid

"I can't put this work off any longer. If I don't do it soon, it'll be impossible to finish it in time."

"When will Mr. Smith agree to a meeting? I keep asking for an appointment, but he keeps putting me off."

put on (1. separable): begin to wear; don.

"It's a little bit chilly outside. You'd better put a sweater on."

put on (2. separable): try to make someone believe something that is ridiculous or untrue.

"Don't believe a word of what Jim was saying. He was just putting us on."

put (someone) out (separable): inconvenience someone.

"I hate to put you out, but I need a ride to the train station and hope you can take me."

put up (1. separable): return something to the proper place.

"Your toys are all over the floor, Timmy. Please put them up."

put up (2. separable): provide someone with a place to sleep.

"There's no need for you to check into a hotel. I'll be happy to put you up."

put up with (inseparable): tolerate.

"It's really important to come to work on time. The boss won't put up with tardiness."

put back (separable): return something to the proper place.

150 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"I've finished with these books. Do you want me to put them back on the shelves?"

R

rip off (separable): cheat; take advantage of; charge too much.

"Don't even think about buying a car there. They'll rip you off."

round off (separable): change from a fraction to the nearest whole number.

"Round all prices off to the closest whole-dollar amounts. For example, round \$33.73 off to \$34.00."

run into (inseparable): meet by chance.

"Yesterday at the supermarket, Jan ran into her former roommate. Before yesterday, they hadn't seen each other for nearly five years."

run out of (inseparable): use the last of.

"On the way home from work, Art ran out of gas."

S

set up (separable): make arrangements for something.

"You'll see Mr. Thomas tomorrow. I've set a meeting up for 9:30 AM."

set back (1. separable): cause a delay in scheduling.

"We've had some problems with the project that have set us back at least two days. We'll give you a progress report tomorrow."

set back (2. separable): cost.

"I wonder how much Bill's new car set him back?"

slip up (no object): make a mistake.

"You slipped up here. The amount should be \$135.28, not \$132.58."

stand up (2. separable): make a date but not keep it.

"Angela was supposed to go to the dance with Fred, but she stood him up and went with Chuck instead."

show up (1. no object): arrive; appear.

"The boss was very upset when you didn't show up for the meeting. What happened?"

show up (2. separable): do a noticeably better job (often unexpectedly) than someone else.

"Everyone thought Marsha would win, but Jean did. Actually, Jean really showed Marsha up."

stand for (1. no object): represent.

"These letters seem to be an abbreviation. Do you know what they stand for?"

stand for (2. inseparable): tolerate; permit (usually negative).

"I'm not surprised that Mrs. Johnson rejected your report. She won't stand for shoddy work."

## T

take after (inseparable): resemble; favor (in appearance).

Note: used for people.

"Both my sister and I take after our father."

take / bring back (separable): return.

"This book is due tomorrow. I guess I should take it back to the library."

"Yes, you can borrow my pen, but don't forget to bring it back to me when you're finished."

take care of (1. inseparable): provide care for; watch one's health.

"Lois has been taking care of her father since he returned home from the hospital."

"You've been working too hard lately. You'd better take care of yourself!"

take care of (2. inseparable): make arrangements (for something to happen); take responsibility for.

152 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

"Will you take care of making reservations for our flight to Boston?"

take off (1. separable): remove (something you're wearing).

"Please take your hat off when you go inside a building."

take off (2. no object): leave; depart (often suddenly or quickly).

"Was something wrong with Jill? She took off without saying goodbye."

"When does your plane take off?"

take off (3. separable): make arrangements to be absent from work.

"Susan isn't here today. She's taking today and tomorrow off."

take up (separable): begin (a hobby or leisure-time activity).

A: "Do you like to ski?"

B: "I've never been skiing, but I think I'd like to take it up."

tell (someone) off (separable): speak to someone bluntly and negatively, saying exactly what she/he did wrong.

"Julie was really angry at Bob; she told him off in front of all of us."

tick off (1. separable): irritate someone; make someone upset or angry.

"It really ticks her off when someone is late for an appointment."

tick off (2. separable): show that something has been completed by putting a tick (check) beside it.

"Here are the things you need to do. Tick each one off when you finish it."

throw away (separable): discard; put in the garbage.

"You shouldn't throw those newspapers away; they're recyclable."

throw out (1. separable): discard; put in the garbage.

"This food smells bad. You'd better throw it out."

throw out (2. separable): forcibly make someone leave (usually because of bad behavior).

"Those people are drunk and making everyone uncomfortable. The manager should throw them out."



Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
throw up (usually no object; with an object, separable): vomit.

"Paul was so nervous about his job interview that he threw up just before he left for it."

try on (separable): wear something briefly to check its fit, how it looks, etc.

