

Tips for Conversation sessions:

Some of the topics/ideas that have worked well for us recently in conversation groups:

- Introductions – each student introduce themselves; their background/course/plans for the future.
- Have a couple of topics from today's news – eg google Sydney morning herald and take copies of anything that you think might be interesting.
- Talk about how they want the discussion session to be/how you think it should be:
 - Who controls the conversation? (ideally not just the facilitator!)
 - Goals for them – listening; responding; initiating; 'carrying' the conversation
 - How much correction do they want? Will this stop the flow of the conversation?
- End of session – everyone can suggest ideas for next week
- Encourage everyone to participate where possible – everyone has a different comfort level so it's about getting used to that.
- For larger groups – split into 2 or 3 student groups and ask them to come up with a list of questions for you (eg. about Sydney, working in Australia, English language)

Following are a list of possible discussion topics. For more ideas, Google 'conversation starters for ESL students' for lots of ideas on the net. *Whatever interests you as the facilitator is a good place to start.*

- **Discussion topics:**
 - Australian customs that may be different from their country eg:
 - Giving tips; Handshakes; Paying for a meal – man or woman?
 - When to say 'excuse me' and 'sorry'; Drinking culture
 - Holidays; Good places to visit near Sydney; Where to go on holiday in their country
 - Housing
 - Do people in your country aspire to buy a house?; Prices in Sydney?; Types of housing
 - Transport
 - How does it compare?; Any problems with getting around?; Is it expensive?
 - How do people treat each other eg. giving up seat on a bus?
 - Useful websites for finding where to go eg. www.131500.com.au
 - Celebrations
 - How Australians celebrate birthdays, weddings etc
 - Which birthdays are celebrated in different countries
 - Exercise/Keeping fit
 - How they keep fit; What is typical in their country – male/female differences?
 - Favourite walks around Sydney
 - Australian Legal system/Politics
 - Eg. talking about jury duty; who does it; who would like to do it
 - How Australian elections work
 - Learning English
 - How did you learn? What worked well/didn't work well for you?