

**Supplementary Guide for
ESOL Conversation Program Guidelines
Fall 2011**



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Week 1: Getting to Know Each Other

Culture Corner

Cultural Shock

There are many differences between the United States and your country. At times you may not understand the actions of Americans or particular facets of the American society. When you first arrived in the U.S., you may experience “cultural shock”- a feeling of disorientation or confusion that often occurs when someone leaves a familiar place and moves to an unfamiliar one. At first you may feel elated, and extremely positive about your new life. It may take even days or even weeks for uncomfortable feelings to set in. Symptoms of cultural shock include change in appetite, low energy, sleeping a lot, crying, frustration and even anger. Whether you experience some or all of the symptoms related to culture shock, rest assured that there are many other students in your situation. As times passes, you will make new friends. As you become more accustomed to life in the U.S. and to American attitudes, uncomfortable feelings should diminish.

Paragraph on the definition of Americans: Adapted from A.R. Lanier, Visiting the U.S.A.

More than 200 million people now call America “home,” but most of them can trace their families back to other parts of the world. The idea that these people, who once were strangers to the United States, have lost the customs and cultures of their original countries and have become “American” is untrue. In fact, what exists in America is more often a kind of “side-by-side” living in which groups of people from other countries often have kept many of their own customs and habits. They join the general American society only in certain area of their lives- such as in schools, businesses, and sports- but they keep many of their own native customs and manners socially and at home. This living “side-by-side” has both advantages and disadvantages. Sometimes it may cause disagreements from one another. However, there are also great advantages the come from the variety of cultures brought by settlers from other lands. There is great freedom of choice among ideas, dress, food, social customs in America. Everyone can find some part of his own familiar world in the United States, in churches, music, food, national groups, or newspapers.

Week 2: Natural Disaster

Community Building: Fear in a Hat

- The tone could be set by introducing the topic of fear and explaining how it is normal and natural at this stage of program that people are experiencing all sorts of anxieties, worries and fears about what might happen. A good way of starting to deal with these fears is have them openly acknowledged - lay them on the table, without being subject to ridicule. Having one's fears expressed and heard almost immediately cuts them in half.
- Can be done as the first activity in a program, during the initial stages or well into the program. When used early on in particular, it can help to foster group support and be helpful for alerting the group to issues they may want to respect in a [Full Value Contract](#).
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Culture Corner

Independence

Americans value personal independence and self-reliance. This individualistic orientation means that people believe they are responsible for their own happiness and future, and that they should not depend on others to make them happy or successful. This does not mean that they do not work together or help one another. It means that each person is responsible for his or her own life.

This individualism is seen in many ways in American life. The emphasis on individualism begins early. Children are encouraged to develop and express their own opinions and interests, particularly in school. IN family life, children are often given household responsibilities at an early age. Teenagers are expected to find summer jobs when they are not in school. And American young people often leave home early to live “on their own.”

Activity: Idioms from the weather:

A Breeze

For some folks, everything is easy. Life is a **breeze**. They're always healthy. They are never **under the weather**. If they walk into a room full of strangers, they make friends in five minutes. They have no trouble **breaking the ice**. They earn enough to save some money every week. They are **saving money for a rainy day**. So if trouble ever does come, they'll be able to **weather the storm**. Yes, some people have no problems if times are good or bad. They are okay **come rain or shine**.

Idiom	Definition	Sentence
A breeze	something easy for a person to do	Because I studied every day, the exam was a breeze.
A fair-weather friend	A person who doesn't help when a friend is in trouble	Judy showed that she was just a fair-weather friend. When I needed help, she refused me without even considering it.
Come rain or shine	no matter how hard it is to do	Uncle Jeremiah lives two hundred miles away, but he'll be at my birthday party come rain or shine.
Full of hot air	talking a lot but never doing what one says	Many politicians are full of hot air. They make promises, but they don't keep them.

