

DISCUSSIONS SAMPLES

Extracts from *Discussions Vol. 1-3*, *Discussions You've Never Had*, and *Discussions One-to-One*



Adrian Wallwork

(author of *Discussions AZ*, Cambridge University Press)

with Hoeppe, Lawson, Fletcher, and Nevison

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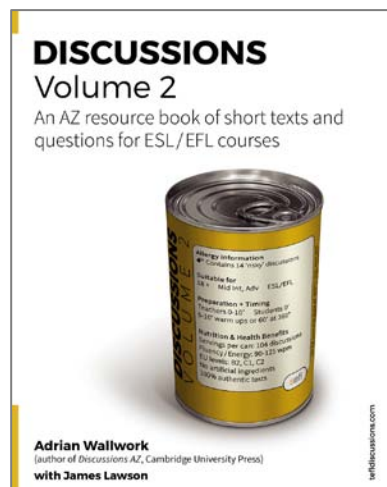
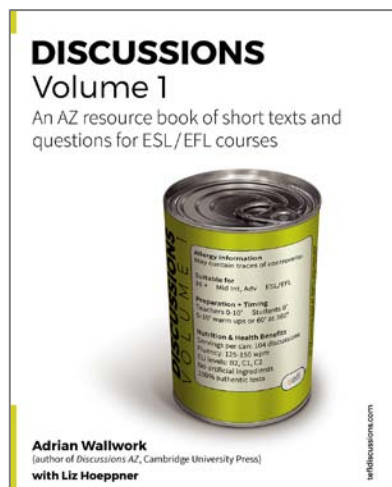


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DISCUSSIONS SAMPLES - Table of Contents

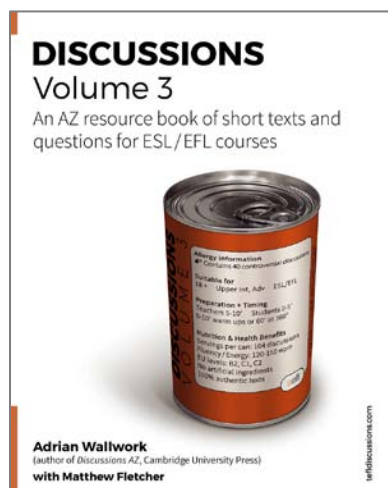
<u>DISCUSSIONS Volume 1-3</u>	3
<u>Teacher's introduction</u>	4
<u>Subject index for Discussions Vols 1, 2 and 3</u>	8
<u>DISCUSSIONS Volume 1</u>	15
<u>You</u>	16
<u>DISCUSSIONS Volume 2</u>	21
<u>Applications</u>	22
<u>DISCUSSIONS Volume 3</u>	27
<u>Sex</u>	28
<u>DISCUSSIONS You've Never Had</u>	33
<u>Teacher's introduction</u>	34
<u>Exercises</u>	38
<u>DISCUSSIONS One-to-One</u>	41
<u>Teacher's introduction</u>	42
<u>Exercises</u>	46

DISCUSSIONS Volume 1-3



DISCUSSIONS Volume 1

DISCUSSIONS Volume 2



DISCUSSIONS Volume 3

Teacher's introduction`

Below is a very brief guide to this book. Details on how to use this book and the others in the series can be found in the *Teacher's Book*, which can be downloaded for free at: tefldiscussions.com.

1 Rationale and Level

In each book there are 26 topic-related units, whose only logical order is that there is one for each letter of the alphabet. There are 104 exercises. They are predominantly speaking exercises based on a very short reading passage or a quotation with related questions, or simply a set of straight questions related to a particular topic.

Volume 1 and *Volume 2* are aimed primarily at B2 / C1 students (intermediate to advanced). Many exercises are also at B1 level (low-mid intermediate), and all the exercises can be used with C2 students (very advanced). *Volume 3* is most effective with upper intermediate and advanced students. The books are aimed at students aged 18+.

The volumes are in order of the amount of teacher preparation they require and the number of 'controversial exercises', marked with a M, that they contain. Volume 1 has no M exercises, and requires little or no preparation by the teacher. Volume 2 has fourteen M exercises, along with nineteen exercises that require preparation. Around of a third of the exercises in Volume 3 are rated M and all the exercises benefit from the teacher having read and digested them before handing them out to the class. Volume 3 works best in classes where the students know each other well.

Note that the texts and questions do not necessarily reflect my own point of view. It might be worth making it clear to your students that the texts and questions do not reflect your point of view either. They are simply designed to stimulate a reasonably balanced discussion.

Future editions will also contain listening exercises.

2 Choosing exercises

Before choosing a particular exercise/topic, decide whether it would be suitable for your students. In Vols 2 and 3, potentially controversial exercises are marked with a M in the Table of Contents. Such exercises are not suitable for the following types of students, those who:

- Ø you do not know very well
- Ø do not know each other very well
- Ø are in a multinational group with cultures or countries that tend to clash with each other

The Mexercises are best used only with:

- Ø groups who have been together for a while
- Ø open-minded students
- Ø small groups where you can closely monitor the conversations

A simple solution for your first lesson is to ask students to look at the index and to mark those items that they would:

- be particularly interested in talking about
- prefer NOT to talk about

Whatever exercise you use, always have a back-up in case your chosen exercise does not go as planned.

3 Preparation

In *Discussions Volume 1* and *Volume 2* only the exercises with a clock ⌚ in the Table of Contents require preparation on your part. Preparation is needed in order for you to digest the meaning of a text or to think about the implications of the questions. In a few cases, preparation might also involve looking at the key to the exercise. Note that in the Table of Contents all those exercises with a key are marked ⌨.

If you are a reasonably experienced teacher, the other exercises require no preparation on your part. You can simply hand out the exercise to students, and then read the texts and questions at the same time as the students are reading. If you are relatively new to EFL / ESL teaching, then clearly you should look at the exercises before going into class! You will also need to decide how long your class might take to complete the exercise.

In *Discussions Volume 3* the exercises are 'heavier' than in the other two volumes. Unless your class is truly up for anything, it would be wise to read the exercises before handing them out to students.

If you are planning to use an exercise for a full discussion (rather than just as a warm up), then ask students to prepare for it in advance. Tell them the exercise they are going to be doing next lesson, ask them to read the text and look up any unknown words, and finally ask them to think about how they would answer the questions (and what vocabulary and grammar they might need to enable them to answer the questions).

This approach is outlined in Section 1 of the Students Introduction. Such preparation will help students to feel more confident in having the discussion and you massively increase the chances of them having something to say.

Not all groups of students will need to see (and prepare) the exercise in advance. Those that are used to having discussions in the classroom (and in their regular lives) will probably have no problem jumping in to a new topic.

Clearly, however, if you do have time to prepare the exercises, the more likely they are to be effective. Things you might like to think about are:

- Is a discussion of this type suitable for my students? Will they have much to say? Might some students have an issue with the subject matter?
- How long is the discussion likely to last? Would it work better as a warm up or a full discussion? [In Volumes 1 and 2, those exercises that I think also work well as warm ups are marked ☐]
- Do my students actually need to read the text? If I am short of time, could I get them simply to discuss the questions?
- Do my students need to answer all the questions? Might some of the questions be intellectually too demanding for them, or simply not part of their realm of experience? If so, should I tell them which questions to answer, or simply say, for example, 'choose three questions that you would like to discuss'?

- What other questions would I like my students to answer? (i.e. you might want to change / add questions)
- Could I increase the length of the discussion by combining more than one exercise together (for instance, by doing two consecutive exercises, e.g. C1 followed by C2; or non consecutive exercises e.g. C1 + R4)?
- Can I tie in the discussion to what we did in a previous lesson or to a unit in the regular coursebook my students are following?

Note: The exercises are designed for pairwork or groupwork.

