

SAMPLE CHAPTER\*

COMPELLING AMERICAN CONVERSATIONS

Questions & Quotations  
for Intermediate American English Language Learners

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\*reproducible for classroom use

# 12

## PRACTICING JOB INTERVIEWS



### PREPARING FOR QUESTIONS

Job interviews are both stressful and necessary. Experts recommend that all job seekers, including native English speakers, practice their interviews. You want to give short, clear, and smart responses. Working with a partner, interview each other. Switch roles between manager and job applicant after every three questions. Use complete sentences.

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
2. What are you looking for in your next job? Why?
3. What are some of your strengths?
4. Why are you interested in working for this company?
5. What did you learn from your last job?
6. Why did you leave your last job?
7. What have you been doing lately?
8. How has your background prepared you for this position?
9. How would your co-workers (or classmates) describe you?
10. What's the best job you have had so far? What made that job satisfying?
11. What training or qualities should a good nurse (or engineer, sales person, carpenter) have? Do you have these skills and qualities?
12. Should we hire you? Why?

## EXPANDING VOCABULARY

Please circle the words that you know. Read the other definitions below.

applicant	apply	background	benefit
bonus	client	promote	software

**applicant**, *noun*: a person who is trying to get a job; a candidate.

~ *Many job applicants turned in their resumes to the restaurant manager.*

**apply**, *verb*: to ask for a specific job, by filling out and turning in papers or by answering questions online.

~ *I need to apply for that job in the marketing department.*

**background**, *noun*: facts about your personal history.

~ *Does your background include any writing experience?*

**benefit**, *noun*: something good or helpful; anything valuable given by a company to its workers, such as health insurance.

~ *George's company offers a tuition benefit that helps employees pay for college classes.*

**bonus**, *noun*: an extra payment for a job well done; reward.

~ *In December, the company gave bonuses to all the hard-working assistants.*

**client**, *noun*: a person who receives a professional service; customer.

~ *Frances is a successful stockbroker with many wealthy clients.*

**promote**, *verb*: to be chosen for a better job within the same company, often with more difficult tasks and a higher salary.


~ *Raj was promoted to supervisor after only a few months on the job.*

**software**, *noun*: coded programs that work on computers and other electronic devices.

~ *Malik is learning the new database software.*

**ASKING QUESTIONS**

A. Select five vocabulary words in this chapter and write a question for each word. Remember to start your question with a question word (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How, Is, Are, Do, Did, Does, etc.). You will also want to end each question with a question mark (?). Underline each vocabulary word.

 Example: How do managers decide which workers to promote?

- 1. ....
- 2. ....
- 3. ....
- 4. ....
- 5. ....

B. Take turns asking and answering questions with your partner.

**PARAPHRASING PROVERBS**

A. What do the following proverbs and sayings mean? Discuss them with your partner. Circle your favorite.

- ◆ The secret of getting ahead is getting started. —American
- ◆ Think before you speak. —Latin
- ◆ Short answers save trouble. —American
- ◆ What you don't ask for, you don't get. —English
- ◆ Silence can speak volumes. —American
- ◆ Know your audience. —Greek
- ◆ Praise is always pleasing. —Latin
- ◆ Anything worth having is worth working for. —American



B. Can you add two more proverbs related to the topic?

- ◆ .....
- ◆ .....

## THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES...

1. Can you describe what you did in your last job?
2. Have you ever worked in the United States? If so, was it a full-time or a part-time job?
3. How comfortable are you speaking with customers (or clients) in English?
4. Are you open to working overtime? On weekends? Evenings?
5. How would your supervisor (or teacher) describe your work? Do you agree?
6. What are your strongest skills?
7. Have you ever been promoted? If so, what was your new title?
8. Can you describe a problem that you faced at work, and how you solved it?
9. In your opinion, what is a good job? Why?
10. Do you like working alone or with others? Why?
11. Have you ever worked with difficult people? If so, how did you handle them?
12. What skills do you think you will need for your next job?
13. How have your work skills changed over the last five years?
14. What education might be helpful for the career you want?
15. Where do you see yourself working in five years? What's your plan to make your dream come true?

## DISCUSSING QUOTATIONS

Take turns reading these quotations out loud and discuss them with your partner. Mark your answer. Explain your response.

1. "My father taught me to work; he did not teach me to love it."  
—*Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865), 16th U.S. president*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
2. "I find my greatest pleasure, and so my reward, in the work that precedes what the world calls success."  
—*Thomas Edison (1847–1931), American inventor*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
3. "The difference between a job and a career is the difference between 40 and 60 hours a week."  
—*Robert Frost (1874–1963), American poet*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....

