

# 49 English Conversation Topics

Lessons with Discussion Questions,  
Writing Prompts, Idioms & Vocabulary



**Jackie Bolen**

**49 English Conversation Topics ( for  
Intermediate-Advanced ESL/EFL):**

**Lessons with Discussion Questions, Writing  
Prompts, Idioms & Vocabulary**

Jackie Bolen

[www.eslspeaking.org](http://www.eslspeaking.org)

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## About the Author: Jackie Bolen

I taught English in South Korea for a decade to every level and type of student and I've taught every age from kindergarten kids to adults. Most of my time centered around teaching at two universities: five years at a science and engineering school out in the rice paddies of Chungcheongnam-Do, and four years at a major university in Busan where I taught high-level classes for students majoring in English. These days, I live in Vancouver, Canada where I teach privately as well as in English language academies. In my spare time, you can usually find me outside surfing, biking, hiking, or on the hunt for the most delicious kimchi I can find.

In case you were wondering what my academic qualifications are, I hold a Master of Arts in Psychology. During my time in Korea, I've successfully completed both the Cambridge CELTA and DELTA certification programs. With the combination of almost 15 years teaching ESL/EFL learners of all ages and levels, and the more formal teaching qualifications I've obtained, I have a solid foundation on which to offer teaching advice. I truly hope that you find this book useful and would love it if you sent me an email with any questions or feedback that you might have—I'll always take the time to personally respond.

### Jackie Bolen around the Internet

ESL Speaking ([www.eslspeaking.org](http://www.eslspeaking.org))

Pinterest ([www.pinterest.ca/eslspeaking](http://www.pinterest.ca/eslspeaking))

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\*\*\*This book contains all new topics and questions! There are even more complete English conversation lesson plans in these other books of mine.\*\*\*

67 ESL Conversation Topics (Intermediate-Advanced)

47 ESL Conversation Topics (Beginner-Intermediate)

If you can't get enough ESL conversation questions in this book, you can get even more goodness delivered straight to your inbox every week. I promise to respect your privacy—your name and email address will never be shared with anyone for any reason. [Sign-up here.](#)



# How to Use this Book

These conversation lessons are designed for teenagers, university students, or adults. They do assume a basic knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary so are best suited for intermediate or advanced students.

The main purpose of these lessons is to get students talking about a certain topic and can be used for classes of 30 minutes to two hours. There are 49 different topics in total and each lesson includes the following:

- warm-up question
- vocabulary challenge (5 scrambled words from the conversation questions)
- idioms and phrases related to the topic (5)
- 15 conversation questions
- 3 writing prompts suitable for class time or homework

For smaller classes of less than three students, it's possible to work through each lesson together as a class. It's also possible to use these conversation lessons for 1-1 or private tutoring. However, for larger classes of four or more, I recommend putting students into pairs and letting them work through the lesson together to make classes more student-centered.

# Advertising

## Warm-Up

Do you think that you're influenced by advertising? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary Challenge

n b a r d = A type of product from a certain company with a certain name.

e i c o m m e r c i a l = What you see on TV during breaks.

i n f l u e n c e r = Someone with a lot of social media followers.

c u s t o m e r = Someone who buys something or uses a service.

t a r g e t = To go after, or aim for something.

## Idioms and Phrases

*go viral, across the board, sold on (something), deliver the goods, price yourself out of the market*

If you don't \_\_\_\_\_, you'll be out of a job.

Have you seen the latest video. It will \_\_\_\_\_ I think.

I'm not \_\_\_\_\_ this colour. What do you think?

Be careful. You might \_\_\_\_\_ if you go too high.

It's rare that we agree on a decision \_\_\_\_\_ at our company.

## Answers

**Vocabulary challenge:** brand, commercial, influencer, customer, target

**Idioms and phrases:** deliver the goods, go viral, sold on, price yourself out of the market, across the board

## **Let's Talk**

1. Name as many different advertising methods as you can (at least 5).
2. What are some of your favourite brands?
3. If you need a new pair of shoes, what influences your decision to buy one pair over another one?
4. Have you seen any shocking or memorable commercials or advertisements?
5. What makes an ad memorable and another one not?
6. Do celebrity or influencer advertisements make you want to buy the product?
7. Are you easily influenced by advertising?
8. What do you think about companies (fast food restaurants, for example) that target children in their advertising?
9. What influences you to buy one product, or another?
10. Do you consider customer reviews before buying something?
11. Should political parties be allowed to advertise before an election?
12. Should pharmaceutical companies be allowed to advertise their drugs?
13. Would you rather pay for a TV/movie subscription (Netflix, for example) than see ads like on cable TV?
14. What are some of the negative effects of advertising?
15. When you go to the grocery store, do you ever buy “store brand” items?

