

Small talk, big difference

Study abroad: prepare, try and review | A2-B1 | Adults and older teens

1 Where could a small question lead?

Look at the pictures. What could each person ask? Which exchange would be easiest for you?



1 The bus to the museum



2 Buying fruit



3 Dinner with a housemate



4 Joining a local event



5 Finding a place to meet



6 Trying something new

2 Ask, check and keep talking

Ask: Could you tell me which bus goes to the museum?

Check: Sorry, did you say thirteen or thirty?

Ask for help: Could you say that again, please?

Continue: Have you been there? / What was it like?

Use Could you + verb for a polite request: Could you repeat that?

After which bus, use statement order: which bus goes, not which bus does go.

3 Choose the useful words

Complete with: again · say · tell · like. Check before you speak.

1. Could you _____ me where the bus stop is?
2. Sorry, did you _____ thirteen or thirty?
3. Could you say that _____, please?
4. You tried the pottery class! What was it _____?

Now take turns. Say one request. Your partner gives a short, invented answer.

Have a go. Keep talking.

Short exchanges, useful questions and fresh conversations

4 Listen: the wrong destination

Listen to your teacher or the recording, if available. Do not read the script.

First: Does Maya want a bus or a boat?

Again: 1. Which bus does she need? 2. When does it leave?

3. Where is the stop? 4. What makes them laugh?

5 The picture challenge

1. A chooses a picture from page 1. B takes the matching reply card from the teacher. Keep the reply card hidden from A.

2. A asks for the information they need. B answers from the card.

3. A checks one detail and asks one more question. B answers or invents a sensible reply.

4. Swap roles and choose a different picture. Try three pictures each.

A needs to find out: 1 bus number and time; 2 price of bananas; 3 dinner time; 4 event day and cost; 5 cafe location; 6 class time and what to bring.

Example: A: How much are the bananas? B: One pound forty a kilo.
A: Sorry, did you say one forty? B: Yes. A: Do you sell apples too?

6 Take the conversation somewhere new

Ask and answer. Choose questions you like. Follow an interesting answer with Why?, What happened? or Can you give me an example?

1. Where do you already use English outside lessons?
2. What would you ask a new housemate on your first evening?
3. Which activity would you like to try? What would you ask first?
4. When did you last mishear a word or number? What happened?
5. What makes someone easy to talk to?
6. Would you rather explore a new place alone or with someone? Why?
7. What food could you recommend to a visitor? How would you describe it?
8. What small favour might you ask a neighbour for?
9. How do you start a conversation with a new colleague or classmate?
10. What helps when you cannot remember a word?
11. What would you show a visitor in your area? What might they ask?
12. Which small English conversation would you like to try next?

Finish by telling your partner one useful thing you learnt about them.