4 Conducting a discussion activity

The activities are laid out on the page so that they don't look overtly like ESL/EFL exercises. Individual activities are thus not numbered, though for convenience questions within the same exercises are numbered. This means you can easily change the order of the activities from the order suggested on the page, and/or just select those activities that you think will work best with your students. The rationale is maximum flexibility.

All exercises can be done by students in pairs or in groups.

Below are the typical activities. A single activity may occupy the whole page, or more frequently, may be found in combination with other activities.

- Facts / Quotations: Students read the facts / quotations and discuss them directly. Alternatively, ask students to write down a question in relation to the fact or quotation. They then ask the question to their partner. This is designed to be a 2-3 minute activity.
- List of questions: This is most basic type of exercise. Ask students to read all the questions and choose 4-5 questions (or more) to discuss together.
- Quizzes: These are in the form either of: i) personality quizzes, typically asking students what they would do in certain situations; ii) general knowledge quizzes (the answers are in the key at the end of the book); iii) true/false statements (again, answers in the key)
- Short texts: The reading exercises are authentic texts of around 100-150 words, and can be read in between one to three minutes. Students only need to understand the general gist.
- Questions on the preceding text: The texts are not designed to be a standard reading comprehension exercise, but a springboard to conversation via the questions that follow the text. In some cases, the questions are factual (the answers are in the key at the end of the book).

Proceed as follows:

1. Put students into pairs or groups.
2. Inform students which activity you wish them to do.
3. If students haven't done any pre-preparation (see Sect 1. page 6), then they can do it now. However, in many cases, they can simply launch straight into the exercise.

4. Go around groups encouraging students and noting down their difficulties (vocabulary, pronunciation, repeated grammar mistakes etc.).
5. When the time you have allocated is up or when around half the class appear to be winding down their conversation, either elicit general feedback or move on to the next activity.

At the end of the lesson or the beginning of the next, go over the points you noted down while you were going round the groups (step 4 above).

5 Duration of activities - warm up vs full-blown discussion

It is difficult to predict exactly how long a discussion will last. It depends on how much preparation the students have done beforehand, and how interesting they find it. The level of interest may also vary from group to group. Some exercises you might like to use as 5-10 minute warm up exercises, others you could use for full-blown discussions. In Volumes 1 and 2, the exercises that I think could work as warm ups (but might also develop into a longer discussion) are marked with a *y*. In Volume 3 there are no exercises marked as warm ups, though you might find that a few could work as such (e.g. A3, B1, B2, M1, N1, Q4 and T2).

With experience you will learn which exercises work best in which situations, with which groups, and for how long. The secret is always to have a Plan B: - i) for a discussion that dries up too quickly you need to have back up materials (don't force students to continue the discussion), ii) for a warm-up where the discussion actually takes off you need to assess whether it might be better to abandon your original lesson plan and just see where the discussion goes and what students might get out of it.

6 Keys and Index

Those exercises that entail students guessing the answers to factual questions have a key. You can either give the answers yourself to get students to read the key. In the Table of Contents all those exercises with a key are marked: *p*.

The index is designed to help you i) find exercises that you think might be suitable for your class, ii) to locate exercises that you have done previously. The fact that an item is listed in the index does not always mean that there is a full discussion of it in the related exercise, it may simply be referred to.

7 Your collaboration please

Clearly the topics, or the way I have dealt with the topics, will not necessarily reflect the way you yourself would wish to approach them. In addition, you may have topics for discussion that are not covered in any of the *Discussions* series.

So I would welcome any improvements to my exercises (texts, questions) and also any new exercises that you like might like to send me either to replace ones in the current books, or for use in future books in the series.

Although these books have been edited by experienced ELT teachers, they have not been subjected to the rigorous editing skills of a professional ELT publisher.

If you find any mistakes or have comments to make please contact me: adrian.wallwork@tefldiscussions.com

Subject index for Discussions Vols 1, 2 and 3

Subject index for Discussions Vols 1, 2 and 3

The coloured cans refer to the volume number:



Volume 1



Volume 2



Volume 3

The letters and numbers refer to the unit and exercise number. For example,

risks R1, R2, R3, R4, D2, D3

means that the topic of risks and risk taking is dealt with in unit R ('Risks') of Volume 1 in exercises 1-4, and in unit D unit D ('Dangers') of Volume 2 in exercises 2 and 3

origines P4

abortion L4

actors M3, A1

addiction - techno I2

advice B3, K3, B4

affairs - extra marital A4, S1

age S2

agony aunts I4

AIDs O4

alcohol R2

alcoholism H3

aliens A2

alt-right M4

Amazon B3

Americans A2

animals A1, A2, A3, A4, V4,

K4, N1, T3

annoying habits Y2

apps A1, A3, A4

art E3

artificial insemination E1

atheism R4

Australia P4

average G3

battery hens V4

beauty E1, G2, K3


beliefs A2


Bible H4



Black English L4


blasphemy T4


blogs B1, B3


body building  S2



body  G2


books  B1, B2,  Q2


boycotting  P2


breast implants  E1




bribing  Y3


British  U4,  I1


bucket list  Y1


burkinis  U2


burqas  H4


business  A2, G4,  E3,  B3



cannibalism  E3


capital punishment  V2


cars  A4


Catholicism  N4, R3, W2, Z2, Z3


censorship  Q2


chances  O3,  O3

children  H2


Christianity  T3, U1, U2, Z3


cinema  M1, M2, M3, M4

civil liberties  S4


civilization - a new  C2, C3


claims for damages  J4, K4


climate change  D4


cloning  G4

comfort zone  Z3


compass  T4

conspiracy theories  C1, C2, C4


conversation - safe topics  T1


cool / uncool  W2


countries  B4, C1, C2, C3, H3, I3, R4

creation myth  R3, U1

creationists  U1

crime  J1, J2, J3, J4

crime  J2, J4

cryonics  O4

cults  W3

cultural differences  H2, I1, K1, W4

cultural heritage  C1, E3

cultural traits  I3, P3, R4, W4, Z1

cultures  B4, C4, P3, R4, W4

cultures  C4, Q1, P4, T4

dangers - assessing  D2

dating  D1, D2, D3, D4, S1

daydreaming  Z3

death  O3, R2, Y1,  L2

debunking  M1

definitions  N4

diceman  X1

dietary laws  T3


































































disciplinary procedure  J2

discoveries  U3

dishonesty  M2

dreams  Z2, Z4

drugs  O4,  H3,  R2

dubbing  M2	Esperanto  G3	funny  H1
e-commerce  E3	ethics  H3	future  F1, F2, F4,  D4, H4, I2,
e-piracy  E1	etiquette  B4	O2, R4, T1,  F1, F2, F3, F4, O4
economics  F3,  W4	euthanasia  E3	future tenses  F3
education  E1, E2, E3, E4,  U1	exams  Q3, U3	gambling  R2
Egypt  K1	extreme measures  X4	game shows  X2,  X2
elections  G1	extremes  O2, X1	games consoles  X3
electricity  E4,  Y1	Facebook  S2	Garos  W1
email  E2, U2,  H3	fake news  N1	gas  E4
English - abbreviations, acronyms	famous people  N3	gender  L2, M3,  G1
etc  A4	fears  Y4,  O1	generation  X X3
English - Black English  L4	federal budget  P3	genes, genetics  G1, G2, G3, G4
English - future of  L2	fertility drugs  E1	geography  C1, C2
English exams  Q3	films  M1, M2, M3, M4	Google  G1, G2, G4
English  K1, M4, Q3	Finland  P1	Google Translate  G3
English  O2, O3	first meetings  Q1	gossip  N4
Englises  L3	food  V1, V2, V4,  F1, F2,  T3	government  G1, G2, G3, G4,
envy  B1	football  S4	 P1, P2, P3
ESP  A2		grammar  F3

