


# Look Who's Talking! 28 ESL Discussion Topics Adult Students Really Enjoy

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One key goal almost every adult ESL student shares is **gaining the ability to speak English with others**.

Luckily, they come to the classroom with a unique advantage. They have **life experience**.

And, unlike younger students, they've typically already achieved a high level of proficiency in their native language.

They want to speak English as well as they speak their own native language—so what better way to speak English like their native language than to speak about the very same things that they speak about on a daily basis?

ESL speaking activities work even better when they speak about their own personal recollections, thoughts and ideas on these topics too!

Sure, games and interactive exercises definitely work—so, you can always do some fun activities with them. But when it comes to improving confidence and fluency, sometimes you just can't beat a fine discussion. You know, a discussion like the ones they regularly have in their own language!

Breaking out discussion questions like the ones below, questions about everyday things, works well because these types of questions really get the brain thinking, relate directly to the students on a familiar level and can even incite some fascinating discussions between students, all while you sit back and listen!

These topics can all be used for beginner, intermediate and advanced learners! Just choose the questions that are the right level of simplicity or complexity for your students based on your knowledge of their skills. You could even mix up the example questions any way you'd like.

Ask the students these questions yourselves to get conversations started, or pass them out on worksheets for students to ask each other.

## 28 ESL Discussion Topics for Adults That Everyone Has Opinions On

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### 1. Hobbies

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Everybody has hobbies, and everybody loves talking about them. Hobbies could be passions too, you know. Some simple questions to ask include:

- What are your hobbies?
- Why do you like your hobbies so much?
- How often do you do these hobbies?
- How long have you been doing these hobbies, and how did you get started?
- What hobbies did you used to have, but now do not?
- Is it important to have hobbies? Why/why not?

### 2. Time

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As people get older, their perceived value of time increases, so it's a practical topic that everyone has something to say about. You could ask questions like:

- How much free time do you usually have?
- How important is time to you?
- If you had more free time, what would you do?
- "Time is money." Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- How do you feel about time that is wasted?

### 3. Sleep

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As people get older, they start to appreciate a good night's sleep more and more. This topic is often a favorite for all. Some example questions are:

- How much sleep do you usually get?
- Why do some people sleep well while other people do not sleep well?
- What do you do when you have trouble sleeping?
- What time do you usually go to sleep? What time do you usually get up?
- Have you ever slept in a strange place that was not a bed?

## 4. Music

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Everybody loves music and most people feel very strong emotions towards it—especially when it comes to the music that they love (or hate) most. Some simple questions to ask could be:

- What types of music do you like/dislike?
- How do certain kinds of music make you feel?
- What types of music come from your country?
- What's your favorite song/album/artist?
- What music is popular in your country right now?

## 5. First Dates

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Unless you're teaching in a place where arranged marriages are the thing to do, talking about first dates gets everybody interested. We've all been there. You could ask questions like:

- How many first dates have you had?
- How do you feel about first dates?
- What is a common first date like in your country?
- What is the best/worst first date experience you've ever had?
- What makes a good first date in your opinion?

## 6. Work

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Lots of people work and have lots to say about it. I mean, if you're spending about a third of your waking hours at work, you may have lots to say. Some good questions are:

- What work do/did you do?
- How do/did you like the work?
- What is your dream job?
- What work is common in your city/area/country?
- What is your general view about work? Why?

## 7. Risk

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Everyone feels a certain way about risk. Some are risk-oriented, others are risk-averse. Talking about risks seems to generate some good conversation. You could ask questions like:

- What is your definition of risk?
- Are you a risk taker? Why/why not?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of taking risks?
- What risks do you come across in your work/life?
- What risks have you taken in your life?

## 8. Food

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Food is possibly the most universal topic of them all and everyone loves to discuss what they eat. This is also an ideal topic for beginners because the vocabulary is usually pretty simple. You could use questions like:

- What is your favorite food? Why?
- What food comes from your country?
- How do you feel when you eat food?
- What foods do you dislike? Why?
- Where do you usually get food from?

## 9. Motivation

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Whether or not the students are a motivated bunch, motivation is a good topic to discuss in order to inspire your students. Some example questions are:

- How motivated are you in general?
- What motivates you to do things?
- What is the best motivator to succeed?
- What do you do when you feel demotivated?
- What is a good way to motivate others?

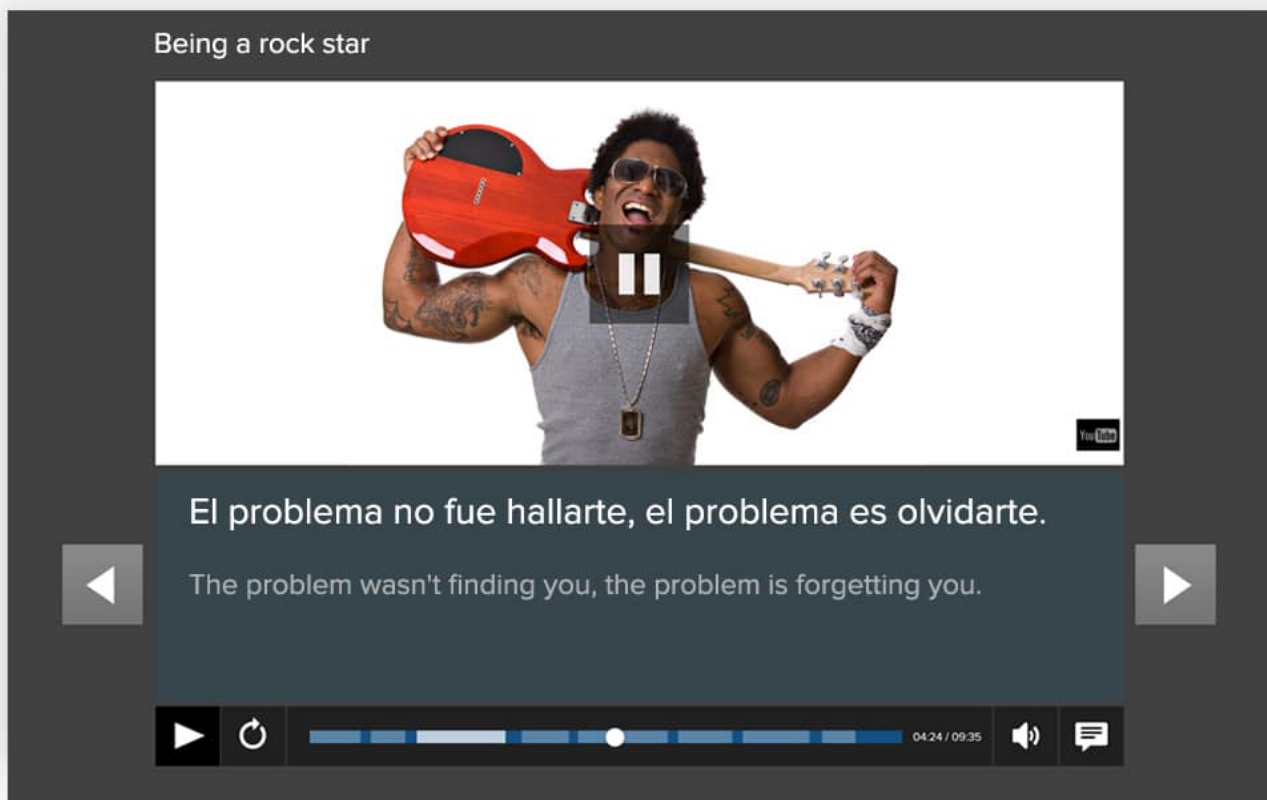
## 10. Beauty

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Beauty is one of those topics that's conventionally more geared toward women than it is to men. However, anyone can appreciate beauty in all its forms, and anyone can recognize the importance of the concept of beauty in our cultures, societies and behaviors. Plus, men might surprise you by caring to chime in on beauty, looks and grooming.

This makes it a good topic to discuss to get some opinions and various views within a group of students. You could ask questions like:

- What is "beauty"?
- What/who do you consider beautiful?
- What does "inner beauty" mean to you?
- Do you consider artificial beauty (cosmetic surgery) to still be beauty? Why/why not?
- How do you feel about the emphasis that people put on beauty these days?
- What would you tell your children about beauty?



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## 11. Crime

Crime may not be on the top of people's lists of favorite topics but it's something that's talked about. Depending on your adult students' life experiences, it may be something that has affected their lives. Learning to discuss it could help your students out in the long run. Good discussion questions are:

- Is crime a big problem in your city/country?
- Have you ever been a victim of crime?
- What crime is common in your city/country?
- What would you do if you noticed a crime being committed?
- How is the law enforcement in your city/country?