Snowed under	having a lot of work to do	I have to stay late at the office tonight and finish some things because I'm snowed under with work.
To break the ice	to begin a conversation with a stranger	Jim is very shy. If he goes to a party where he doesn't know anyone, he finds it hard to break the ice.
To have one's head in the clouds	not to know or understand what is going on	I don't think Celia understands that she's in danger of not passing the course. She seems to have her head in the clouds.
To rain cats and dogs	to rain very hard	It must be raining cats and dogs outside. The rain is pounding on the roof.
To save something for a rainy day	to prepare for trouble, usually by saving money	Tom makes only four hundred dollars, but every week he saves forty for a rainy day.
To weather the storm	to wait and be patient until things get better	Our business has had a lot of problems this year. But I am sure things will be okay if we weather the storm for just a few more months.
Under the weather	sick	

Week 3 Transportation

Activity: Idioms

Wear and Tear

It's true that my car looks old and worn out. It's eleven years old, and it has a lot of **wear and tear** on it. But I am tired of my friends telling to get a new car. **By and large**, my car still runs okay. It takes me where I want to go. I use it to go **back and forth** to work every day, and it doesn't break down very often.

When it does break down, I take it to my mechanics. They know the **ins and outs** of my car. They don't give me a **song and dance**. They tell me exactly what's wrong with the car and how much it will cost to fix it. I know that I can trust them. So I feel confident that when I drive my car, it will get me **safe and sound** to where I am going.

More idioms with "and"

Back and forth-Tim rode the same bus route for years. Every week he went back and forth from San Antonio to Austin.

Fair and square-I won the tennis game fair and square, but Maurice argued that I hadn't followed the rules.

Odds and ends- I wanted to buy some clothes at the big sale, but by the time I got there, there were only odds and ends left.

Right and left-We had a lot of business last week. The orders were coming in right and left.

Spick-and-span- Kathy always cleans the house well before her friend visits so that everything is spick-and-span.

A long explanation, a long excuse that is often not true	a song and dance
A variety of small items, the pieces left over	Odds and ends
All the details	ins and outs
Damage that happens as something gets old and used	wear and tear
From one place to another and back to the first place	back and forth
Honestly, without cheating	fair and square
In large numbers, from every side	Right and left
Mostly, most often	by and large
Very clean	Spick-and-span
With no damage or injury	safe and sound

Week 4 Hygiene and Body Language

Culture Corner

Personal Space and Privacy

These notes on personal space are very general. Customs vary in different parts of the country and between ethnic groups. However, in general, Americans do not touch each other very much in public. Touching between two people of the same sex is not common. Touching between people of different sex is more common, especially if they are young lovers. You may see young men and women holding hands, embracing, and even kissing in public. In the past, this kind of open touching was considered very impolite. But times are changing, and nowadays people are more likely to touch and show affection in public. In fact, it isn't unusual to hug someone if you have not seen them in a long time, or if they or you are going away.

In conversations, Americans stand about 2 or 3 feet apart and often use a lot of gestures. Some gestures involve physical contact. Sympathy is shown by putting a hand on another person's shoulder. Touching the other person's hand or arm shows support, agreement, or thanks.

On one hand, Americans are not especially private people. They leave the doors to their offices open, and often neighboring homes are not separated by fences or walls. It is also rare to find closed doors in homes. On the other hand, Americans tend to be very strict about other matters. For example, the importance of privacy (knocking on the door before entering a room, asking for permission to borrow items of personal property, or allowing time for persons to be alone); also, calling people before going to visit them, hesitating to ask a person's age or discussing personal finances, and using polite terms such as "please" and "thank you" at times that other societies would consider unnecessary or inappropriate.

Activity: Idioms for Parts of the Body

Last year my English class was full of characters. That's a polite way of saying it had some unusual people that I'll never forget. One student was a hard worker that he learned all the idioms in our book by heart. He was always saying things like "I'm on cloud nine," or "I'm green with envy." We never knew if he meant what he said or if he was just practice English. Another student had a **sweet tooth**. She would bake lots of breads and cakes and bring them to every class for us to share during breaks. Two students met in the class and fell **head over heels in love**. We were all invited to their wedding and had a great time. Then there was a student who was always **pulling someone's leg**. For example, one day before class, he put a long homework assignment on the board and made us think that the teacher had given it. We all had **long faces** until the teacher came in. Then we realized that someone had played a joke on us.