grandparents  L3



Great Britain  Q4

guns  V1, V4

habits  H1, H4, Y2

happiness  K4

headlines  X4

health  H1, H2, S2,  E1, E3,
G2, L3, U3, Y1

heaven  R4


hobbies  H3,  L4, S1


holidays  C2,  T2, V1, V2


Holocaust  C4


homosexuality  N4, O4, S4

horse manure  A4

household jobs  W1

human nature  N3


humour  D2, H1, H2, H3, H4

ideal (man / woman)  W4

identity  I1, I2

image - self  I1, I2, I4


incompetence  D1, D2, D3, D4

infant mortality  E3

Instagram  I4


insults  N2

intelligence  D3, D4, X4,  E2

internet - dangers  D1

introductions  Q1

inventions  I1, I3, I4, T1, T3, 
C2

Islam  H4, J4, R2, U2, X3

Israel  E4,  P4



Jain monks  Z3

James Bond  Q1


Jehovah's Witnesses  U2, Z4

Jews  C4, Z2

jobs  Q1



jokes  D2, H2, H3,  L4

Joneses  I2

judging yourself  J3


junk  J1

juries  A3, J1, J2,  J3


justice  A3, J2,  J1, J2, J3, J4,
V3

knowledge  K1

language  L1, L2,  K1


law (an eye for an eye)  J4

laws (as in Murphy's Law)  N2


leisure time in the future  F2

lex talionis  J4

LGBT  S4

life after death  L2

life  L1

life on other planets  A2

lifestyle  K4, L1

lists  B2

live to be  100 L1

Lorde  P2

love  D1, D3, D4

lying  M2

machines  F4

man on moon conspiracy  C1

maths  B1, X4,  X2

media  N1, N2, N3

men  M3, Q2, W3

mental blocks  M1

MeToo  W3

miracles  Z3


moon  C1

movies  M1, M2, M3, M4

Murphy's Law  N2

music - black  L4


Muslims  H4, J4, R2, U2, X3


myths (modern)  M1


names  N1


nationalities  H2


New Zealand  P4


news  N1, N2, N3, X4



nightmares  Z4



North Korea  Z1


Nostradamus  F3


obsessions  O1


odd balls  O4


odd one out  O2,  O2


odds  O3,  O3


office issues  J3



origins  P1


paedophilia  N4


Palestine  P4, X3


Paris syndrome  V2


Parthenon marbles  E3


past habits  P4,  H1


people  P1, P3, P4, Y2



performance  Z4


personal questions  Q2, Y2


personal zones  Z1


personality  P1, Y2


personality traits  G3




pets  K4,  K4


phones  P1, P2, P3, P4


plagiarism  M2


poems  K3, N1




political correctness  T4


politics  G1, G2, G3, G4, N4, 
U3,  G1, K2, M4, P1, P2, P3,
P4, S1, Z1


polygamy  K3


Polynesia  O3


pornography  S3

predictions  A4, F1, F3, F4, 
D4, I2, O2, R4, T1,  F1, F2,
F3, F4, O4

preferences Y3,  T2


privacy online  S4

private life  A1


professors  H3



prostitution  M3

Protestants  Z2



qualifications  Q1

qualities  K2

questions  Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, W4

quizzes / questionnaires  B3,
G3, H1, O1, O2, P2, P4, Q4, 
A1, E2 G3, N3 O1, U4, Y3, Y4

Quora  Q3,  Q3

racism  E3, J4,  E3, H2

rap  L4



reincarnation  L2

religion (in general)  R1, R2, R3,
R4, U1, Z2, Z4

research  R1, R3

responsibility  R3

rich  B4




risks  R1, R2, R3, R4,  D2, D3

rules of thumb  B3

Russia  P1, P2


scams  B2

school  E1

science  A3, E3, R1, R2, R3, 
Q1, Q4, T2,  U3

security  S4

selfies  P3

sex  Q1, S1, S2, S3, S4

Sikhs  U2

sin  N4

Singapore  K1

sleep  Z1, Z2

soccer  S4

social constructs  Y2

social media  S1, S2, S3


social scientist  Q4

society  L3, Q4

South Africans  U4

South Korea  O2

space (outer)  R4


spare time  H3

sport  S1, S2, S3

spy  Q1


statistics  P4

stereotypes  L2, V3,  I1

strange people  O4

strange powers  A2, Y1


stupidity  D1, D2, D3, D4

subjects at university  E2

subtitling  M2

suing  J4, K4

supernatural  A2, Y1


surrogate mothers  W3

swearing  T4

syndromes  C2, H4

Tagalog  K2

taste  T2

technology  E4, F1, I2, I4, Q1,
T1, T3, T4

teenagers  Q3

telepathy  P4

telephones  P1, P2, P3, P4

Tesla  A4

time  O4, Z2


tolerance  L3

tomatoes  V1

torture  V2, X2

tourism  C2

toys  L2,  V4

translation  G3

transport  T3

travel  T1, T2, T3

trolling  B3

truth  C4, M2

TV  X2

Twitter  S3


Uganda  K3

UK  Q4

university  U1, U3, U4,  E4

unpleasant people  K2,  B1, B3

urban tales  C3

urban tales  M2

USA  O1, U1, U3, U4,  H3


useless information  J2, J3

vacations  O3, T2, V1, V2

values  R4


vegans  V3

vegetarianism  V1, V2, V3, V4

video game consoles  X3


violence  V1, V2, V3, V4

wack  W2


warning labels  U2

wealth  B4


weekends  V4

Western identity  P4

whacky  W1, W3, W4

what would you do?  P2,  E2, U4

WhatsApp  A2

which is worse  Y4

Wikipedia  M4,  R3

women  M3, W1, W2, W3, W4,  N3, R2, U4,  H4, I3, K3, L4, M3, S3, W1, W2, W3, W4

word generator  O2

X box  X3

X factor  X2

X Files  X1

yes man  X1

YouTube  Y1

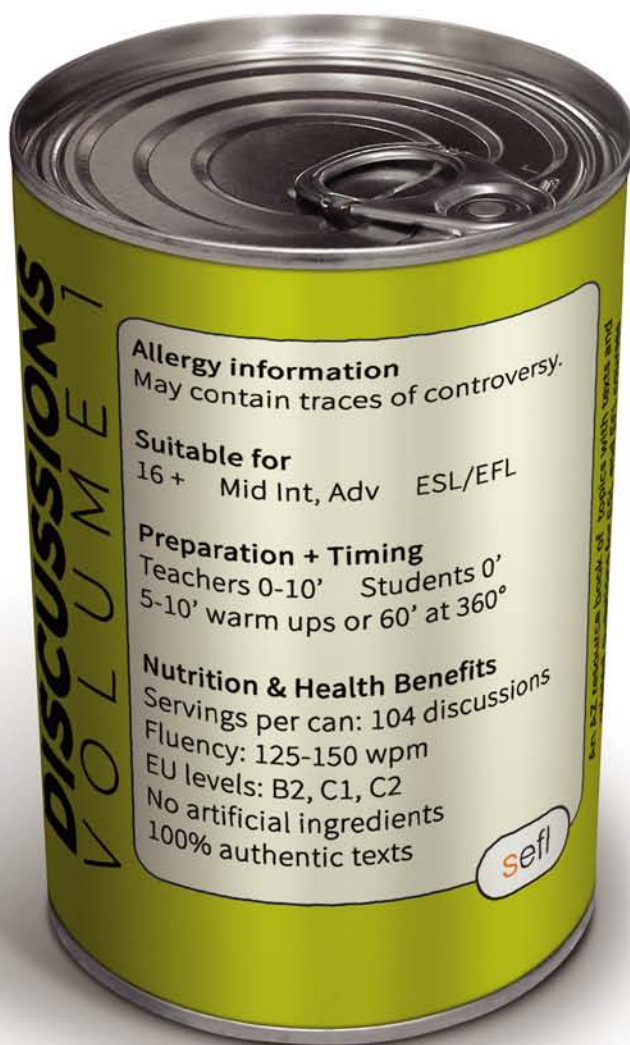
zealots  Z1

zones  Z1, Z2, Z3, Z4

DISCUSSIONS

Volume 1

An AZ resource book of short texts and questions for ESL/EFL courses



Adrian Wallwork

(author of *Discussions AZ*, Cambridge University Press)

with Liz Hoepfner

YOU

Y1: Bucket list

A bucket list is a list of things that you would like to do within a certain time period (the original bucket list was for things to do before you die). Choose five or more of the items below to put on your own bucket list. For each item, give a specific example (e.g. animal to see - *leopard*, book to read - *War and Peace*).