## 12. Love

Everybody loves love and most people have had some firsthand experience they'd like to talk about. It's another one of those universal topics that gets the conversation going. Even if it's not about romantic love and heartbreak, students can talk about familial love with their parents and children, as well as love between friends. Questions like these are good:

- What is love?
- Who/what do you love?
- What good/bad experiences have you had with love?
- Can you be too young to be in love? Why/why not?

- How do you feel about love?

### 13. Goals

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We all have goals and talking about them actually gets us more encouraged to do something about them. Sharing goals is also a good thing to help get them done. A good set of questions is:

- What are your current goals in life?
- How do you plan to reach your goals?
- How often do you set goals for yourself?
- What goals have you set and achieved in the past?
- How do you feel when you reach your goals?

### 14. Dreams

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We all have dreams, sometimes on a nightly basis, and talking about them is a great discussion topic for classes as they inspire students to be creative and even whimsical. Great questions for this topic include:

- What kinds of dreams do you have?
- What do you think dreams mean?
- How much of your dreams do you remember? Why?
- What is your opinion on premonitions? Are they real?
- What are examples of memorable dreams you have had?

### 15. Restaurants

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Along with eating, everybody loves talking about their favorite eateries and restaurants. Some students could even relate to each other with their choices and views. Good questions include:

- How often do you go to restaurants?
- What is your favorite restaurant? Why?
- What do you usually order at a restaurant?
- What is the restaurant experience like in your country?
- Have you ever worked in a restaurant?
- If you owned a restaurant, what kinds of food would you serve?

### 16. Cooking

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Cooking is another topic that may allow for some good conversation. Most people in most countries do a good amount of cooking. A few good questions could be:

- In your home, who usually cooks?
- How often do you cook?
- How well do you cook? What can you cook well?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of cooking?
- What food would you like to learn how to cook?

### 17. Money

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If there is a topic that everyone loves deep down, it has to be money. People love talking about money. Well, may not if they're broke—but even if they are, it's a good, relatable topic that gets conversations going. Great questions include:

- How well do you manage your money?
- Why do some people have money problems?
- What are some good ways to make money?
- What would you do if I gave you \$20/\$2,000/\$2,000,000?
- How often do you save money? Why?

## 18. Shopping

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This one is a personal favorite for many. Shopping is becoming more and more prevalent and brings out some zest in some people. They just love shopping! Others feel strongly the other way—very few people are completely neutral on this topic. A few good questions are:

- Do you enjoy shopping? Why/why not?
- What is your favorite shop? Why?
- In your city, where is a good place to go shopping?
- How do you feel about online shopping?
- How do you think shopping will be like in the future?

## 19. Plans

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Everybody makes plans and discussing them could even influence the class to start making plans of their own! A few example questions include:

- How often do you plan things? Why?
- What are your plans for (\_\_\_\_\_)?
- What are your plans for your English?
- What do you think of this quote? "Having no plan is a plan to fail."
- Do you have any back-up plans?

## 20. Books

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Books make for a good discussion topic because most people enjoy a good book.

When you read, your mind is filled with new images, feelings, ideas and thoughts. Books also empower and educate people, so your adult students may believe in the value of books. It can be immensely satisfying for adult students to share how they feel about reading. Some questions to ask are:

- Do you like books/reading? Why/why not?
- What kind of books do/did you like?
- What is your favorite book? Why?
- What was the last book you read?
- Do you believe reading books/literature is more important than reading stuff online? Why/why not?

## 21. Sports

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Now comes a topic that more men may favor, but it's still good for classes since female spectators are on the rise. Some students may also have children that enjoy sports! A few good examples are:

- Do you like sports? Why/why not?
- How often do you exercise/play sports?
- Did you play any sports as a child?
- What sport/physical activity is popular in your country?
- What is your opinion on professional sports?

## 22. Life

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Life discussions go on in all languages and English is no exception.

Practicing discussions on life is a good topic to cover since everyone has their own views and thoughts on the ubiquitous subject. You could bring up questions like:

- What is the meaning of life?
- How is your life going up to this point?
- What do you think happens after life?
- What important life lessons have you learned?
- If tomorrow was your last day to live, what would you do?