"I'm not sure that jacket is large enough. May I try it on?"

try out (separable): use a machine briefly to determine how well it works.

"I really like the way this car looks. May I try it out?"

try out (for) (inseparable): try to win a place on a team or other organization.

"I know you want to be on the football team. Are you going to try out?"

"If you like to sing, you should try out for the choir."

turn around (1. usually no object): move so that you are facing the opposite direction.

"Everyone turned around and stared when I entered the meeting late."

turn around (2. separable): move so that someone / something is facing the opposite direction.

"I don't want this chair facing the window. Will you help me turn it around?"

turn around (3. separable): make changes so that something that was unprofitable is profitable.

"The company was doing poorly until it hired a new president. He turned it around in about six months and now it's doing quite well."

turn down (1. separable): decrease the volume.

"Your music is giving me a headache! Please turn it down or use your headphones!"

turn down (2. separable): refuse.

"I thought I could borrow some money from Joe, but when I asked, he turned me down."

turn in (1. separable): give / deliver / submit to someone.

"I've written my report, but I haven't turned it in."

154 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

turn in (2. no object): go to bed.

"I'm pretty tired. I guess I'll turn in."

turn in (3. separable): report or deliver wrongdoers to the authorities.

"Two days after the robbery, the thieves turned themselves in."

turn off (1. separable): stop by turning a handle or switch.

"I'm cold. Do you mind if I turn the air conditioner off?"

turn off (2. separable): bore; repel (very informal).

"That music turns me off. Please play something else!"

turn on (1. separable): start by turning a handle or switch.

"It's cold in here. I'm going to turn the heater on"

turn on (2. separable): interest very much; excite (very informal).

"What kind of music turns you on?"

turn up (1. separable): increase the volume.

"I can barely hear the TV. Can you turn it up a little?"

turn up (2. no object): appear unexpectedly.

"We were all surprised when Pam turned up at the party. We didn't even know she was in town."

W

wait on (1. inseparable): serve (usually customers in a restaurant, shop, etc.)

"I want to make a complaint. The person who just waited on me was very impolite."

wait for (inseparable): wait until someone / something arrives or is finished with something else.

"When will Kenny be finished with work? I've been waiting for him for almost an hour!"

"I'm tired of waiting for the bus. I guess I'll take a taxi instead."

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
wake up (1. no object): stop sleeping.

"I usually wake up around 5:00 AM each day."

wake up (2. separable): rouse someone; cause someone to stop sleeping.

"I have an important meeting tomorrow and I'm afraid I won't hear my alarm.  
Will you wake me up at 6:00 AM?"

watch out for (inseparable): be careful of; beware of.

"There's a school at the end of this block. Watch out for children crossing the street."

"If you take that road, watch out for ice during the winter."

wear out (1. separable): wear something / use something until it can no longer be worn / be used.

"I need a new pencil sharpener. I wore this one out."

"I suppose I should get some new shoes. I've almost worn this pair out."

wear out (2. separable): cause to become exhausted; cause to become very tired.

"I had four different meetings today. They wore me out."

"I suppose I should get some new shoes. I've almost worn this pair out."

work out (1. no object): exercise (usually in a gym, etc.) to build muscles, body tone, etc.

"Instead of eating lunch on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, Sheila goes to the recreation center to work out."

work out (2. separable): solve a problem / resolve a difficult situation (usually by working together).

"I know we disagree on many points, but I believe we can work things out."

wrap up (1. no object): wear enough clothes to keep warm.

"It's really cold today. Be sure you wrap up when you leave the house."

wrap up (2. separable): finish something; bring something to a conclusion.

"We've been talking about the problem for nearly three hours.  
I hope we'll be able to wrap the discussion up soon."

156 **Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English**

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>  
write down (separable): record something in writing.

"Could you tell me your e-mail address again? I want to write it down."

write up (separable): record; report in writing.

"You'll need to make a report on your business meetings. Be sure you write them up as soon as possible after you return from your trip."

Z

zank out (no object): fall asleep quickly because of exhaustion.

"I intended to go shopping after work, but I was so tired that I zonked out as soon as I got home."

**Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English** 157

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

**Worksheet for Free Talk**

Students, keep a record of your errors here.

Incorrect	
Correct	

Incorrect	
Correct	

Incorrect	
Correct	

Incorrect	
Correct	

Incorrect	
Correct	

Incorrect	
Correct	

Incorrect	
Correct	

Incorrect	
Correct	



**Conversation Questions and Activities to Aid in the Learning of English** 159

Arranged according to tense, topic, and levels of difficulty

By Prof. Mark McDowell, M.A. Mark's ESL World ~ <http://www.marksesl.com>

Write Additional Notes Here: