

# Advice from the Authors to the Students

We hope that you will enjoy the topics and activities in this book! Here are some tips and suggestions for using this book to improve your speaking skills in English.

Some people are naturally good at speaking about certain topics. The natural tendency of these extroverted people is to start a topic for discussion. These people have good skills in maintaining the discussion, too. Other people are more quiet and reserved. They may have many ideas to add to the topic, but their natural tendency is to listen. These introverted people are participating in the discussion, too, but in a different way. Regardless of your personality type, you CAN be an active participant in discussions in English. You CAN become a better speaker in English.

In order to improve your discussion skills in English, here are some tips that we strongly recommend.

1. Learn everything you can about the topic because people who are good discussion participants have solid background knowledge of the topic;
2. Learn the vocabulary associated with that topic because you cannot discuss a topic well if you do not know the basic vocabulary for that topic;
3. Learn to use key phrases that allow you to begin discussions (see examples below);
4. Learn to use key phrases that allow you to maintain discussions (see examples below);
5. Learn to use key phrases that make others talk because a discussion NEVER involves just you—without other people you have NO discussion (see examples below);
6. Learn to be a good listener by showing respect for others in your group, which means that you should let everyone speak and you should not interrupt others;
7. Learn to be tolerant of others' ideas because it is this VARIETY of ideas that makes a discussion interesting;
8. Do all of the written prediscussion assignments in this book because research in foreign language studies shows that preparation activities that

require you to write out your ideas will greatly improve the quality and quantity of the language that you produce in class discussions the next day.

### Useful Expressions for Starting, Maintaining, and Ending a Discussion

#### *To begin a discussion*

- What do you think about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Do you think \_\_\_\_\_ is a good thing?
- This topic makes me mad. (explain why)
- I can't believe there are people who think . . . (Explain your position.)

#### *To state your opinion*

- I think \_\_\_\_\_ is a good thing.
- I don't think \_\_\_\_\_ is a good thing.

#### *To maintain a discussion*

- Are there any other ideas on \_\_\_\_\_?
- Who else agrees with (name)?
- Does anyone else have anything to add to what (name) just said?
- Can anyone else think of another reason to support this idea?
- You know, that's an interesting point that you've just made. (Offer your own opinion now.)

#### *To bring someone else's ideas into the discussion*

- (name), what do you think about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Does anyone else have anything to add?

#### *To assess agreement*

- OK, so how many people are in favor of \_\_\_\_\_?
- How many people agree with what (name) just said?
- OK, is this what the rest of you think, too?

#### *To indicate agreement*

- I agree with (name).
- I agree with what (name) just said.
- I think that's right. (Explain your own position now.)

**To indicate disagreement in a polite way**

- I understand what you (or name) are (is) saying, but I think . . .
- I understand what you (or name) are (is) saying, but I wonder if you have considered (another reason or another idea).
- Hmm . . . That's interesting, but I wonder if you have considered . . .

**To contrast two views on an issue**

- Most of us agree that the best decision is to \_\_\_\_\_. What are some of the reasons that other people might have for disagreeing with this?
- OK, we've heard one side of the issue. What is the other side?

**To summarize a discussion**

- OK, we're almost out of time. Where do we stand on this topic?
- OK, some of the people think that \_\_\_\_\_ and others think that \_\_\_\_\_. (Fill in the blanks with different ideas.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (names of people) think that \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (names of people) think that \_\_\_\_\_.
- OK, so what is the consensus of our group?
- Do we have a consensus?
- It looks like we'll have to agree to disagree on this topic because our opinions are too far apart.

## Useful Grammar Structures for Starting, Maintaining, and Ending a Discussion

**1. How to ask a *yes-no* question**

- a. verb *to be*; *can*, *could*, *should*, *will*: move the subject to the second position
  - Are you sure about that?
  - Is that your real opinion?
  - Was he guilty?
  - Were the tickets real?
  - Can you repeat that?
  - Should he go to jail for the rest of his life?
- b. other verbs: use *do*, *does*, or *did* in the first position
  - Do you think that the woman stole the money?
  - Does a criminal have any rights in jail?
  - Did the police do the correct thing?

## 2. How to make a negative statement

- a. verb *to be*; *can*, *could*, *should*, *will*: put *not* after (or use a contraction)
  - I am not sure about this. (I'm not)
  - That is not a serious problem in that country. (isn't)
  - He was not guilty. (wasn't)
  - The tickets were not real. (weren't)
  - People can not go to jail for that kind of crime. (can't)
  - The police should not treat people like that. (shouldn't)
- b. other verbs: use *do*, *does*, or *did* with *not* (or use a contraction)
  - A criminal does not have any rights in jail. (doesn't)
  - My family did not travel a lot when I was young. (didn't)
  - Doctors do not have the right to make that decision. (don't)

## 3. How to ask information (*wh-*) questions

- Who called the police?
- Where did the boy grow up?
- Why do some people disagree with the judge's decision?
- Which unit is the most interesting to you?
- What does this word mean?
- When do most people take their vacation?
- How much did that item cost?
- How many people are there in your family?
- How far is the bank from here?

## 4. How to express past tense

- a. regular verbs: add *-ed*
  - played, realized, spelled, believed, snowed, rained (pronounced \d/)
  - cooked, walked, laughed, worked, missed, watched (pronounced \t/)
  - needed, wanted, created, decided, reacted, added (pronounced \ɪd/ or /əd/)
- b. irregular verbs: various endings (must be memorized)
  - drove, wrote, woke, ran (one vowel change)
  - put, cut, cost (no change)
  - ate, taught, bought, caught, did, saw, told, said, went (total change)
  - read (pronunciation change but no spelling change)

## 5. How to combine two "equal" ideas

- a. *and*: when you want to add another idea
  - The police chased the man, and then they caught him.
- b. *but*: when you want to add an idea that is different from the first idea
  - The police chased the man, but they couldn't catch him.

- c. *so*: when you want to say that one idea is the result of the first one
  - The police caught the thief, so they put him in jail.
- d. *so*: when you want to express a purpose
  - The police chased the man so they could arrest him.
- e. *or*: when you want to express two options
  - The man should go to jail, or the government should kill him.

## 6. How to include one idea inside another idea

### a. noun clauses

- I believe that she is innocent.
- I don't know why she did that.
- Can you tell me if that was a good plan?
- He said that you agree with the judge's decision.

### b. adjective clauses

- The man that robbed the bank went to jail.
- I prefer the plan that you talked about.
- A person who can tell a joke well is a treasure.

### c. adverb clauses

- When the winner was announced, she shouted for joy!
- After the jury reached a decision, the murderer cried.
- Before he goes to the dentist, he always gets pretty nervous.

## 7. How to express condition

### a. present or everyday routine actions

- When it rains too much, we don't play tennis.
- When I was late, my boss got mad.

### b. present unreal condition

- If I had a million dollars, I would buy a new car for you.
- If we spoke more languages, that would be a very good thing.

### c. past unreal conditions

- If I had studied, I would have passed the exam today.
- If a student had complained about the magazines, the school would have removed them.