Definitions	Idioms	Sentence
Something or someone that annoys or bothers a person	A pain in the neck	Waiting for the bus <u>on the</u> cold, windy <u>corner</u> is a pain in the neck.
To joke, to kid or to trick someone	to pull someone's leg	Tomorrow is not a holiday. Don't believe Rich. He's just pulling your leg.
Very much in love	Head over heels	Pam and Tony are head over heels in love. They're planning to get married

To be very expensive	To cost an arm and a leg *pricy, upscale	Everything in that fancy department store costs an arm and a leg. I can't afford to buy anything there, not even a pencil.
To hurry up, move faster	To shake a leg	Shake a leg! We have to be at school in twenty minutes.
By memory	By heart	I know all my friends' telephone numbers by heart. I never have to look in the telephone book.
Always wanting to know other people's business and what other people are doing	Nosey *A direct but sometimes rude common phrase to counter nose people: Mind your own business	Every time I go out, I notice my nose neighbors watching me. They must know everything about me.
A sad, dissatisfied expression	a long face	Because Judy didn't get an invitation to the party, she's walked around with a long face since yesterday.
To like sweet foods very much	To have a sweet tooth	I know you have a sweet tooth, so I bought you a box of chocolate
A person who talks too much and does not keep secrets	A big mouth	My brother has such a big mouth. He told everything I said to our mother.
To agree completely	to see eye to eye	Lucy and Dan never argue. They see eye to eye on almost everything.
Can you think of more idioms using words for parts of the body? (See the handout "Idioms Using Parts of the Human Body to express other Ideas.")		

In / at / on the corner

We say 'in the corner of a room', but 'at the corner (or 'on the corner') of a street'

In / at / on the front

We say 'in the front / in the back' of a car

We say 'at the front / at the back' of buildings / groups of people

We say 'on the front / on the back' of a piece of paper

Can you act out or draw (on the board) the difference between the two sentences below? What's the difference between the two?

Waiting for the bus on the cold, windy corner is a pain in the neck.

Waiting for the bus in the cold, windy corner is a pain in the neck.

Cultural Etiquette and Hygiene

Beginning

-It is best to go over the term with the beginning students and possibly even bring pictures printed from the computer (or on the lab top if it is available) or act it out.

Intermediate

-Ask students to help Bob solve his problems without using too much money (remember, Bob is a poor college student).

Advanced

-If someone were to confront you with any of these hygienic problem (saying that you have bad breath etc), how would you react? Do you think your ethnic culture have an impact on your reaction? Or do you think your family dynamics (home culture) has more impact on how you react to unpleasant experience?

Scenario

Bob is a poor college student who is in need of help for hygiene-related reasons. His college roommate is trying to help him by describing his “condition” to another person to help him engage in a makeover. Based on what his friend said (first column), can you guess what his friend is trying to say (second column)? Ask students to fold over the second column and engage in authentic guessing and checking.

Game: How do you say...? (25 min.)

Bob has white stuff on his shoulders.	He has dandruff in his hair.	
Bob’s running shoes are five years old.	His running shoes reek.	
Bob hasn’t brushed his teeth in weeks.	He has bad breath.	
Bob has been eating too much chocolate.	He has zits on his face. *pimples	
Bob makes noise after he eats.	He belches after every meal. *burps	
Bob can’t open his eyes in the morning.	He has sleep in his eyes.	For eyes, it could be called crusties, eye booger (used by kids), “sleep”
Bob’s hairline is receding.	He’s going bald.	
Bob forgot to zip his pants.	His fly is open. It is often considered humorous if a person is caught with his or her fly down.	

Depending on the number of students and their proficiency levels, you may wish to go over the sentences with the students in advance to frontload them with the vocabulary. For more advanced students, they can usually figure out most of the phrases with minimal help.

Instructions setting up the game:

1) Cut the box into strips of paper and glue/tape each on an index card

2) Flip the index card over and let the students play the memory game. If students match the term with the meaning, then they can take the cards with them and go again. Each set is a point. Play take turns in clockwise direction.