## **Writing Prompts**

1. Is there enough protection against false advertising in your country?
2. Which products depend the most on advertising? Which products have a strong brand loyalty?
3. Do you think advertising is a form of art?

# Advice

## Warm-Up

Do you like to give advice to people? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary Challenge

u n s o l i c i t e d = Something that isn't asked for.

h a b i t = Something you do many times.

e x p e r t = Someone who knows a lot about a certain thing.

f i n a n c i a l = Related to money.

p a r e n t s = The people who raise a child.

## Idioms and Phrases

*the pot calling the kettle black, actions speak louder than words, unsolicited advice, Rome wasn't built in a day, don't count your chickens before they hatch*

I know you didn't ask, but I have some \_\_\_\_\_ for you about this decision.

Didn't you get arrested for drunk driving too? Aren't you just \_\_\_\_\_?

Don't give up. \_\_\_\_\_.

Do it, instead of saying it. \_\_\_\_\_.

You're not officially accepted. \_\_\_\_\_.

## Answers

**Vocabulary challenge:** unsolicited, habit, expert, financial, parents

**Idioms and phrases:** unsolicited advice, the pot calling the kettle black, Rome wasn't built in a day, actions speak louder than words, don't count your chickens before they hatch

## Let's Talk

1. Have you ever gotten some good advice? What was it?
2. Have you ever gotten some bad advice? What was it?
3. Do you think that you're good at giving advice?
4. Have you ever given somebody bad advice?
5. Did your parents give you lots of advice when you were growing up?
6. What do you think about unsolicited advice?
7. What is some advice you'd give to kids growing up today?
8. Would you pay an expert to get financial or legal advice about something if you needed it?
9. Is the Internet a good source of advice?
10. Do you ever read advice columns in newspapers or online?
11. In your friend group, who do people usually ask for advice?
12. I want to quit smoking. Please give me some advice!
13. I just won a million dollars. Please give me some advice about what to do with it!
14. I'm depressed and just sit on the couch watching TV all day. What should I do?
15. I hate my job but can't afford to quit. Please give me some advice.

## Writing Prompts

1. What advice would you give someone who wanted to get rich quickly?
2. What advice would you give someone who wanted to drop out of high school and start his or her own company?
3. What advice would you give someone who found a wallet with \$1000 in it?

# Annoying Things

## Warm-Up

What are 2-3 things that annoy you?

## Vocabulary Challenge

c r o k w e o r = A person that you work with.

e p t / p v e e e = A certain thing that always annoys you (two words).

p l a r a l t i y c r u = Especially.

i s m n o g k = Using cigarettes.

o a n y n = To bug or get on someone's nerves.

## Idioms and Phrases

*get your knickers in a knot/twist, flew off the handle, gets my goat, got on my nerves, the gloves are off*

My dad \_\_\_\_\_ when he found out that I crashed the car.

You know what \_\_\_\_\_? The way that Tanja laughs when she tells us to stay late at work.

My kids \_\_\_\_\_ towards the end of the summer. I'm happy they're back at school.

Well, \_\_\_\_\_. No more Mr. Nice Guy!

You don't need to \_\_\_\_\_. I'm going to clean up the kitchen after I'm done eating.

## Answers

**Vocabulary challenge:** coworker, pet peeve, particularly, smoking, annoy

**Idioms and phrases:** flew off the handle, gets my goat, got on my nerves, the gloves are off, get your knickers in a knot

## Let's Talk

1. What annoys you about where you currently live?
2. How do you get to school or work? Do you find this annoying?
3. Have you ever had an annoying coworker or classmate? What did they do?
4. Do you have a family member that you find annoying? What do they do?
5. Does PDA (public displays of affection) annoy you?
6. Does it annoy you when people talk during TV shows or movies?
7. Does smoking bother you?
8. Do you have any habits that annoy other people?
9. If something is annoying to you, what do you usually do?
10. What does “pet peeve” mean? Do you have any?
11. Is it possible to change an annoying habit?
12. Why do some people find children to be annoying?
13. Do you find any celebrities annoying?
14. Do you get annoyed at people with bad grammar or spelling?
15. Is there a saying or phrase that is particularly annoying to you?

## Writing Prompts

1. What would you do if you had a very annoying coworker or classmate that you had to work closely with?
2. What are some things that annoy people about using public transportation?
3. If you find lots of people or things annoying, are you actually the problem?



# Around the Neighborhood

## Warm-Up

How would you describe your neighborhood?

## Vocabulary Challenge

b n e o i s g r h = People that live near you.

u c o t m e m = To get to work by car, bike, walking, or public transportation.

n a i s t s o c i o a = Organized group.

r c h e i l n d = Kids.

i o u p n p t o r y t = Circumstances that make it possible to do something.

## Idioms and Phrases

*he's (she's) been around the block, girl next door, love your neighbor as yourself, this neck of the woods, neighbors from hell*

Remember that \_\_\_\_\_ from when you were growing up? Where is she now?

Wow! \_\_\_\_\_. Isn't that his 5<sup>th</sup> hockey team in 6 years?

Well, in \_\_\_\_\_ we don't park on the street. Everyone uses their driveway.

Why do you expect your brother to be kind to you when you're mean to him?

\_\_\_\_\_.

Remember those \_\_\_\_\_ from a few years ago? They're back. Across the street from me.

## Answers

**Vocabulary challenge:** neighbors, commute, association, children, opportunity

**Idioms and phrases:** girl next door, he's been around the block, this neck of the woods, love your neighbor as yourself, neighbors from hell

## Let's Talk

1. What are some good things about your neighborhood?
2. What are some things that you don't like about it?
3. Do you know your neighbors well?
4. Where are some places in your neighborhood that people like to hang out?
5. What kinds of recreational opportunities are there?
6. What kinds of people live in your neighborhood?
7. Do most people commute to work?
8. Do you have a neighborhood association of some kind?
9. Are there good schools in your neighborhood?
10. Is your neighborhood a good place to raise children?
11. Would you move if you had the opportunity?
12. Do your parents still live in the neighborhood where you grew up?
13. Do most people rent or own their houses?
14. What would make your neighborhood better?
15. Does your community have special events?

## Writing Prompts

1. Think about a neighborhood in your city where many people want to live. What is so good about it?
2. Think about a neighborhood in your city where people don't want to live. Why don't they want to live there?
3. If you could, what changes would you make to your neighborhood?

# Bad Behaviour

## Warm-Up

Did you ever get in trouble for anything when you were a kid from your parents or teachers?

## Vocabulary Challenge

l p c u i b = Not in private.

I r e o l i n g = A system of faith.

e c u u l r t = A way of life shared by a group of people.

n c l r i a m i = A person who commits a crime.

e c I n n e f l u = To have an impact on the behaviour of another person.

## Idioms and Phrases

*know-it-all, busybody, cheapskate, couch potato, behind the times*

My mom is so \_\_\_\_\_. She still uses a flip phone and thinks gay marriage should be illegal.

One of my cousins is a serious \_\_\_\_\_. He always tries to get out of paying his fair share at dinners.

I used to be a \_\_\_\_\_, but I started running a few years ago and got hooked.

My aunt Karen is such a \_\_\_\_\_. She's always calling me to "chat," but she just wants the latest gossip.

My boss is a real \_\_\_\_\_. He doesn't listen to any opinion but his own.

## Answers

**Vocabulary challenge:** public, religion, culture, criminal, influence

**Idioms and phrases:** behind the times, cheapskate, couch potato, busybody, know-it-all

## Let's Talk

1. What are some examples of good behaviour in children?
2. What are some examples of bad behaviour in children?
3. Do you have any bad habits? What are they?
4. Did you do anything really bad when you were young?
5. Have you ever felt embarrassed by a friend or family member acting badly in public?
6. Do you think friends can influence teenagers in a positive or negative way?
7. Think about a bully at school. Would you teach your child to fight back against him or her?
8. Do you think video games can result in murders or other violent crimes?
9. Does music influence people in a bad way?
10. How does religion impact behaviour?
11. In what situations are you on your "best behaviour?"
12. What should the punishment be for murder?
13. Should criminals get out of jail early for good behaviour?
14. Are there things in some cultures which are considered rude but not in others?
15. Do you think corporal (hitting) punishment is okay for teachers to use?

## Writing Prompts

1. What should be done about repeat offenders (people that commit more than 1 crime)?
2. Do teachers or parents have a bigger role in teaching children about how to be good citizens?
3. What would you do if you saw one person in a couple hitting the other one?

# Birthdays

## Warm-Up

Describe a memorable birthday that you've had. Or, a birthday party that you've been to.

## Vocabulary Challenge

a m e b m o l r e = Something easily remembered.

t n t r a i d o i = A custom or belief or action passed down from generation to generation.

s a c p l e i = Not common or usual.

p t a y r = How people often celebrate a birthday.

s e i u r r s p = Not expected.

## Idioms and Phrases

*birthday bash, let your hair down, blow out the candles, good things come in small packages, birthday suit*

Oh, \_\_\_\_\_! You're only 40 once!

Oh no! Ted is in his \_\_\_\_\_ again. Where are his mom and dad at?

Ready to \_\_\_\_\_? 3-2-1 . . .

I got Teresa an engagement ring for her birthday. \_\_\_\_\_, right?

When's your big \_\_\_\_\_? Saturday, right?

## Answers

**Vocabulary challenge:** memorable, tradition, special, party, surprise

**Idioms and phrases:** let your hair down, birthday suit, blow out the candles, good things come in small packages, birthday bash