## 23. Television

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Television is one of those topics that everyone has an opinion about. The irony of it is that even though more and more programming is viewed on computers and tablets, television is still a hot topic classes love to discuss. Good questions include:

- How often do you watch TV?
- Should everyone have a television in their home?
- What is the best way to watch television: On a television set, computer, tablet or phone?
- What television programs are popular in your country?
- What do you think will be the future of television?
- What is your opinion on television?
- If you had your own TV show, what would it be like?

## 24. Learning

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Learning is like nature—it's all around us, even on a subconscious level. Our brains are built to absorb, filter and store information. Discussion about learning could actually stimulate some English learning amongst the students! A few questions that are suitable are:

- How important is learning? Why?
- Besides English, what are you currently learning?
- What things are you good/bad at learning? Why?
- What would you most like to learn?
- What is the most difficult part of learning? Why?

## 25. Movies

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Like television, talking about movies is a topic that has something to be said by everybody. I mean, who doesn't watch movies? A few good questions to be asked could be:

- What was the last movie you saw? How was it?
- What is your favorite movie? Why?
- How are the movies in your country? What are the best ones?
- How often do you watch movies in English?
- If there were a movie about your life, what kind of movie would it be? Why?

## 26. Games

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Games are fun and everybody enjoys fun, no?

But in all seriousness, talking about games gets discussion more geared towards past tense, which gives the students a fond sense of nostalgia. Some simple questions could be:

- What is your favorite game ever?
- What games did you play as a kid?
- What games are popular/came from your country?
- How competitive are you when it comes to games?
- What games do you still play now? Why?

## 27. Computers

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The year is 2016 and you can't go a day without talking about computers. A greatly universal topic that could have students discussing quite a few things, which could all relate to real life too! Great questions on this could be:

- Describe your computer at home/work.
- What do you usually use a computer for?
- Do you like computers? Why/why not?
- What was the first computer you ever had like?
- What do you think will be the future of computers?

## 28. Problems

Even though nobody likes to talk about problems, per se, everybody still talks about their problems to other people! Problems are actually a good topic for discussion since they could help others relate to each other and even present solutions too. A few fine examples of questions are:

- How do you deal with your problems?
- What problems do you come across in your work or life?
- Do you feel that problems are opportunities? Why or why not?
- What was the last problem you solved and how did you do it?
- "Problems don't matter. Solutions do." Do you agree or disagree?

So that's the list of discussion topics you could use with your ESL classes. Depending on their skill levels, you can feel free to make the questions a bit easier or more challenging.

The best topics are those that are talked about in the students' own native language (everyday things) and the best questions are usually open-ended as opposed to something that could be answered in a word or two.

It's also best to avoid topics that could offend students like death, sex, politics and religion—but that's certainly something that varies from classroom to classroom.

These topics may even inspire you to come up with some of your own, as you'll begin to understand your students on a deeper level and knows what works and what doesn't.

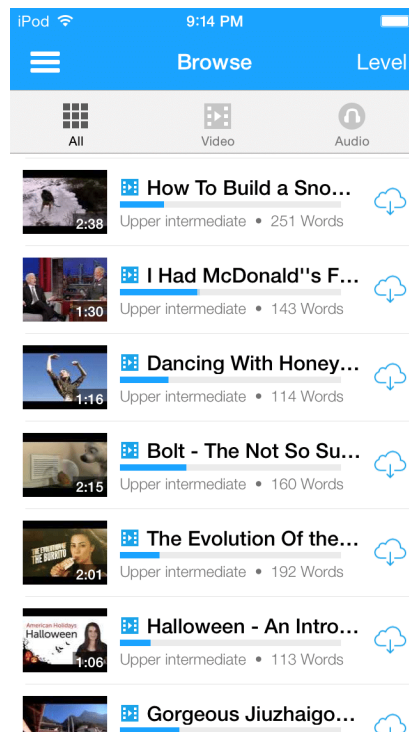
Happy discussing!

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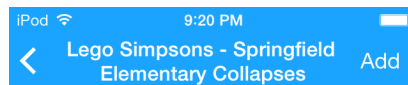




Well , a friend of mine ,  
Steven Spielberg , told  
me to look



For example, if a student taps on the word “brought,” they’ll see this:



brought


v. to take something or  
someone to another place



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iPod 9:21 PM

Quit Fill in the blank Know It



Buildings can after a fire .

Hint: to fall down or inward; to come apart

collapse ✓

decoded

step

fusing

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