Week 5: Food

American Eating Customs

Americans eat with a knife and fork in the following way: When cutting, they hold the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left. After cutting, the knife is placed on the edge of the plate and the fork is shifted to the right hand for eating. While eating, the left hand is often placed on the lap. Left-handed people eat with their left hand.

- Keep your mouth closed when you are chewing food, and speak only when your mouth is empty.
- When you need something that is not near you on the table, ask the person closest to the item to pass it to you; do not reach across in front of them to get it yourself.
- If someone offers you more to eat and you would like to have more, accept their offer. Most likely they will not repeat the offer or insist that you eat. If you don't want more, they will accept your refusal.
- Do not burp after eating.
- Try not to rest your arm on the table while you are eating.
- If you need to leave the table while others are still eating, say, "Would you excuse me, please?"

Culture Corner

Melting Pot vs. Salad Bowl

By The Sentinel

What makes us American? Is it our common love for freedom, or is it McDonalds, American Idol and the War in Iraq? What defines us as a people or as a society? The truth is, America is a mosaic of numerous cultures, ethnicities, colors and religions – to the point where it has become nearly impossible to distinctly define the factors that make us American.

From the time it was founded to today, America has been a home for immigrants from around the world. Ultimately, all of us in this country originated elsewhere. Once America took the initiative to open its doors to immigrants, cultural diversity became a great part of the country's identity. In the initial stages of the process, America was known as "The Great Melting Pot," a metaphor for a country in which people from all backgrounds combine and form a homogenous American identity.

The same cannot be said for America of the 21st century. The America I grew up in was nothing like a melting pot. It resembled a vibrant salad bowl – containing numerous contrasting ingredients which all came together to form one entity, yet each retained its own distinct flavor and identity. Despite having large communities of immigrants, American society does not necessarily compel one to abandon one's cultural identity and tradition in order to assimilate. Fortunately, the United States offers numerous opportunities and scopes to maintain one's own traditions while learning to cope and adjust with mainstream society.

This following section is solely for volunteer's background knowledge. You may or may not want to share some of the contents with your students based on their proficiency level.

My life itself is evidence of that statement. I was born in Bangladesh but grew up in the United States in a traditional Muslim household. I definitely experienced the challenges of growing up in two cultures that were complete contrasts to one another. Despite the obstacles, I never truly felt the compulsion to abandon my beliefs and value system in order to become a 'True American' [whatever that may be].

Fortunately this nation offered me enough opportunities to pursue the American dream and still maintain my parents' traditions. By the age of four, I was able to speak Bengali, English and even Urdu with near fluency. I can honestly say that America's tradition of diversity was a blessing for me from a very early age. I still vividly remember my kindergarten days in New York, where school would begin with not only reciting the Pledge of Allegiance but also singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee," while my Sunday mornings would begin with reciting the Islamic Statement of Faith at the local mosque. In my early school years, the holidays were spent recognizing and even celebrating the Hindu holiday of Diwali, the African Kwanzaa, the Jewish Hanukkah and of course the Christian Christmas.

Truly, this was diverse America at its best.

Unfortunately, the America I grew to love, the nation whose diversity made me feel at home, is undergoing challenges towards the very trait which gave it a multicultural identity. With our increasingly intolerant nature of other cultures and ideas outside our nation – as we witness in the case of Iraq as well as our current immigration debates – we are in danger of losing the very identity which makes us American. Our policies abroad do not match the cultural tolerance we practice at home. Despite the fact that our nation is an amazing example of a vast array of backgrounds coexisting peacefully, nations abroad view us as ignorant and intolerant of other cultures due to the kinds of actions our government takes abroad.

The challenge stems not only from its behavior abroad but also in the alarming trends towards political correctness at home: imposing and dictating freedom to the Iraqis, coaxing other nations and peoples to adopt Western values and mindsets, fighting to close our borders and say goodbye to immigrants who have already made America their home, doing away with celebrating Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Christmas and pretty much anything that creates cultural difference. These trends all pose an intrinsic threat to the pluralism that makes America such a vibrant and thriving democracy.