- animal to see
- book to read
- business to start
- dream to make come true
- food to taste
- job to get
- language to learn
- mountain to climb
- movie to watch
- object to find
- object to purchase
- passion to pursue
- person to reconnect with
- place to walk / trek to / across
- town / region / country to visit
- shop to shop in
- skill to learn
- sport to try
- sports event to go to
- subject to study

Y2: Are you like most people?

Look at the statements below. In each case decide whether you agree with the statement in terms of how
i) other people behave, ii) you yourself (would) behave

1. Given the chance, would cheat on their income tax.
2. Like to gossip.
3. Don't cheat when taking an exam.
4. Vote for a political candidate on the basis of unimportant characteristics (appearance, name, accent).
5. Stop and help someone whose car has broken down.
6. Speak out for what they believe in.
7. Will smoke marijuana (or similar) during their period at university.
8. Make decisions uninfluenced by public opinion.
9. Stick to their principles and ethics.
10. Tell the truth even when they know they would be better off lying.
11. Use social media to try and raise interest in themselves.
12. Make first impressions too quickly.
13. Will have at least one affair during their marriage.
14. Are happy to admit it when they make a mistake.
15. Practise what they preach.
16. Occasionally drive over the legal limit for alcohol consumption.
17. Speak with conviction about a topic which they know very little about (but are not actually aware that they know very little about it).
18. Make little attempt to question their own principles and ethical stances.
19. Post too many photos on social media.
20. Will forge a signature at least once in their life.

Y3: Preferences

Which do you think is better:

- being the worst in a group of highly proficient people?
- being the best in a group of less proficient people?

Pat Metheny, the jazz guitarist, was once asked in an interview: *Did you have a guitar teacher when you were starting out?* His reply was:

Well, I'm from this little town in Missouri called Lee's Summit, and unfortunately, we didn't exactly have any teachers out there. But when I was around 14, I started playing in Kansas City with the best players in town. They weren't guitar players - they were piano players, trumpets and drums, but those guys were really my teachers. I was fortunate to learn from playing with great older musicians. Whenever young guys ask me what they should do to get better, I always say *try to be the worst guy in whatever band you're in*. That's the secret.

Contrary to what Pat Metheny says, research has shown that being a big fish in a small pond enables many people to perform much better than being a small fish in a big pond. Top students in classes with other top students tend to get discouraged if they're not doing comparatively as well as they were used to doing and may drop out. Students in classes with less capable students tend to gain confidence and consequently perform better.

Which do you prefer being / would you prefer to be:

1. a big fish in a small pond or a small fish in a big pond
2. the best in an academic subject or the best in a sports team
3. the youngest in the class at high school or the oldest
4. the teacher's pet or the most popular person in the class
5. a rock musician or a star football player
6. a genius or a 'normal' person
7. the world expert in one area or someone very knowledgeable (but not an expert) in many areas

Y4: What are you afraid of?

Research has shown that there are over 700 things that people fear and dread.

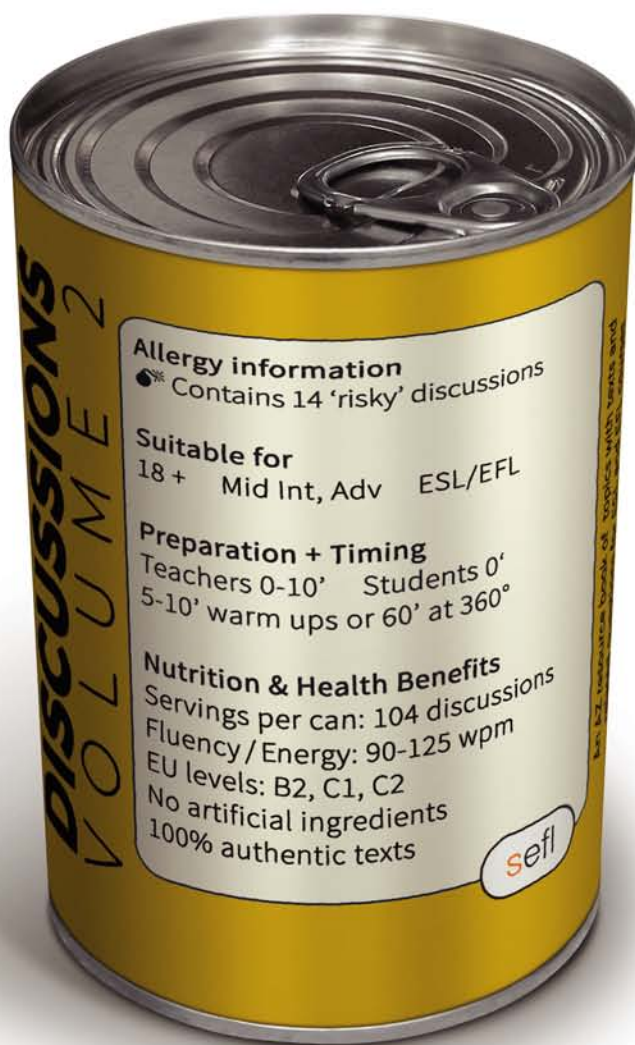
Which of the following 20 common fears do you have?

- being a passenger in a car
- blood
- cemeteries
- deep water
- failing a test
- hypodermic needles
- looking foolish
- making mistakes during English lessons
- meeting someone for the first time
- mice and rats
- not being a success
- roller coasters
- sharp objects
- snakes
- speaking in front of a group
- spiders
- strange dogs
- suffocating
- swimming alone
- thunderstorms

DISCUSSIONS

Volume 2

An AZ resource book of short texts and questions for ESL/EFL courses



Adrian Wallwork

(author of *Discussions AZ*, Cambridge University Press)

with James Lawson

APPLICATIONS

A1: Killer Apps

Look at the ten apps below. Which seven do you think were actually put on the market and sold?

1. Anti Mosquito: Emits ultrasonic waves to repel mosquitoes.
2. CrossClass: Allows you to merge head shots of classmates and friends with photos of blown-up heads of strange (but real) insects and lizard-like creatures.
3. Dreme: When sleeping with earphones, video-records your dreams.
4. Ghost Radar: Detects paranormal activity by identifying words said by ghosts.
5. iBeer: Simulates a beer can that empties itself as you tilt it.
6. Pocket Fan: Triggers a rotating fan on the screen (obviously no air comes out!).
7. QLESS: Scans for mobile numbers of those in front of you in the queue and then proceeds to call them with fake emergencies that will force them to sacrifice their place in the queue.
8. Toilet Sound Machine Extreme: Plays a toilet sound.
9. Lookalike: This dating app has a feature that allows you to find a celebrity who looks like you.
10. Drnk Pay: If you get drunk, the app blocks your bank card until you are sufficiently sober again.

Read the extract from an article from *Newsweek* below.

In what year do you think Quicken was launched: a) 1993 b) 2003 c) 2013?

