

SAMPLE CHAPTER*

COMPELLING AMERICAN CONVERSATIONS

Questions & Quotations
for Intermediate American English Language Learners

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*reproducible for classroom use

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MAKING AND BREAKING HABITS



SHARING STORIES

How well do you know your own habits? Share something about your habits and find out more about your partner's habits in a friendly exchange.

1. How many hours of sleep do you usually get? Is that enough sleep for you?
2. What time do you usually wake up in the morning? Do you get up with the sun?
3. Describe your morning routine. Are you usually in a hurry?
4. What did you eat for breakfast today? Did you drink water, juice, milk, coffee, or tea?
5. How do you get to school? Do you walk, take a bus, drive a car, or ride a bicycle, scooter, or skateboard?
6. Can you describe a usual summer afternoon for you? A typical winter afternoon?
7. What tasks do you put off because you don't feel like doing them?
8. Do you often wait until the last minute to do things? Which things? Why?
9. What's your daily schedule like? Busy? Slow? Jammed?
10. What machines or electronic devices do you use every day?
11. Where do you and your family usually buy groceries? Do you go to supermarkets, smaller grocery stores, or farmers' markets? Why?
12. At the checkout counter, do you usually ask for paper or plastic bags? How often do you bring cloth or canvas bags?

EXPANDING VOCABULARY

Please circle the words that you know. Read the other definitions below.

bargain	curious	exchange	habit
lifestyle	oversleep	routine	schedule

bargain, *noun*: an item offered for sale at less than the usual price; an agreement between a buyer and a seller.

bargain, *verb*: to try to buy a desired object by asking the seller to lower the price.

~ *I like to shop for bargains in the markets and I often bargain with sellers at yard sales.*

curious, *adjective*: having an active desire to learn about things.

~ *I am curious about your college.*

exchange, *noun*: something given in return for money or something else of value; a conversation.

~ *Wynona exchanged a blue sweater for a red one after a short verbal exchange with the friendly saleswoman.*

habit, *noun*: a repeated action developed over time; routine.

~ *Grace developed healthy habits, such as eating right and exercising regularly.*

lifestyle, *noun*: the way a person leads his or her life.

~ *The college lifestyle fit Carlos: he ate three meals a day, studied hard at the library, slept six hours every night, and smiled every day.*

oversleep, *verb*: to sleep late; to fail to wake up on time.

~ *Jake oversleeps when he stays up too late the night before.*

routine, *noun*: repeated activities.

~ *Leah's morning routine included making coffee and taking a shower.*

schedule, *noun*: a series of events organized by date and time.

~ *My schedule for Friday is full. Can we meet next week?*

schedule, *verb*: to make an appointment.

~ *I will schedule you to see the doctor next Tuesday at 3:00 pm.*

ASKING QUESTIONS

A. Select five vocabulary words in this chapter and write a question for each word. Remember to start your question with a question word (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How, Is, Are, Do, Did, Does, etc.). You will also want to end each question with a question mark (?). Underline each vocabulary word.



Example: Are you curious about the new basketball practice sessions?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

B. Take turns asking and answering questions with your partner.

PARAPHRASING PROVERBS

A. What do the following proverbs and sayings mean? Discuss them with your partner. Circle your favorite.

- ◆ Old habits die hard. —American
- ◆ Doing nothing is doing ill. —Vietnamese
- ◆ Whoever gossips to you will gossip about you. —Spanish
- ◆ Good luck beats early rising. —Irish
- ◆ Habits are first cobwebs, then cables. —Spanish
- ◆ Time and tide wait for no one. —English
- ◆ Don't put it in my ear; put it in my hand. —Russian
- ◆ To change and change for the better are two different things. —German
- ◆ Cream rises to the top. —American

B. Can you add two more proverbs related to the topic?

- ◆
- ◆

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES ...

1. What is your favorite time of day? Why?
2. Do you usually look for bargains when shopping?
3. What are your TV viewing habits? Do you always watch certain shows? Which ones?
4. How often do you use a computer? When do you check your e-mail?
5. What are some people's good or healthy habits?
6. What are some bad or unhealthy habits that people have?
7. Do you consider smoking cigarettes a bad habit? Why or why not?
8. What are some of your healthy habits? Which one is your favorite?
9. What are a few of your unhealthy habits? Which one do you want to break?
10. Do you feel that you usually make good use of your time? Why or why not?
11. Are you sometimes lazy? When?
12. Do you feel that things in your life are getting better or worse? Why?
13. How do your habits compare with those of your parents? Your friends?
14. Have your daily habits changed in the last few years? How?
15. Would you like to have been born around 1900? 2100? Why or why not?

DISCUSSING QUOTATIONS

Take turns reading these quotations out loud (or *aloud*) and discuss them with your partner. Mark your answers. Explain your responses.