Our society is a far cry from a melting pot. We have people from every imaginable background coming together to form an interesting and colorful puzzle. Rather than diminishing our differences and imposing integration, diversity should be embraced. Our differences should not be overlooked. In order to truly advance as a civilized society and so-called leaders of the free world, we should acknowledge and even encourage the differences among ourselves. Our questions regarding different cultural and religious traditions should not be pondered in doubt. Rather, they should be pondered with the intent of learning and understanding different customs and traditions. Cross cultural communication and understanding is truly the bridge to building long lasting peace in our society.

This is not a bid for all of us to hold hands and sing "Kumbaya." It is a plea to make an effort to understand and appreciate the differences that make us who we are. Once again, I ask – what is it that makes us American? Our diversity. The willingness to accept, embrace and live with our differences makes us American. Our fine tradition of tolerance and acceptance of diversity in our society is something we can proudly define and claim as American.

If we are to retain our cultural identity [which holds acceptance of diversity at its core] we must continue our tradition of peacefully embracing cultural differences at home and abroad. We must practice abroad what we preach at home. Or else, in the fight to impose the American mindset of freedom and tolerance to nations abroad, we may be at risk of losing this valued tradition in our very own home.

Resources: <http://ksusentinel.com/op-ed/melting-pot-vs-salad-bowl/>

Idioms for Food

A Real Lemon

The used car I bought for three hundred dollars was a lemon. My friends said I was nuts to believe the baloney the seller gave. The seller said that the car was like new, with only ten thousand miles on it. She called it reliable transportation at a very low price. She said she was really selling it for peanuts.

Starting the engine was a piece of cake. I just turned the key-no problem. However, soon I was in a pickle: the brakes didn't work! The owner of the Cadillac I hit went bananas when he saw the damage to the front of his car. He started shouting at me and wouldn't stop. Now I have to pay him two thousand dollars to repair his car. But my friend Nina was a peach. She took my car to the garbage dump so that I didn't have to see it again.

The apple of one's eye: The baby is the apple of her grandfather's eye. He thinks that she's wonderful.

Baloney: His speech about the importance of helping the poor is baloney. He wouldn't even give his best friend a dime.

To cream someone: Our basketball team really creamed its opponent. Our team won by a score of 120 to 60.

Fishy: On our return home, we found the front door open, and we suspected that something fishy was going on.

To go bananas: She went bananas when she heard she had won first prize in the talent contest.

Bill was in a pickle. After filling his car with gas, he could not find the money to pay.

A lemon: The new tape player I bought was a lemon, and I'm going to take it back to the store for a new one.

Nuts: Tony must be nuts to pay over a hundred dollars for a shirt.

A peach: When I was sick last week, Susan visited me and bought groceries for me. She's a peach.

Peanuts: Rose buys used clothes at secondhand stores, and she gets nice-looking clothes for peanuts.

A piece of cake: The math test was a piece of cake for Jimmy. He is very good at doing math problems.

Definitions:

In trouble

Something that is very easy to do

Something that does not work, usually an electrical appliance or mechanical item

To totally beat someone in a game

A very small amount of money

Nonsense

Suspicious, not right or honest

To go crazy

Very crazy, very upset

A very nice person

Someone's favorite person

Week 6: Community Life and University Life

STRESS

Everyone feels stress sometimes. But some people have so much stress that they become sick.

What causes stress? *Change* The biggest source of stress is change. It may be a bad change, like losing a job or getting divorced. But even a good change, like going on vacation, causes stress!

Loss of Control You also feel stress in situations that are out of your control. Maybe you are stuck in traffic or your kids are sick. When you can't change the bad things in your life, you feel stress.

Negative Attitudes The way you think can cause stress. For example, you worry a lot or you think too much about the bad things in your life. These kinds of negative attitudes cause stress.

Unhealthy Habits Finally, the way you live can cause stress. Do you eat too much junk food? Do you work too many hours? These kinds of unhealthy habits add stress to your life.