"I couldn't do without it now," confesses Karen Jacob of Cincinnati, Ohio. "I'm very dependent". The object of such addiction is Quicken. Quicken keeps track of checks, credit-card expenses, monthly bills. Mundane stuff, maybe. But personal-finance software is one of the fastest-growing segments of the industry, says David Tremblay, research director of the Software Publishers Association. Quicken is what the industry calls a "killer app." - an application so powerful that many consumers say it alone justifies the purchase of a home computer.

Ask and answer the questions.

1. What are your favourite apps and why? What was the most recent app you've downloaded?
2. What's the most expensive app you've ever bought? Was it worth what you paid?
3. Which is the most popular app at the moment?
4. How much do you rely on apps? What apps could you not live without? How did people manage before the app was created?
5. What do you think are the most downloaded apps at the moment for your generation? And for your parents' generation?
6. If you could create an app what would it be?

A2: Job applications

Assuming you had the right qualifications and you desperately needed a job, which of one these jobs would you apply for? Which two would you never apply for, even if you were truly desperate?

DESIGNER OF FACTORY FARMS: analysing the least amount of space for an animal to live in while being the most productive possible.

CONTRACTOR FOR FOREST CLEARING: on behalf of the government, clearing huge expanses of forests where indigenous people currently live. The aim is to provide more room for planting crops or grazing livestock (both the crops and the meat from the livestock are then sold to the West).

FINANCIAL LAWYER: helping the mega-rich minimize the tax they pay. This deprives governments from money for public projects for all citizens.

LOBBYIST FOR PRIVATE PRISON: lobbying the government to imprison more people for longer, even ones that pose little threat to the public.

LOW-LEVEL HUMAN RESOURCES EMPLOYEE AT WEAPONS MANUFACTURER: reviewing CVs for a company that designs toys that explode on impact and are designed to maim children.

PART OF MARKETING TEAM OF A BANK: stipulating contracts for large loans with people who it is clear will have difficulty ever paying the loan back.

RESEARCHER FOR ONLINE GAMBLING COMPANY: analysing the compulsive behaviours that make certain types of people addicted to gambling, thus enabling the company to carry out targeted marketing.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPER FOR MASSIVE TECH FIRM: developing tools that can be used to aid the surveillance, detention and deportation of immigrants.

A3: The appliance of science

Scientists apply their knowledge and techniques in a variety of areas, with some interesting findings and inventions! Choose the correct answer (a or b) to the questions 1-5, and decide whether 6-10 are true or false.

1. It rains more a) at the weekends b) on weekdays.
2. Cars were first started with ignition keys in a) 1919 b) 1949.
3. Sugar was first introduced to chewing gum by a) William Semple (a dentist) b) William Wrigley Jr.
4. Doctors manage to predict the day that a baby will be born in a) 1 in 10 cases b) 1 in 20.
5. Tomato ketchup was once sold as a) an additive in pet food b) a medicine.
6. Non-experts are able to distinguish between a fake smile and a genuine smile in two very similar photographs of the same person.
7. There is a correlation between a person's level of optimism and how long they will live.
8. Studies of twins highlight that between 50-80% of the variance in levels of happiness can be explained by differences in their genes, rather than in life experiences.
9. In marital interactions it takes at least five good or constructive actions to make up for all the damage done by one critical or destructive act.
10. People will readily fabricate reasons to explain their own behaviour - in scientific terms this is known as 'confabulation' which is defined as the production of distorted or misinterpreted memories but without the conscious intention to deceive.

Now look again at numbers 7-10. How would you set up some scientific experiments to prove or disprove these statements?

A4: Aka App

English is a very flexible and playful language. The word *app* is an abbreviation of *application*, and *application* is itself an abbreviation of the computer term *application program*. The phone app WhatsApp is a merge of *What is up?* / *What's up?* (or *wazzup*) meaning 'what is going on in your life?' And *ad* is an abbreviation of *advert* which itself is an abbreviation of *advertisement*.

Answer the questions.

1. The English language frequently abbreviates long words into shorter ones. Do you know what the long forms are of these words: *brill*, *info*, *prob*, *typo*, *uni*?
2. Acronyms are a very common form of abbreviation. What do these acronyms stand for: *aka*, *atb*, *asap*, *btw*, *imho*, *fyi*, *lol*, *omg*?
3. Sometimes vowels are removed to create a short form of words e.g. *msg* = message. What do the following stand for: *pls*, *rgds*, *wknd*, *yr*?
4. Native English speakers like to contract words, e.g. *wanna* = want to. Are you familiar with these contractions: *gimme*, *gotta*, *hiya*, *kinda*?
5. Another method of abbreviation is merging two words, e.g. *drailing* = *drunk emailing*. Do you know what the following words are merges of: *brunch*, *motel*, *smog*, *vlog*?
6. Before the advent of predictive texting, a common form of abbreviations in text messages was to use the sounds of letters + numbers, e.g. *cul8er* = *see you later*. Can you guess what the following mean: *som1*, *2nite*, *ru32nite*, *b4*, *w8in4u*?

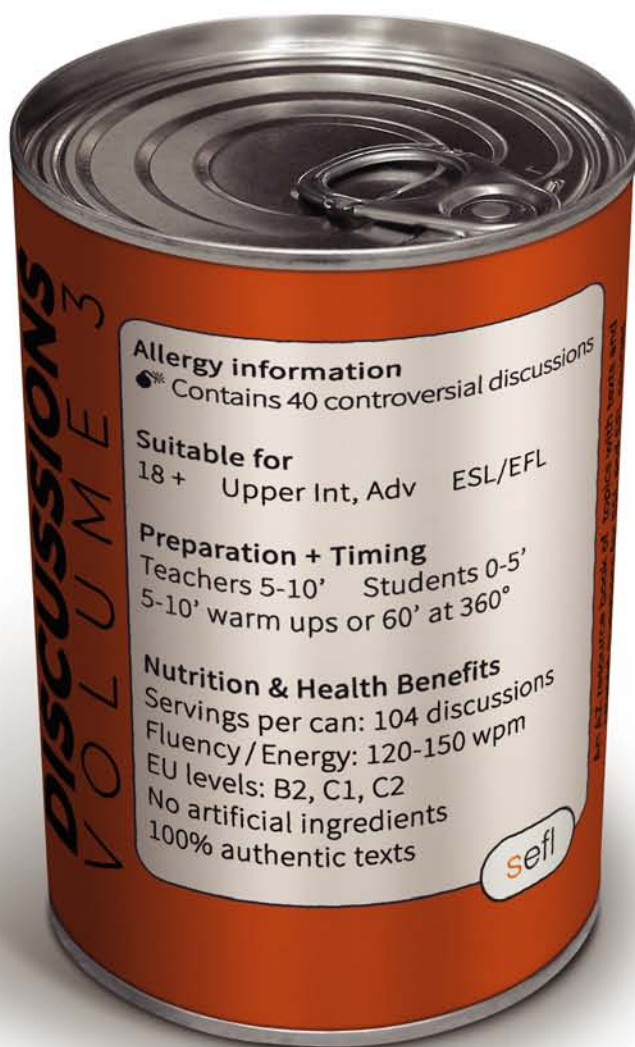
What kinds of words do you abbreviate in your language (e.g. people's names)?

Can you play with your language in the same way as English can be played with?

DISCUSSIONS

Volume 3

An AZ resource book of short texts and questions for ESL/EFL courses



Adrian Wallwork

(author of *Discussions AZ*, Cambridge University Press)

with Matthew Fletcher

SEX

S1: Sex and politics

Who do you think is more likely to cheat on their wife? Those with more or less:

i) sexually conservative values; ii) restricted sex education; iii) money; iv) left-wing leanings

Read the text, check your answers, and then answer the questions.

