

# Open Mind

## THE LIFE SKILLS DISCUSSION GAME

**1**  
Talk about something you've found out by searching for information online.

**2**  
Talk about a problem you have faced recently.

**3**  
Name some outstanding achievements of someone you admire.

**4**  
Talk about something special that you like to do for yourself.

**5**  
Would you enjoy taking an online class? Say why or why not.

**6**  
Talk about a goal you have set for yourself.

**7**  
What type of information do you usually keep private?

**8**  
Name something that almost always makes you happy.

**9**  
If you had been born a different gender, talk about how different your life would be.

**10**  
Why do you believe social networking sites are so popular?

**11**  
Do you think everyone should get a college / university degree? Say why or why not.

**12**  
What do you think about the use of cameras / surveillance in schools / universities / the workplace?

**13**  
What is something you have taught yourself? Do you think it's possible to teach yourself a new language or skill?

**14**  
If you had been born the child of someone famous, would your life be easier or more difficult?

**15**  
Talk about something you cannot do yourself.

**16**  
Discuss some things you have made a priority this year.

### HOW TO SAY IT

**Raising objections and making suggestions**  
Yes, but you have to remember that ...  
That's a good point, but ...  
You're interested in ... so I think you should ...  
Wouldn't you like to ...?

### HOW TO SAY IT

**Agreeing and disagreeing**  
I think so, too. / I agree with you.  
I don't really agree because ...  
Well, actually, I think ...

### HOW TO SAY IT

#### Encouraging the speaker

Are you? Did you? Have you?  
Excellent!  
Tell me more ...  
Wow!  
What a shame.  
That's great!

### HOW TO SAY IT

#### Linking words

and, but, also, so, because

#### Time expressions

at that time ... that year ... my first ... in those years ...

#### Adverbs

already, just, never, yet, before

### HOW TO SAY IT

#### Sequencing words and phrases

The main advantage / reason / thing is that ...  
Another advantage / reason / thing is that ...  
First, ... Second, ... Third, ...  
Also, ... Finally, ..., ... because ...

#### Introducing a contrasting opinion / disadvantage

However, ... .., but ...

#### Summarising an opinion

All in all, ... In general, ...

### HOW TO SAY IT

#### Talking about goals

When / Where / Why / How did you...?  
Why haven't you ... yet?  
When are you planning to ...?  
The result was / is ...

# Open Mind

## Life Skills Discussion Game Teacher's Notes



### Why is speaking an essential life skill?

The philosophy that underpins **Open Mind** is that language is a life skill – a skill for communicating and connecting with others in our everyday lives.

Students rarely come to a class as a blank slate – they bring with them their ideas, opinions, feelings and experiences which all enrich their learning. It is therefore important to make the most of this by allowing students to share their ideas and experiences through group and pairwork, writing and communicative tasks. As students relate to the material and make it their own, they become more than just users of a language; they become active participants, where being both the listener and the speaker are important.

Speaking should also be taught as a relevant real-world skill, with speaking sub-skills to help develop the language skill. Through providing these dedicated strategies and activities, we can help our students achieve wider speaking outcomes and become confident users of English.

### How can I make speaking more collaborative and fun?

Students can be given more opportunities to present their own opinions and viewpoints, discuss their life experiences and communicate with each other on a wide variety of topics. It is our job to provide them with support and guidance along the way. As well as lessons and sections of classes dedicated to speaking, we can also make it an integral part of introductory activities. We can also use speaking as a communicative consolidation of other parts of lessons like grammar, writing and listening.

Providing frequent, in-depth analysis and coverage of speaking ensures this skill is fully exploited. One way to make it more collaborative and fun is to establish a structure, such as those in the **Open Mind** Speaking workshops.

### Different steps in the workshops take students through different stages:

#### Step 1 Comprehension

The workshop starts with a task based on a model conversation or paragraph. One of the task's functions is to check comprehension, but it also provides students with an opportunity to start working with language or sentence structures which will be focused on later.

#### Step 2 Analysis

Another task analyses the useful language in the model conversation, which they'll need to use in the production task at a later stage.

#### Step 3 Preparation

Students prepare for the speaking task by making notes, sometimes with a partner. This helps them to organise their thoughts, so that they can speak with more confidence.

#### Step 4 Production

Students work in pairs or groups and have a conversation using language from the previous stages. In some cases, they have the conversation again with a new partner. This way they keep working with the same language and ideas, while maintaining a high level of engagement.

#### Step 5 Reflection

Students are encouraged to reflect on their confidence in speaking instead of on just the speaking task itself. This self-assessment stage helps improve their performance for next time, as it focuses their attention on their level of competence.

## How to play the Life Skills Discussion Game



Time: 20–30 mins or less

**Items needed:** Small sticky notes; a table or space where all groups can see the discussion wheel

### For large classes – pairs or small groups:

Put students into pairs or small groups. If you prefer, let students choose who they work with.

- Allocate a number to each student from 1–16. Each number corresponds to a segment on the discussion wheel. Avoid assigning the same number to more than one person in each pair or group, to ensure as many ideas in the wheel are discussed as possible.
- Give students about five minutes to prepare what they will say.
- Then, ask them to talk to their partner / fellow group members about the answer to their question, or their response to the topic. They can use the phrases in the 'How to say it' boxes as prompts. The others should listen and provide encouragement, using the relevant 'How to say it' boxes.
- The remaining students take turns to answer their questions, until everyone has had a chance to speak.
- At the end of each turn, each student writes their name on a sticky note, and sticks it to the relevant section on the discussion wheel.
- Then, each student moves clockwise around the wheel from the number they started from and repeats the activity.
- While the students are working, you can walk around and monitor their progress.

### For small classes – whole-class activity:

**Items needed:** a die; coloured counters or small sticky notes; a space where all groups can see the discussion wheel

- Have the poster on the table like a board game.
- Hand out the counters or sticky notes. If you're using sticky notes, have students write their names on them. To begin, everyone should put their counter or sticky note on number 1. Students take turns to roll the die, and answer the question they land on. The rest of the class can either agree, disagree or offer encouragement using the 'How to say it' boxes.
- For a lower-level group, you can allow them a couple of minutes to prepare their answers.
- After each student has spoken, they continue to play in this way until one of them reaches number 16.

### Alternatives:

Students can adapt the questions by talking about a person they know instead of themselves if they prefer.

If the topic is too easy, students can talk for longer on it, or their group members can challenge what they say to promote a healthy debate.

### How to play using your question cards and prompt cards.

- Cut out the 16 questions and 16 'How to say it' prompt cards (some of these will be duplicated) from the photocopyable sheets. Place the 16 question cards face down in the middle of the group. Students take it in turns to pick one from the top of the pile. Depending on their level, students can either keep hold of their cards until the others have chosen and prepare their answers in advance, or answer right away. If students keep hold of their cards, they can have up to five minutes to prepare their answers.
- Discussion encouragement – group: Deal out the discussion prompt cards. The first student starts to give their answer to the question card they pick up from the pile in the centre and the other group members aim to get rid of their discussion prompt cards by asking, encouraging, agreeing or disagreeing with the speaker to create a discussion. Once they have used a discussion card, it is placed face down in the centre of the group.
- Discussion encouragement – pairs: Both students pick up a question card and a prompt card at the same time. They take it in turns to answer the questions on their question cards while their partner contributes to the discussion using their prompt cards.
- The game is over once all the topics have been discussed and everyone has had the chance to contribute.