How can you manage stress? • Find out what causes stress in your life. Pay attention to the times you feel stressed out. • Think about ways to change the things that cause you stress. • Accept the things you can't change. Sometimes you can't avoid a stressful situation. You need to find a way to live with it. • Talk about it. Sometimes you need help. Talk about your stress with a family member, friend, counselor, or doctor.

Even good changes, like getting married, can cause stress. **True False**

2. Being in a situation you can't control causes stress. **True False**

3. Eating too much junk food is an example of a negative attitude. **True False**

4. You can always avoid stressful situations. **True False**

5. Talking with someone can help you manage stress. **True False**

Week 7: Shopping

Idioms with words from Clothes

In the Boss's Shoes

Some people get angry easily. You have to be careful and **handle them with kid gloves**. My boss is always angry. He's always **hot under the collar** about something. If sales are bad, he gets very nervous. He's afraid that he's going to lose everything. He thinks he's about to **lose his shirt**. But the business never makes very much money. We always **run on a shoestring**. In business, you have to be calm and keep your temper. You have to **keep your shirt on**. Our business might be better if my boss could stay calm. Still, I prefer to be me than to have my boss's job. I don't want **to be in his shoes**. He's under too much pressure.

To be in someone else's shoes	I wouldn't be in Danny's shoes when Dad comes home and sees that window.	to be in the place of someone else
dressed to kill	Stephen went to the party dressed to kill in his new black suit, silk shirt and red tie.	in one's best clothes and looking good
a feather in one's cap	Passing the driver's test on the first try was a real feather in my cap.	something to be proud of and to feel good about
hot under the collar	Mike had an important meeting in another city. He got hot under the collar because the plane was late taking off.	angry
to keep one's shirt on	I'll finish using the computer in a minute. Just keep your shirt on, and you will get your turn.	not to get angry, to be patient
to keep something under one's hat	I am getting married, but keep it under your hat. I don't want anyone to know yet.	to keep something secret
to lose one's shirt	Bob invested a lot of money in stock and lost his shirt.	to lose a lot of money
on a shoestring	Alice started a business although she didn't have very much money. She's running on a shoestring.	with very little money
a stuffed shirt	Higgins is such a stuffed shirt. He always wears a tie, and he even eats chicken with a knife and a fork.	someone who lives by the rules and is very formal
Tied to someone's apron strings	Basil never does anything unless his mother says it's okay. He's tied to her apron strings.	always following a stronger person

Week 8: Health

Activity: Idioms- A Lot of Nerve

I like birds. They are beautiful when they fly. Many of them have lovely colors. But I was **sick and tired** of that pigeon. It caused too much trouble. It really had **a lot of nerve**. Every morning it came to my backyard and ate all the baby lettuce one by one. It was very careful to eat the best. **It took great pains** to do so. And so I decided to stop its mischief. I wanted to **give the bird a taste of its own medicine**.

I built the ugliest-looking scarecrow you ever saw. I dressed it in old clothes and put it in the yard. Would it work? I really wasn't sure. **I felt it in my bones** that the bird might know it was a trick. The next day I decided to see what was happening. I paused for a moment, **held my breath**, and looked out the window. There in the middle of the yard was the pigeon pulling out straws from the hat on my scarecrow. And I could see that more lettuce had been eaten. Clearly, I had to think of a new plan.

