

Talking with Americans

On and Off Campus



***Conversations
for Listening and Speaking***

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PRO LINGUA  ASSOCIATES

Contents

On Campus

1. Introductions • 1
2. "How Are You?" • 5
3. Homesick • 9
4. Love and Marriage • 13
5. Under the Weather • 17
6. Freedom of Speech • 20
7. Academic Workload • 25
8. Preparing for an Exam • 29
9. Asking Personal Questions • 33
10. Spring Break • 37
11. No Spring Break • 41
12. Cheating • 45

Off Campus

13. Working • 49
14. Death and Dying • 53
15. Teacher-Student Relationships • 57
16. Learning English • 61
17. At the Fast Food Counter • 65
18. A Moving Violation • 69
19. Late to Class • 73
20. At the Doctor's Office • 77
21. American Food • 81
22. Shopping • 85
23. Job Interview • 89
24. Good News • 93

Introduction

This book was developed for international students and other non-native English-speaking students at university and college campuses and adult education centers. It answers the need to understand native English speakers in these contexts and carry on informal conversations with them.

There are twenty-four conversations in which the learner is engaged with an American who is using informal, colloquial American English. The American is using expressions and idioms that are natural in those contexts. Listening and speaking practice, with some reading, are the language skills that are developed in the lessons.

The learner should be at least at a low intermediate proficiency level, and a young adult or adult learner.

An audio component provides enhanced listening and speaking practice. Although the book can be used without the audio, the use of the audio is strongly recommended.

This is a copyable text which can be used in a classroom, as a tutorial, or, with the audio, for self-study.

Suggestions on how to use the text effectively are in the following User's Guide.

User's Guide

Each of the twenty-four units follows the same format. Each unit has four copyable pages. The first twelve units (on campus) are focused on learners at a college or university campus. The second twelve units (off campus) could also take place on a college or university campus, but they could easily take place at an adult education center. Although the text and audio components can be used in a variety of ways, recommended procedures follow:

Use in a Classroom Setting

PAGE ONE

1. Think and Talk. After selecting a unit, have the students read and talk about the questions in the *Think and Talk* section. You can lead the activity with the whole class or have small groups do it. This activity establishes expectations of what is to follow.

2. American Expressions and Idioms. The words and phrases in this list will be encountered in the next three activities. A simple first step is to ask the class if they recognize any of these entries. If there are some known elements, this can reduce the amount of time spent in the next step. Then have the students read the conversation on the next page. In doing so, they should be looking for clarification of the expressions and idioms. This procedure also introduces them to the “story line” in the conversation, thereby preparing them for the next step, *Listen*.

PAGE TWO

3. Listen. If the audio is available, play the audio once through without stopping to establish the overall meaning of the conversation. Then go back and use the pause button after each sentence or long phrase, working with the students to establish “what’s going on.”

PAGE THREE

4. Fill in the Gaps. This activity can be used in a variety of ways.

- A: After going over step 2 above, play the conversation and have the learners follow along and fill in the gaps. This is a kind of dictation activity for listening practice.
- B: After going over step 2 above, have them read and fill in the gaps to check their comprehension of the conversation passage. In effect it is an evaluation activity.
- C: Introduce the unit by having the learners read the passage and fill in the gaps, so you can check their work to see what is known and unknown.

PAGE FOUR

5. Listen and Repeat. This practice activity is designed to help the learners practice using the suprasegmental system: stress, intonation, rhythm, linking, and phrasing. The words are clumped together by the dashes to show a natural phrasing of the elements of a spoken sentence or long clauses. The boldened, full-capital syllables are the heaviest-stressed syllables of a phrase. This practice is best done with the audio.

6. Talk Like an American. The learners return to the conversation on page two. They work with a partner saying the lines to each other, listening and responding, with one learner taking the part of the international student (*IS*) and the other the American friend (*AF*). The purpose is to speak the lines in step 5, *Listen and Repeat* at the top of page four, naturally, talking *like* an American.

Use for Self-Study

The procedure outlined above will work quite well in a self-study situation. One major difference is that the audio is necessary for self-study.