Ashley Madison is an online dating service aimed at married people to help them find an extra-marital relationship. In July 2015 hackers stole all of the company's customer data (names, addresses, sexual fantasies, credit card info, etc). The hackers threatened to release all the information if the company did not shut its website down. In August 2015, the hackers began publishing the data. In 2018 researchers in the US analysed the customer data and found that Democrats (traditionally more left-wing) used Ashley Madison's services less than Republicans (right-wing). In their article for the journal *Archives for Sexual Behaviour* the researchers concluded that: "Our results are perhaps the strongest evidence yet that people with more sexually conservative values, although they claim to act accordingly, are more sexually deviant in practice than their more sexually liberal peers".

There are various theories as to why Republicans are more likely to have affairs than Democrats:

- Right wing people tend to be less well-informed about sex and sexuality.
- In order to deflect suspicion, people who are more interested in taboo activities declare themselves Republicans, and profess to have stricter attitudes, .
- Ashley Madison's services are expensive, and since Republicans tend to be wealthier than Democrats, they are more likely to be able to afford such services.

1. Are you surprised by any of the results? In your country, is there a tendency for there to be more sexual scandals amongst a particular political party?
2. Is there any link between a male politician cheating on his wife and being dishonest with voters? Is there a clear relationship between one's private and public life?
3. Ashley Madison's tagline was originally "Life is Short. Have an Affair." To what extent do you agree with this statement? Or do you think that agencies like Ashley Madison be banned?
4. How do you think those husbands who were found out managed to deal with the situation?
5. How concerned are you about your online life and data being made public?

S2: The right age

What do you think the right age is to:

- Give a child a lesson on sex education.
- Have your first kiss.
- Have one's first sexual experience.
- Shave.
- Legally allow sex between consenting heterosexuals.
- Legally allow sex between consenting homosexuals.
- Start dating.
- Get married.
- Have a child.
- Stop having sex.

S3: Girls Just Want to Have Fun

Read the text from a research paper entitled *Girls Just Want To Have Fun*, written by an Italian PhD student.

Several feminist groups are trying to free women from humiliating representations that consider them only as sexual objects, as usually happens in mainstream pornography. The solution suggested by this “third wave” of feminist activists is not to ban pornography, but to produce “feminist pornography” directed by women that takes account of their sexuality and expresses it appropriately.

In Italy there is a feminist union called *Le Ragazze del Porno* (the Porn Girls), an all-women group made up of film directors, writers, artists and performers which has launched a crowd-funding campaign to produce a series of feminist pornographic films. The aim of the project is for women to become sexual *subjects* of representation, rather than merely objects.

Discuss the questions.

1. What movies have you seen recently that represent women as sex objects?
2. What do you think about the *Ragazze del Porno*'s project?
3. Where do you draw the line between the erotic and the pornographic?
4. Do you think pornography in any form should be banned?
5. What are the dangers of watching porn for i) teenage boys, ii) teenage girls iii) adults?
6. How easy is it to become addicted to pornography? With what consequences?

S4: LGBTI and conversion therapy

How are the following groups treated in your country? What progress, if any, has been made in the last decade to improve their status in society?

- homosexuals
- transvestites
- transsexuals
- intersexuals

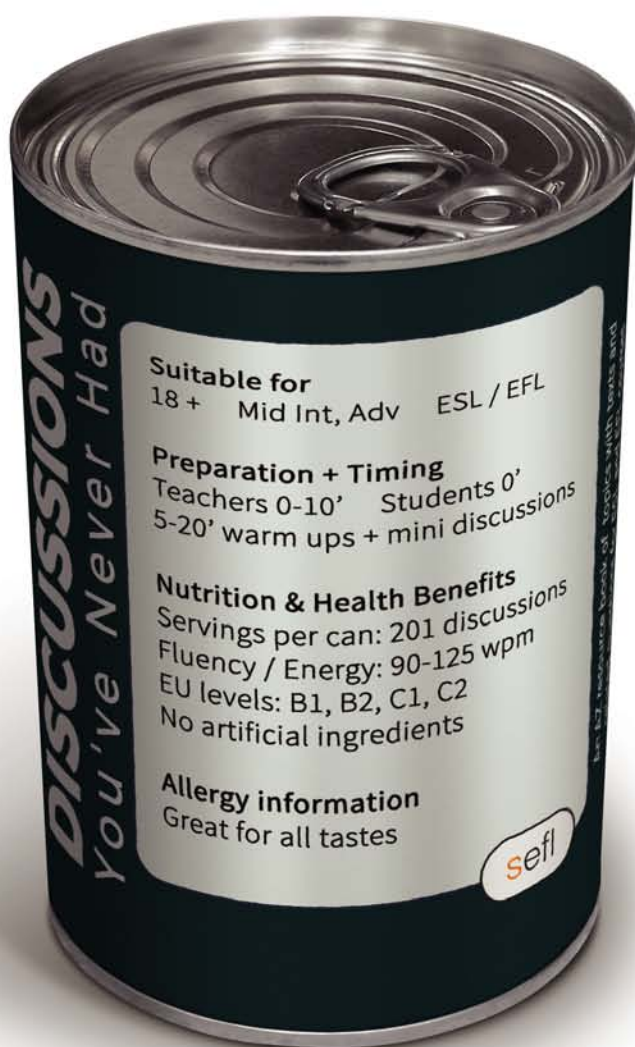
Read the text below and answer the questions. How offensive do you find Pence's support of this 'therapy'?

Conversion therapy, which is advocated by Mike Pence (vice president under Trump) is a psychological treatment or spiritual counselling aimed at changing a person's sexual orientation from homosexual or bisexual to heterosexual. Until 1981 techniques used included 'ice-pick lobotomies', chemical castration with hormonal treatment, electric shocks to the hands and/or genitals, nausea-inducing drugs and masturbatory reconditioning. More recent clinical techniques have been limited to counselling, visualization, social skills training, psychoanalytic therapy, and spiritual interventions such as prayer and group support and pressure.

DISCUSSIONS

You've Never Had

A resource book of 201 exercises
for ESL/EFL group lessons



Adrian Wallwork

(author of *Discussions AZ*, Cambridge University Press)

with Kate Nevison and Liz Hoeppe

Teacher's Introduction

8. What makes this book different?

This book provides a refreshing and effective alternative to the traditional discussion formula.

Traditional style: one topic, many questions

Below is an example of a typical / traditional discussion exercise, where the topic is News (I have just shown some examples from the original 45 questions).

- What is the role of newspapers in society?
- Why do we buy newspapers?
- Do you think that news is censored in some countries?
- Is the news censored in your country?
- Will newspapers disappear in the future?
- How does American news differ from your country's news?
- What is your favorite section of the newspaper to read?
- How often do you watch the news?
- Do you make a point of watching the news?

Source: <http://iteslj.org/questions/news.html>

If you propose one topic (e.g. news *or* honesty *or* politics) to your students, the effectiveness of the ensuing discussion very much depends on the students being interested in that topic and having something to say about it. The above questions on the news may generate a good discussion and the exercise will certainly practise news-related vocabulary. But there is a chance that some students won't have any particular opinions and/or are not interested in the topic.

New alternative style: many topics

These many topics are presented within a uniform format/layout. In most of the exercises it is thus the format that gives cohesiveness to the exercise, not the theme.

If the discussion is multi-topic (*news and honesty and politics and annoying habits and the supernatural and supermarket shopping and x and y and z*), and students are given the opportunity to choose their own topic, then you already have a much greater chance of success. If additionally you let students go off-topic, then you get even more discussion.

The exercises do not explicitly draw directly from students' personal experiences, nor are students required to have any specific knowledge of a topic.

Instead the exercises are based on getting a spontaneous reaction to something that students have probably never even thought about before, and then building upon this reaction.

This puts students on the same level with regard to their experience base and knowledge base, and so is more likely to give all students a chance to express themselves.

