

# Conversation Courses – Walk the talk

Whether you want to kick around a topic, debate it or you just want an informal chinwag, a course book can be a big help in getting your learners engrossed and involved.

Anyone who has ever taught a conversation course knows that the rewards of teaching these courses far outweigh the difficulties. Whilst exchanging information, ideas and opinions, the teacher and the learners get to know each other and as a result, classes usually feel at ease and comfortable with each other quickly and have a lot of fun together.

The only downside to teaching conversation courses is the teacher's weekly quest for an interesting topic. The right choice of reading material isn't easy, either: it should be long enough to give learners some information so they have something to talk about, but short enough so that reading will not take up too much time. And there is the question of vocabulary and listening exercises. It can all take more time than most teachers have. That is reason enough to use a course book, isn't it?

Most learners join a conversation course from B1 level onwards – that's when their vocabulary is wide enough for a conversation including more than one or two exchanges, and they've mastered the basic grammatical structures needed in everyday discussions.

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In my experience, students' aim at this point is to practice fluency in order to express themselves in situations where they may be speaking informally to speakers of other languages or to native speakers. They are not interested in adding more complicated grammatical structures to their portfolio or in writing texts. So that means that classroom time should be used to help learners to become fluent by giving them the chance to express their ideas and opinions and to speak about their experiences.

*In Conversation B2/C1* is the third in a series of course books written for adult learners with exactly these needs in mind. Topics include a wide variety of topical, relevant issues, and provide vocabulary and functional support for the discussions. Subjects such as "What makes you laugh?" or "Ecotourism" are guaranteed to give your learners something to kick around.

## Warming up

Teachers know how important it is for learners to relax and have some fun, so the book starts off with an introductory lesson where learners are given the chance to get to know each other. Newcomers to conversation courses will realize that this course is differ-

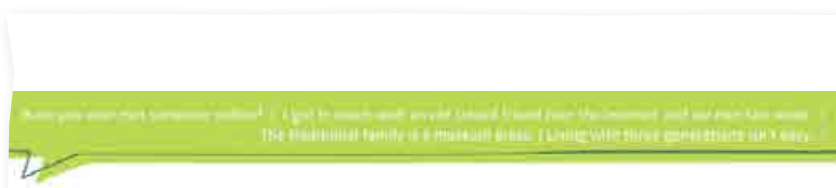
ent, and that learners are attending in order to practice expressing their opinions, feelings and ideas and enquiring about others. They can relax – in a conversation course there are no right or wrong answers.

**2a** Complete the sentences below and compare your answers within your group.

1. Some day I'm going to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I'd really miss \_\_\_\_\_ if I couldn't do it anymore.
3. This winter I hope to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. It's not worth worrying about \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I'd love to \_\_\_\_\_.
6. I wouldn't like to \_\_\_\_\_.

*In conversation B2/C1, p. 5*

Introducing each topic is a green-colored band across the top of the page with sentences. These can be used as a warmer as they introduce the topic and suggest vocabulary or sentences that may be used during the lesson. I like to ask my class when or if they would ever say these things or if they agree with the statements. Consider the example below, taken from topic 13 of *In conversation B2/C1*, "Living together": My learners did have a story or two to tell about people they had met or about romances that had started online. And the sentence about the traditional family led to a heated debate which involved vocabulary discussions.



*In conversation B2/C1, p. 30*

## More (than) words

These vocabulary discussions fit in very well with the first exercise of the topic, which deals with vocabulary used to describe relationships. Learners enjoyed discussing the differences and deciding when to use the different expressions. One of the files in the back of the book provided additional information on the terms.

**1a** Look at the possible synonyms for 'partner' in the word cloud and answer the questions.

1. Which of these words do you think are positive / negative, politically (in)correct or old-fashioned?
2. Which words do you like and in which situations would you use them?
3. Would you add any words?
4. Do you have similar words in your language?



*In conversation B2/C1, p. 30*

## What do you think?

Every topic consists of a short reading and listening text with discussion questions encouraging learners to express and exchange their opinions and ideas and give examples from their own life. Each topic contains a variety of different activities: Discussing questions, responding to provocative statements, reacting to photographs or cartoons, doing quizzes, playing role plays and games. A favorite of mine are the thought-provoking quotes which always inspire lively discussion and oftentimes laughter.

**3c** Discuss the statements and give reasons for your opinions.

It is important to state your own opinion, even if you don't know much about the subject.

Compromises never make anyone happy.

The rules for communication are the same in every culture.

*In conversation B2/C1, p. 31*

## Before and after class

In my experience conversation classes are never homogeneous and weaker or less confident learners often ask if they can prepare for the next lesson. I suggest they look over the first exercise in the new topic at home as a preparation for the next class as they have a chance to pre-learn the vocabulary and become familiar with the topic (the word cloud on the left is a good example of this).

A nice bonus for learners is the homework section at the back of the book. There is a short homework exercise for each unit. Usually this is an opportunity to practice writing about an experience, to give an opinion or expand on a quote. There are also vocabulary review exercises.

The book is set up in such a way that teachers can be flexible and choose topics in any order they find relevant to their learners. For example, before or after vacation time, the topic "Eco-tourism" may generate more discussion, whereas the topics called "Lying and cheating" or "Green California" may be coupled with a story in the news.

## Try it out for yourselves!

I have enjoyed working with the team co-writing all three conversation courses. Thanks to *In conversation* and *In conversation II* (both at level B1/B2), my classes and I had lively, informative and sometimes surprising discussions. Learners were able to talk about their life experiences in a relaxed classroom environment. I'm looking forward to using the new course book next semester.

See for yourselves if using one of the conversation courses in your classes from B1 to C1 level might be a good choice for you, too.

### INFOBOX



› *In conversation B2/C1*  
Konversationskurs  
Englisch mit  
Audio-CD  
978-3-12-501557-9  
€ 20,99

› *In conversation (B1/B2)*  
Konversationskurs mit Audio-CD  
978-3-12-501555-5  
€ 20,99

› *In conversation II (B1/B2)*  
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Weitere Informationen finden Sie unter  
[www.klett.de/inconversation](http://www.klett.de/inconversation)

Weitere Titel:



› *Discussions that Work*  
Klett Tipps 53: Frische Zutaten für neue Kursrezepte  
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