4. “You have to have your heart in the business and the business in your heart.”  
—*Thomas J. Watson (1874–1956), American founder of IBM*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
5. “In business for yourself, not by yourself.”  
—*Ray Kroc (1902–1984), American owner of McDonald’s Corporation*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
6. “You have to know how to accept rejection and reject acceptance.”  
—*Ray Bradbury (1920–), American author*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
7. “If you don’t know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else.”  
—*Dr. Laurence J. Peter (1919–1990), Canadian-American educator*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
8. “The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary.”  
—*Vidal Sassoon (1928–), British hair stylist and businessman*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
9. “Hiring is a manager’s most important job.”  
—*Peter F. Drucker (1909–2005), American management consultant and author*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
10. “I want to work for a company that contributes to and is part of a community. I want not just to invest in; I want to believe in.”  
—*Anita Roddick (1943–2007), British businesswoman and human rights activist*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....

**“Whenever you are asked if you can do a job, tell ‘em, ‘Certainly, I can!’—and get busy and find out how to do it.”**  
—*Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), 26th U.S. president, author, and explorer*

## SEARCH and SHARE

### Finding Advice on Job Interview Techniques

Student Name: ..... Date: .....  
Class: ..... Teacher: .....

Please find a video clip (in English) that you would like to share with your classmates from **YouTube.com**, **hulu.com**, or **Monster.com** that helps people successfully interview for jobs. Watch the video, take notes, and review it for your classmates.

Video title: .....

Web address: .....

Length: ..... Creator: .....

Describe the video.

What interview tips did the video provide?

How practical was the advice? Why?

What do you think was the strongest part? Why?

What was the weakest part? Why?

Who do you think is the target audience for this video?

Why did you choose this video?

How would you rate this video on a scale of 1–5, with five being the highest? Why?

**“Hiring is a manager’s most important job.”**

*Peter F. Drucker (1909–2005), American management consultant and author*





PRAISE FOR COMPELLING AMERICAN CONVERSATIONS:  
QUESTIONS AND QUOTATIONS FOR  
INTERMEDIATE AMERICAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

“How can so much learning be in just one book? ***Compelling American Conversations*** is all that an ESL teacher or student needs to use in their course. With clear, easy to follow directions, students learn necessary details about American English and culture, practice critical thinking, expand vocabulary and idioms, as they converse in real, natural adult English. Included in the “Search and Share” component are marvelous lessons on using the Internet. An extra bonus is that any of the conversations, quotes, etc. can be used as writing prompts. The book is fun and stimulating and, fortunately, very accessible for the intermediate learner.”

~ Planaria Price  
Author, *Life in the USA* and *Realistically Speaking*

“***Compelling American Conversations*** is a great book for students to improve their conversational skills. The exercises also help to improve the “on-the-spot” thinking skills students need to become fluent English speakers. I recommend this book as a study aid for those who wish to improve their IELTS speaking score.”

~ James Hutzell  
Lecturer, USC Language Academy

“Conversational English proficiency can only be acquired by engaging in authentic English conversations. The academic approach used all too frequently in conventional ESL classrooms consistently fails at helping English learners become fluent English speakers. ***Compelling American Conversations*** fills the gap left by inadequate curricula by offering engaging topics and prompts that become the starting point for thoughtful and meaningful conversations. I highly recommend it.”

~ Nathan D. Crandall, M.A.  
Founder, *The Fluency Coach*  
[www.thefluencycoach.com](http://www.thefluencycoach.com)

“***Compelling American Conversations*** is a great textbook for teaching conversational American English to ESL learners. It teaches the students topic by topic how to start a conversation with small talk leading up to a more serious discussion using relevant vocabulary and global idioms within the context of American culture. It also focuses on teaching the students how to ask questions as well as answering them. This is something that they will all need in the real world. I highly recommend it as either a main textbook or as supplementary material for any ESL instructor to use with intermediate to advanced level students who want to improve their oral skills.”

~ Eva Owen  
EFL/ESL Instructor

“Simply a FANTASTIC book! A must-have resource for all English teachers and students alike!”

~ JJ Polk  
Author, *English in Global Contexts*

“***Compelling American Conversations*** is an essential English conversation book. The carefully chosen vocabulary words aid students without overwhelming them, and the way the questions integrate with students' background knowledge helps them feel confident in exploring new topics of conversation. I love the use of proverbs and quotations to engage English learners and to get them talking. Whether you're running a school or teaching private lessons, this should be the first book you grab to get your students talking.”

~ Brent G. Warner  
Author, *How to Pass the TOEFL iBT Test*