A bitter pill to swallow	something difficult and unpleasant to experience	When Jake lost the job after working with the same company for twenty years, it was a bitter pill to swallow.
A fly in the ointment	a problem	We want to buy the house, but there's just one fly in the ointment. We don't have enough money for a down payment.
Blood is thicker than water	relatives are the most important people	Anna gave her son the job instead of advertising the position. You know, blood is thicker than water.
Sick and tired	very annoyed, very tired of doing something	I am sick and tired of doing all the housework myself. I need some help.
To cough up	to pay money	The landlord said to Brian, "Cough up the rent or leave the apartment."
To feel it in one's bones	to know something, often before seeing it or before it happens	Our team is going to win the game. I can feel it in my bones.
To get burned	to have a bad experience, to be cheated	She got burned after one of her best friends betrayed her.
To give someone a taste of his/her own medicine	to do something bad to someone after the other person has done the same bad thing	If he keeps on shouting at people and getting angry, someone will give him a taste of his own medicine and shout back at him.
To have a lot of nerve	to act so badly and impolitely that it actually takes courage to do so	Jacob has a lot of nerve. He got a pay raise three months ago. Now he's asking for another one.
To hold one's breath	to pause, stop or think	If you are angry, hold your breath and count to ten. After that, you'll feel calmer.
To take pains	to take a lot of trouble to do something	If you take pains to do something well, it will often be a success. And you won't have to take time to do it over because it will be right the first time.

Week 9: Entertainment

Culture Corner

Leisure

Sports of all types are popular in the United States, and facilities for playing various sports exist in all cities and towns: swimming pools, tennis courts, football and baseball fields, golf greens, bowling alleys, roller/ice skating rinks, etc. In addition, many Americans have taken up jogging and bicycling in order to stay physically fit. You will probably see joggers almost everywhere you go.

Other popular sports are skiing (on water in warm weather and on snow in the winter), sailing, fishing, hiking, and camping. There are now also a number of different kinds of exercise groups in most communities, part of the current emphasis on good health. In gyms, there are groups that do exercises to music and centers where weightlifting equipment is available.

Television is a part of everyday life. Most American families have more than one television set and watch it regularly. On weekends, going to the movies is a popular pastime, as is going out for a meal at a restaurant. In warm weather, Americans enjoy picnics and barbecues where food is cooked and eaten outside and people play outdoor games.

Many Americans also like to read, do various crafts, watch sports events, and attend concerts. They also enjoy gardening and “do-it-yourself” projects, such as sewing their own clothes or building furniture, as might be expected where independence is valued.

Conversation Topics

Americans often ask a lot of questions when they first meet someone, and some of these questions may seem quite personal to you. When an American does this, she or he is only looking for a common ground for building a relationship. Perhaps you will discover similar interests or abilities that can then be used as a basis for friendship.

Although Americans ask a lot of questions, there are some topics you should avoid in conversation until you know a person well: the person’s age and financial status, the cost of the person’s clothes or personal belongings, his or her personal religious beliefs, and a person’s love life.

Activity: Idioms from Recreation

A Person on the Ball

We always know what our boss, Ashlyn, was thinking. **Right off the bat**, as soon as she walked through the door, she would let you know what she wanted you to do. Her style was clear, direct, and open. She always **put her card on the table**.

If you did something wrong or said something inappropriate, Ashlyn told you that you were **off base**. If she thought you were doing well and **on the ball**, she told you that, too. And when she said no she meant no. **No dice**. Not many people argued with Ashlyn and won. But I think she really enjoyed people who would stand up to her and give their own opinions. I think she secretly got **a kick out of it**.

to get a kick out of something	I really get a kick out of Sean's jokes. He always makes me laugh.	to enjoy something a lot
to go fly a kite	I am tired of listening to you complain. Stop bothering me. What don't you just go fly a kite?	to go away or stop annoying someone, usually said in anger
a good sport	I beat my brother five times in tennis today, but he's such a good sport that he bought us a pizza afterward.	someone who does not complain if he or she loses or who does not boast if he or she wins
in the same boat	Now that we are both out of work, we are in the same boat	in the same situation
to keep the ball rolling	Let's keep the ball rolling, we are off to a good start.	make something continue to happen
no dice	Abe wanted the party to be at our house, but I said no dice.	no, a negative answer
off base	You are off base with that answer. Try again.	not correct, in appropriate
on the ball	David is an excellent manager. He really knows how organize things and get things done. He is really on the ball.	very good at doing things, effective and efficient
to put one's card on the table	Let me put my cards on the table. Either we sell more or we have to close the business.	not to hide anything, to explain the situation fully and honestly
right off the bat	Jimmy looked at the math problem for just a minute, and she got the correct answer right off the bat.	immediately, without delay
sink or swim	We are going to do our best to start our restaurant, sink or swim.	fail or succeed, no matter what

Week 10: Holidays and Celebrations

Last Day (wrapping up) 15 minutes

Use the last 15 minutes to reflect on your conversation group as a community. Think about how we have learned, grown and even opened our hearts to one another. Take this time to make sure you write down each others' phone number, contact information and appreciate each other.

