

Developing a conversation

Point out that effective conversation needs the participants to be active, for example by:

- ▶ asking questions
- ▶ commenting on what the other person says
- ▶ explaining their opinions.
- ▶ making suggestions
- ▶ checking that the other person understands
- ▶ asking the other person to explain something more clearly

Emphasise the importance of taking responsibility for involving the other person in the conversation. Some students may feel uncomfortable about asking an older person questions, but point out that this is normal in English-speaking cultures.

Asking questions about someone's interests, opinions and experiences is welcomed as it shows friendly interest in the other person and is essential in the GESE and ISE exams. Some questions are best avoided, however, such as asking a much older person how old they are, how much they earn, etc.

This worksheet will help you with:

- ▶ conversation in all situations
- ▶ GESE Grade 7 and 8, interactive and conversation phases
- ▶ ISE II, conversation task

Activity 1

Lucy and Tom are in an art gallery. Choose the correct sentence from the box for each gap.

Point out that the speakers are both responding to each other and making the conversation two-way, and not simply speaking as a monologue.

Letter	Sentence
A	Why not?
B	We could always come back one afternoon.
C	Why not buy a guidebook?
D	That sounds great, doesn't it?
E	Why don't you do that?
F	Shall I come with you?

- 1 **Lucy:** Shall we go and look at the portraits, Tom?
Tom: **E**. I'm not so interested in them, and I can go and see the statues outside while it isn't too hot.
- 2 **Lucy:** Tom, shall we go and see the sci-fi paintings? A friend of mine told me they were really worth seeing.
Tom: **D**. Sci-fi has always intrigued me.
- 3 **Lucy:** I know we said we'd spend all day here, but I really feel I've had enough for now.
Tom: **B**. There's too much to take in in one visit.
- 4 **Lucy:** I'm feeling very thirsty. I could go to the café and buy a couple of drinks.
Tom: **F**. We won't be allowed to drink them in here, anyway.
- 5 **Lucy:** I don't know how I'm going to remember all the amazing paintings we've seen!
Tom: **C**. Then you'll have a permanent record of them.
- 6 **Lucy:** I really wouldn't want that painting on my wall at home!
Tom: **A**. I think it suggests so many different things, it's quite exciting.

Activity 2

Compare these two ways of continuing the conversation between Lucy and Tom.

- 1 **Lucy:** That's a beautiful painting, isn't it?
Tom: No, it isn't.
- 2 **Lucy:** That's a beautiful painting, isn't it?
Tom: I'm not sure I think so. I'm not very keen on landscapes unless they suggest something about the lives of the local people, and this one doesn't give any indication that anyone actually lives there. What do you particularly like about it, Lucy?

Tom's second answer is better because

- ▶ it disagrees with Lucy more gently (his first answer could make her feel that her opinion is of no value)
- ▶ it explains his opinion (his first answer doesn't tell her why he disagrees with Lucy)
- ▶ it gives Lucy something to comment on and explore further
- ▶ it ends by encouraging Lucy to explain her opinion.

Read these parts of Lucy and Tom's conversation, and in pairs write at least one good response by Tom to each of Lucy's comments.

- 1 **Lucy:** I think that painting's amazing, with all those jagged lines and brilliant colours. I don't suppose you'd agree with me, though.
Tom: Well, I see what you mean, but I have to say I prefer to look at something a bit more relaxing. But if you saw several paintings like that one, wouldn't they lose their impact?
- 2 **Lucy:** That painting's by someone called Bridget Riley. Do you know anything about her?
Tom: I don't recognise the name. Hold on, and I'll look her up on my phone. How do you spell her last name?
- 3 **Lucy:** That sculpture reminds me of one we saw last year in a TV programme about modern South American art. Do you remember?
Was that the one that tried to cover hundreds of years and lots of different cultures in about half an hour?
- 4 **Lucy:** I'm getting hungry. I hope there isn't a queue in the café.
Tom: Well, shall we go and have a look, and if there is a queue we can go back later. What do you think?
- 5 **Lucy:** I like that painting by Kandinsky. Didn't he paint one called 'The Blue Rider'?
Tom: That rings a bell. I can't remember what it looks like, though. I seem to remember that I looked through a book of Kandinsky paintings, and liked quite a lot of them.
- 6 **Lucy:** I'm really disappointed there are so few people here. It's such a great exhibition, lots of people ought to see it.
Tom: At least that makes it better for us. I hate exhibitions where there are crowds of people, and you have to peer round their heads to see the paintings.
- 7 **Lucy:** I really can't make up my mind about those bronze figures. What do you make of them, Tom?
Tom: They look really strange. I suspect they're the kind of thing that grow on you. Why don't we come back and have another look in half an hour, and see how we feel about them then?

8 Lucy: Shall we go on to the next gallery now, or have lunch first?

Tom: ~~I don't really mind either way, but I quite fancy a break, so why don't we have lunch?~~

9 Lucy: I'd like to sit down for ten minutes, but you don't have to, if you don't want to.

Tom: ~~That's fine by me. Shall we go and sit in the entrance hall, and watch people coming in and out? It'll make a change from the paintings.~~

10 Lucy: Do you think we should try and find out if this exhibition is permanent or temporary?

Tom: ~~I suppose it'd be handy to know, because if it ends soon, we'll have to decide how much of it we want to see. But if it's permanent we could come back another time.~~



Star test-taker activity



Decide which three of the following a star test-taker is most likely to do in the various phases of a test.

Draw a star for 'Yes' or draw a line through the sentence for 'No'.

- *.. Encourage the other person to expand on their opinion.
- ~~Remember that in the best conversations, one person speaks all the time.~~
- *.. Explain why you agree or disagree with the other person.
- *.. Begin what you say by linking it with what the other person has said.
- ~~Discourage the other person from disagreeing with you.~~
- *.. End what you say by encouraging the other person to speak.
- ~~Remember that conversation consists mostly of giving information.~~