

Introduction

This book is a photocopyable collection of 64 one-page handouts in the form of questionnaires. It may be used with a variety of learners from high beginner to high intermediate level, and many of the surveys will be suitable at the advanced level. Learners from middle schoolers to adults will be able to relate to most of the topics.

The purpose of *Surveys for Conversation* is to stimulate effective conversation practice. The photocopyable survey worksheets are each used over two days. On day one, the conversation topic is introduced, and the survey worksheet is assigned for homework. On the following day, the completed surveys are the basis for a guided conversation.

By doing the surveys as homework, the students have the opportunity to think about their ideas, look up the words they need to express them, and produce a written copy of their responses to bring back to class for sharing. Because they've prepared the surveys and had an opportunity to think about the topic before the actual discussion, their anxiety level is lowered, and the resulting conversation is focused, effective, relaxed, and enjoyable.

Many of the surveys ask the students for information about "your native country." You may have students who were born in the United States, and therefore survey questions asking them to compare the U.S. with their native country may not be relevant. However, most English language learners come from a cultural background that is not "standard American." For them it may be more appropriate to use the phrase "your culture" or "your family's native culture."

In this second edition, the 64 surveys are arranged into four groups of 16. The first surveys, "For Starters," are the "safest." Your students will probably be most comfortable sharing these basic facets of their lives. The "Work and Play" surveys ask questions about everyday activities, for example music and sports, transportation, and money. The surveys in "That's Life" look at the ups and downs of human life, from birth and celebrations to aging and death. Lastly, "It's Debatable" surveys are the most controversial topics and as such, the "hottest" and most challenging.

The surveys can be used with learners at any proficiency level and from middle school to adult education. Adapt and use the surveys in a way that is appropriate for your class – then step back and let them talk.

On the back of each survey worksheet is a page of notes for the teacher. The *Lexical Challenges* are vocabulary items in the worksheet that may need special attention (see “Teaching Procedure” explained below). The *Extension Activities* are suggestions for following up on the conversations to augment or supplement the topic. *More Conversation/Discussion* is self-explanatory – additional prompts are supplied to explore the topic in greater detail. This second edition also includes *Writing* prompts and *Helpful Websites*, for gathering information and suggesting activities to be found on the Internet.

Teaching Procedure

The recommended teaching procedure is outlined below. However, as every teaching situation is different, it should be modified as the situation demands.

Day One

1. Introduce the topic. Describe it very generally, and/or ask the students to tell what they know about the topic.
2. Go over the vocabulary associated with the topic by going over the words you think they might need for understanding the survey questions and for carrying out a conversation. A list of possible “challenges” is on the back of the survey form.
3. Distribute the survey and review it in class to be sure the students understand the questions.
4. Assign the survey for homework.

Day Two and Beyond

1. Have the students share their responses to the survey. This can be done in pairs, in small groups, or as an entire class. In some cases the responses can be tallied, and the result used as an opinion poll.
2. Time permitting, the survey sharing can then be immediately followed by extension activities and/or more conversation and more discussion. Or the topic can be revisited on subsequent days. One advantage of coming back to the topic later is the recycling effect of using the vocabulary and revisiting the concepts again – always useful for language learners.
3. Assign the writing activity for the survey.

On page 129 there is a list of useful expressions commonly used in discussions and conversations. They can be introduced a few at a time at the beginning of each conversation session. They can also be written on the board for ongoing reference and use, or they can be written on index cards and handed out to the students. Each student can be given the same card, for example, “In my opinion. . .” or they can each be given a different card to use at least once during the course of the conversation. The list of useful expressions can be copied and used in each of the conversations.