Sentence Starters for reflections:

I like how we....

I enjoy _____ activities...

Have students write down the activities that they enjoy and found memorable.

Equality

The concept of equality is extremely important in the United States. Americans generally say that all the people are the same, regardless of social, economic, racial, ethnic, or gender differences. They expect to have an equal opportunity to achieve personal and professional goals. Americans can become very angry if they think they are not being given an equal opportunity to compete or improve their lives. Fair government and equal protection by law are very important. Americans may also become angry at people who expect special favors or treatment. When they think someone is not being fair or is looking for special treatment, they are likely to say, "Who do you think you are?" They also get angry at people who will not wait for their turn.

There are, of course, social and class differences in the United States and many inequalities in American life. Most Americans are aware of these inequalities, but they would rather think that the United States is a country where they, to quote the Declaration of Independence, "all men are created equal" and have certain rights, and "among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

Invitations

Americans will quickly and easily invite strangers into their homes. You will find that you are treated as "one of the family" almost immediately after you arrive. Do not be surprised at American informality. It is quite natural. Your hosts will probably not give you very special guest status. You should "make yourself at home" with them. If you are invited to a home for a meal or a party, you can ask, "Can I bring anything?" If you are invited for a stay of one night or more, then it is appropriate to bring a small gift- flowers, candy, or some souvenir from your own country.

If you receive a written invitation, it is important to respond to it as soon as possible. Some invitations will have R.S.V.P. or "Please reply" written at the bottom, and these must have a reply. If a telephone number is given, then it is polite to call and accept or decline the invitation. If there is no phone number, then a written note is adequate. If you receive an invitation over the telephone, make sure that you have correctly understood the date, time and location. And if for some reason you should realize later that you cannot attend, then be sure to telephone to inform the person inviting you that you will not be there, and explain the reason why.

Activity: Idioms using color words

In the Red

The letter came **out of the blue!** I wasn't expecting it. But there it was in **black and white**, signed by the bank manager. I had no money in my checking account. I was **in the red**.

I couldn't believe it. So I went to see the manager. We looked at the problem together. The bank had made a mistake. It had put ten dollars into my account instead of one thousand dollars!

Because it was the bank's mistake, there was no delay reopening my account. The manager cut through all **the red tape**. Now I had money in my account. And I had the **green light** to write the checks again.

Idioms with definition:

The black market-you can go to the bank to change dollars. But if you change money on the black market, you often get more money for each dollar.

To feel blue: I was alone on my birthday and feeling blue. Then Anny called and invited me out, and I felt better.

The green light: The bank has given us the money. Now we have the green light to start the project.

Green with envy: I was green with envy when I learned that Luis had won a trip to Europe.

In black and white: I couldn't believe it, but there it was in black and white, as clear as it could be. The letter said that I had won a trip to Europe.

In the black: Theo earns a thousand dollars a week. He doesn't have to worry about having enough money. He's always in the black.

In the red: I never have enough money to pay my bills. I'm always in the red.

Out of the blue: The news of the factory's closing came out of the blue. No one was expecting it.

The red carpet: When the movie star visited, our town rolled out the red carpet. There was a special parade and a special dinner in her honor.

Red tape: Every time you want to get a new passport, you have to go through a lot of red tape. It's not easy and it takes a lot of time.

A white lie: I didn't feel like going out. So I told a white lie, and I said I didn't feel well.

Definitions of idioms:

By surprise, unexpectedly

Very clear and easy to understand

Owing money, in debt

Complicated official procedures and forms

The okay to start something

Special honors for a special or important person

The market not controlled by the government, where things are sold in private and often against the law

Something that is not true but causes no harm

Jealous of someone else's good fortune

To feel sad

Having money