1. "Men's natures are alike; it is their habits that separate them."
—*Confucius (551–479 BCE), legendary Chinese philosopher*
 Agree Disagree
Why?
2. "Nothing is in reality either pleasant or unpleasant by nature; but all things become so through habit."
—*Epictetus (55–135), Greek philosopher*
 Agree Disagree
Why?
3. "The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken."
—*Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), English writer*
 Agree Disagree
Why?

4. “Nothing so needs reforming as other people’s habits.”
—*Mark Twain (1835–1910), American novelist*
 Agree Disagree
Why?
5. “Ninety-nine percent of all failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses.”
—*George Washington Carver (1864–1943), African-American scientist and inventor*
 Agree Disagree
Why?
6. “Life never becomes a habit to me. It’s always a marvel.”
—*Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923), New Zealand writer*
 Agree Disagree
Why?
7. “The unfortunate thing about this world is that good habits are so much easier to give up than bad ones.”
—*W. Somerset Maugham (1874–1965), English novelist*
 Agree Disagree
Why?
8. “Any man who reads too much and uses his own brain too little, falls into lazy habits of thinking.”
—*Albert Einstein (1879–1955), American Nobel Prize-winning scientist*
 Agree Disagree
Why?
9. “Curious things, habits. People themselves never knew they had them.”
—*Agatha Christie (1890–1976), British novelist and playwright*
 Agree Disagree
Why?
10. “For many, negative thinking is a habit, which over time becomes an addiction.”
—*Peter McWilliams (1949–2000), American self-help author*
 Agree Disagree
Why?

**“We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”**
—*Aristotle (384–322 BCE), Greek philosopher*

SEARCH and SHARE
How Do You Spend Your Time?

Student Name: Date:
Class: Teacher:

Enter the amount of time you spend on each of the following activities on a typical weekday. Use your best estimate or guess for each category.

	<u>hours / minutes</u>
sleeping	_____ : _____
eating and drinking	_____ : _____
housework/cleaning up	_____ : _____
attending classes	_____ : _____
working at a job	_____ : _____
commuting/driving	_____ : _____
playing sports and exercising	_____ : _____
watching TV	_____ : _____
attending religious services/praying	_____ : _____
socializing and relaxing	_____ : _____

For any of the above activities, would you say that you spend more or less time on it, compared to other students in your class?

To compare your results to those of the average Americans by groups, visit the following website:
<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/07/31/business/20080801-metrics-graphic.html>

“All the treasures of the earth cannot bring back one lost moment.”
—*French proverb*

PRAISE FOR COMPELLING AMERICAN CONVERSATIONS:
QUESTIONS AND QUOTATIONS FOR
INTERMEDIATE AMERICAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

“How can so much learning be in just one book? ***Compelling American Conversations*** is all that an ESL teacher or student needs to use in their course. With clear, easy to follow directions, students learn necessary details about American English and culture, practice critical thinking, expand vocabulary and idioms, as they converse in real, natural adult English. Included in the “Search and Share” component are marvelous lessons on using the Internet. An extra bonus is that any of the conversations, quotes, etc. can be used as writing prompts. The book is fun and stimulating and, fortunately, very accessible for the intermediate learner.”

~ Planaria Price
Author, *Life in the USA* and *Realistically Speaking*

“***Compelling American Conversations*** is a great book for students to improve their conversational skills. The exercises also help to improve the "on-the-spot" thinking skills students need to become fluent English speakers. I recommend this book as a study aid for those who wish to improve their IELTS speaking score.”

~ James Hutzell
Lecturer, USC Language Academy

“Conversational English proficiency can only be acquired by engaging in authentic English conversations. The academic approach used all too frequently in conventional ESL classrooms consistently fails at helping English learners become fluent English speakers. ***Compelling American Conversations*** fills the gap left by inadequate curricula by offering engaging topics and prompts that become the starting point for thoughtful and meaningful conversations. I highly recommend it.”

~ Nathan D. Crandall, M.A.
Founder, *The Fluency Coach*
www.thefluencycoach.com

“***Compelling American Conversations*** is a great textbook for teaching conversational American English to ESL learners. It teaches the students topic by topic how to start a conversation with small talk leading up to a more serious discussion using relevant vocabulary and global idioms within the context of American culture. It also focuses on teaching the students how to ask questions as well as answering them. This is something that they will all need in the real world. I highly recommend it as either a main textbook or as supplementary material for any ESL instructor to use with intermediate to advanced level students who want to improve their oral skills.”

~ Eva Owen
EFL/ESL Instructor

“Simply a FANTASTIC book! A must-have resource for all English teachers and students alike!”

~ JJ Polk
Author, *English in Global Contexts*

“***Compelling American Conversations*** is an essential English conversation book. The carefully chosen vocabulary words aid students without overwhelming them, and the way the questions integrate with students' background knowledge helps them feel confident in exploring new topics of conversation. I love the use of proverbs and quotations to engage English learners and to get them talking. Whether you're running a school or teaching private lessons, this should be the first book you grab to get your students talking.”

~ Brent G. Warner
Author, *How to Pass the TOEFL iBT Test*