Note: The exercises are in no particular order.

9. Why and how was the book conceived?

I wanted to create a book of discussion exercises that:

- would be cheap enough for every EFL teacher to be able to buy
- would fit onto the screen of a mobile phone
- required no photocopying (who likes doing photocopies? what students like receiving them? what school likes spending money on unnecessary ink and paper?)
- required virtually zero preparation by the teacher
- had topics that were unusual yet for the most part grounded in every day stuff that students can relate to
- could be used either as 3-5 minute warm ups or take up an entire 50 minute lesson
- could be used at many levels thus enabling the strapped-for-time teacher to use the same exercise in nearly every class taught on the same day

This book is the natural extension to the other *Discussion AZ* books (Cambridge University Press), but this time stripped down to a minimum. No pre-reading exercises or listening exercises, and virtually no notes for the teacher to read.

Once I had got the formula I thought it would be useful to devise questions with someone much younger than me and also female. So I enlisted the services of Lizzie Hoepfner, then 24, who provided a nicely different slant to some of the questions.

10. Why do certain topics not turn up in TEFL?

Many topics never get discussed in EFL books because they simply don't relate to the theme of a particular unit. In addition, the themes of textbooks are very similar and are often dictated by topics that tend to come up in exams. This means that themes like family, travel, education, leisure, technology, the environment or crime tend to come up again and again. This may not be a problem for students who haven't done many English courses, but for those who go from beginners to advanced it can be very tedious. It is even more tedious for teachers who have to hear the same opinions over and over.

Controversial topics tend to be avoided by the big publishers. They market their books all over the world and try to have a one-size-fits-all approach. This means they can only stick to 'safe' topics in order to avoid any legal issues and so as not to offend anyone of any religion or culture.

If you are interested in discussions that are more controversial, then try another book in this series: *Discussions Volume 3*.

11. I find that traditional discussion activities often do not work. Why is this?

Many discussions in EFL classrooms fail. This may be for several reasons:

- the students don't choose the topic
- the topics proposed are simply not interesting and thus generate no discussion
- the topics are too banal or have been overexploited in previous lessons / coursebooks
- they require students to already have opinions on the topic, which either students do not have or which they are not willing to share or which they are not able to express easily in English
- they make students lose face in front of their companions because they force students to reveal that they know nothing about a particular topic
- they are taboo for some types of students
- they appeal predominantly to Europeans
- they require students to give away personal information that they may be reluctant to share with the rest of the class

Another key reason why discussions can fail is that they may be dominated by one or two students. To address this problem see Section 17.

Exercises

1. How much difference would it make if

1. the media were unbiased
2. the fresh-water became salty and the salty-water fresh
3. shops sold everything as 'un-branded'
4. girls were physically stronger than boys
5. everyone knew each other's names
6. there was no competition between people
7. animals could speak
8. the maximum speed for cars was 20 kph
9. everyone's god was female
10. we had eyes at the back of our head

2. What's the use of

1. Latin
2. make up
3. ornaments
4. pets
5. picture frames
6. social networks
7. thanking
8. wind
9. worrying
10. yawning

3. The best way to handle * is

1. homework
2. insomnia
3. late dinner guests
4. partner's infidelity
5. people who talk too much
6. shouting bosses / teachers
7. sibling rivalry
8. spam
9. stress
10. travel by low cost airlines

4. Which of the following is it best not to do

1. read someone's diary
2. sing at karaoke
3. smile at a stranger
4. spy on friends
5. steal money from your parents
6. take your wallet to the beach
7. walk on walls
8. watch TV in bed
9. wear the wrong size clothes
10. write down your pin number

5. What would happen if

1. politicians' mothers were elected rather than the politicians themselves
2. criminals' parents were put in prison rather than the criminal
3. teachers were paid on how well their students perform
4. parents had to go on regular 'how to bring up your children' courses
5. politicians who advocate war had to send their children to war immediately
6. priests had to get married
7. women could marry as many men as they wanted
8. men gave birth, not women
9. holidays were only given as a reward
10. babies were born able to talk

6. Which is 'better'

1. the east or the west
2. democracy or benign dictatorship
3. an iPhone or an Android phone
4. saving or spending
5. English or your language
6. buying or renting
7. wine or beer
8. your brain or your heart
9. a dog or a cat
10. a short intensive course or a long diluted course

7. Which are easier to control / manage

11. children or adults
12. your social life or your work/school life
13. friends or family
14. days or years
15. thoughts or feelings
16. the wind or the ocean
17. money or time
18. parents or in-laws
19. dreams or failures
20. dogs or cats

8. Which was the strangest invention

1. gothic architecture or opera
2. bungee jumping or mud wrestling
3. paying for someone to care for the elderly or for children
4. bubble gum or candy floss
5. cosmetic surgery or body building
6. social hierarchy or social networking
7. 24/7 opening hours or running machines
8. zombie movies or pokemon
9. shirt & tie or synthetic fabrics
10. cigarettes or body piercing

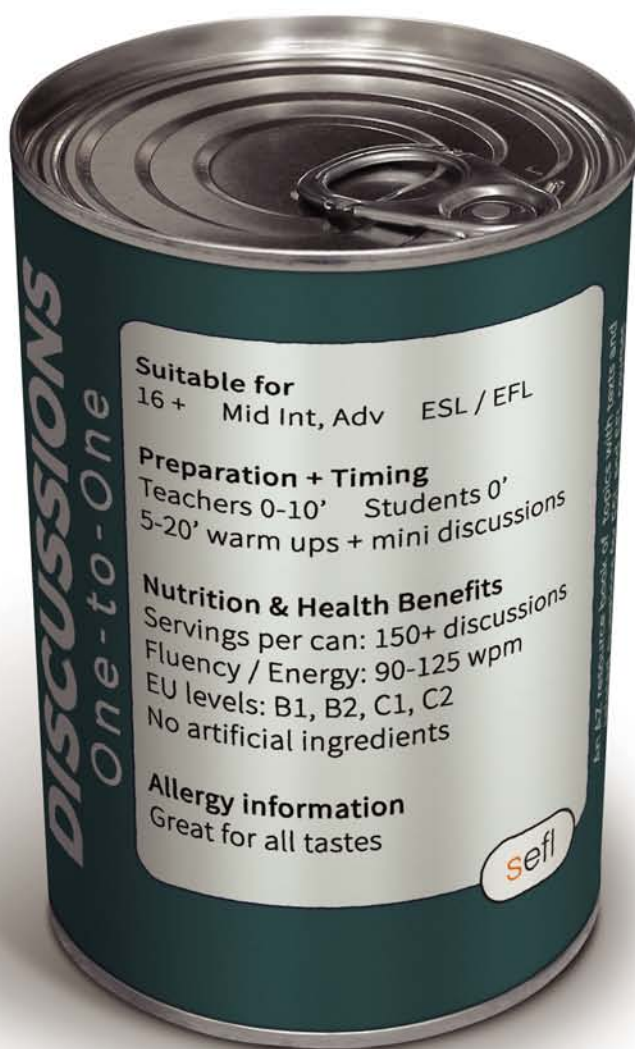
9. There is no such thing as a / an

1. uninteresting subject
2. unanswerable question
3. unusual idea
4. uncontrollable urge
5. unexpected event
6. boring person
7. hopeless situation
8. pointless conversation
9. wasted afternoon
10. ugly face

DISCUSSIONS

One-to-One

A resource book of 150 exercises for 1-1
ESL/EFL lessons



Adrian Wallwork

(author of *Discussions AZ*, Cambridge University Press)

with Kate Nevison

Teacher's Introduction

1. What makes 1-1 lessons different?

There are some key differences between group classes and individual lessons:

- Students who opt for 1-1 lessons tend to be more motivated as they are probably willing to pay much more than the cost of doing the lesson in a group. Their motivation is also likely to motivate you too. However, despite their enthusiasm, they may not know exactly what they need from your lessons. This book is designed to cater for those students who wish to improve their oral skills, and thereby improve their vocabulary and grammar. Before embarking on the exercises, check that your students want to focus on oral skills.
- You will be able to give the student your full attention and concentrate on their specific needs. 1-1 lessons are very useful for those students who have pronunciation problems, or who are very shy and would be reluctant to talk in a group lesson.
- Given that there is just one teacher and one student, you both have to take responsibility for making the lesson a success. In a conversation lesson, this entails you having a lot of questions up your sleeve that you can ask your student. You'll soon find that you are constantly feeding them new questions, so you always need to be one question ahead!
- Your relationship with the student will be much more intense than a typical classroom relationship. You may well end up becoming friends or becoming their amateur therapist!

Note: Although this book was written specifically for 1-1 lessons, most of the exercises can also be done with small groups of students who know each other reasonably well.

2. How should I select which exercises and topics to use?

This book is designed to create a discussion between you and your student on various topics. You can either use an exercise as a warm up or for the part of the lesson that you have planned to dedicate to oral skills.

The exercises in this book can even be used as an entire lesson if your student is basically interested in a conversation lesson. In fact, for many students wanting private lessons, conversation is their prime aim.

EXERCISES 1-21: THEME-BASED QUESTIONS

Exercise 1 is dedicated to a needs analysis and should also help you set some ground rules. If your student is relatively low level, then you might like to ask these questions in their language (if you speak it).

These needs analysis questions are followed by a discussion on names (Ex 2), as a gentle introduction to get the student talking about him/herself.

Exercises 3-20 are organized by general theme (school, work, hobbies etc) and tend to be questions that you and your student will be familiar with.

EXERCISES 22-121: QUESTIONS ABOUT STUDENT'S PERSONALITY AND ATTITUDES

These exercises contain questions about students' attitudes to various topics along with a number of hypothetical questions. Each set of topics begins with a question (e.g. *When was the last time you ... Have you ever ... How would you react if ... Do you tend to ...*). Many of the questions are typical of those found in personality tests. The questions are personal, but are not intrusive and are unlikely to cause any embarrassment .

EXERCISES 122-154: MORE UNUSUAL QUESTIONS

These exercises are similar to the ones given in the companion book, *Discussions You've Never Had*. They cover areas that it is unlikely that you or your student have discussed before in an English language lesson.

3. Money issues + what should I do in the first lesson?

If you have not already dealt with money issues by email/phone, you might like to start by getting the thorny question of how payment should be organized. Factors to think about:

- Do you want to give them a first free trial lesson?
- Do you want them to pay upfront for a package of lessons?
- Are you going to charge them if they cancel at the last minute?
- Where are you going to do the lessons? Your place or theirs? Will the price change accordingly? [Having the lessons at your house saves on travel time, affects you much less if there are last minute cancelations, gives you a feeling of safety particular if you are a female teacher with a male student]

You should also conduct a needs analysis (Ex 1).

To get the main part of the lesson going, I suggest that you start with your own tried-and-tested first lesson questions. Alternatively you can begin the questions in Part 1 (Ex 2-20) - these regard the student's family and work situations, without getting too personal.

In any case, let the student choose the topics and questions, rather than imposing them yourself. As lessons progress, the key is only to use those topics/questions within an exercise that you feel your student will be comfortable with.

4. How should I conduct the exercises?

The big difference between a conversation exercise in class and with a private student, is that you can become directly involved in the conversation with the private student.

Clearly, it is useful for the student's listening skills if he / she listens to you talking. However, given that many students think that they are getting value for money if they do all the talking, it is a good idea for you to explain to them at the beginning of the 'course' that there are clear benefits for them of you talking: not just to improve their listening skills but to give them a break from talking themselves (see Section 8).

So the procedure for carrying out an exercise could be as follows:

- 1) Dictate (or message / email) those items in the exercise that you think would be suitable.
- 2) Ask your student to read through the items and choose one or two that they would like to talk about.
- 3) Get the conversation started by asking the student a related question. For example, imagine the item to be discussed is whether the student eats junk food.

Your student begins talking about junk food and your role is to:

- comment on what they've said
- feed them related questions e.g. *Do you have any fast-food restaurants near where you live?*
- occasionally express your own opinion (try to encourage them to ask you questions)
- move on to another item when you've exhausted talking about junk food

4) As you listen to them speak, write down the errors they make in terms of: vocabulary and phrases, pronunciation, grammar.

5) Be prepared for the fact that even though the student may have chosen the topic, they may not actually have much to say about it. This means you always need to be one step ahead, i.e. you need to have the next question (and the one after) ready.

6) Get the student to ask you a few questions (see Section 8).

7) Go over her / his mistakes.

Exercises

10. Movies and TV

1. What's TV like in your country?
2. Are you on Netflix / Amazon / Sky? When did you first pay a subscription?
3. What kind of TV programmes do you like?
4. What are your favourite TV shows and series?
5. What type of movies do you like?
6. Which is your favourite film?
7. Do you like adventure films / comedies / horror?
8. Do you watch any TV in English? Do you watch movies in English?
9. Do movies tend to be dubbed into your language?
10. Do you watch with or without subtitles?
11. Who are some of the famous actors and musicians in your country?
12. Who's your favourite actor / director?
13. Who are your favourite US actors and actresses?
14. Who is the most popular entertainer in your country?
15. When did you last go to the movies? Where's your nearest cinema?
16. Have you seen X's latest film?
17. What did you think of X's last film?
18. Do you ever go to the theatre?

11. Which three of these questions would you most like to be asked? And which three the least?

1. How tall are you
2. What is biggest defect
3. What personality trait do most people most like in you
4. What was the name of your first boy / girl friend
5. What is the first thing you usually do after waking up
6. What food, if any, are you allergic too
7. How many friends do you have on Facebook / Instagram
8. What is your most ticklish spot
9. What is your biggest fear
10. What colour is your bedroom

12. What is your favourite ...

1. animal
2. car
3. colour
4. flower
5. newspaper or magazine
6. painting
7. place
8. season
9. time of day
10. topic of conversation

13. What has been the ...

1. happiest period of your life
2. most terrifying experience you've ever had
3. biggest mistake you've ever made
4. longest you've ever had your hair
5. furthest you've been away from home
6. longest time you've ever spent completely on your own
7. most exciting thing you've ever done
8. highest point you've ever been to
9. fastest speed you've ever driven (or been driven) at
10. most expensive thing you've ever bought

14. What do you feel is the most

1. appealing element about your work / studies
2. desirable aspect of being in a relationship
3. biased TV network in your country
4. wonderful aspect of learning another language
5. attractive city within 100 km of where you are now
6. fun you can have in a library
7. lied-about experience
8. prescribed drug
9. sung song
10. ridiculous fashion of the last 50 years

15. Which could you do for five minutes without stopping ...

1. do press ups
2. be completely naked in a public place
3. listen to a baby crying
4. tread water
5. wash your hands
6. skip
7. peel onions
8. run on treadmill
9. drill a hole
10. talk in English

16. What would you never pay for ...

1. a cleaner
2. a first date
3. a laugh
4. access to a beach / sea
5. books
6. education
7. priority queue at an airport gate
8. second-hand clothes
9. taxis
10. the right to roam (countryside)

17. Which would you rather ...

1. fly or be invisible
2. give up meat or alcohol
3. help a poor person in your own country in another country
4. learn Spanish or Chinese
5. listen to people arguing or eating
6. meet your dead great great grandfather or your future great great grandchild
7. be stronger or better looking
8. read traditional post or email
9. take photos of class/work mates or family members
10. try break-dancing or ballet

