

Conversation Grid – Activity

Highlights: The power of using conversation grid activities is that learners are involved in authentic, independent, and cooperative conversation without direct teacher involvement. These grids can be used with any topic as teaching or assessment activities. Learners usually enjoy them greatly.

Objective: Learners practice and increase knowledge of language structures (such as what, when, where, and why questions and their typical answers), vocabulary (as related to a particular topic such as “on the job”), and cultural aspects related to a topic. They ask questions, listen to answers, and record information on the grid.

Context: This activity is suitable for general ESL classes as well as specific classes such as family literacy or workplace classes.

Materials: Draw a large grid on the board or have an overhead transparency with a sample of the grid to explain the activity. Learners need conversation grids to record answers. (See examples that follow. Grids can have complete questions (e.g., What is your job now? What do you like to do in your free time?) or cue phrases (e.g., job in United States; hobbies).

Procedure:

1. Review language structures and key vocabulary that have been previously taught and are needed to successfully complete this activity. The review should be verbal and written with plenty of input from the learners. For example, if one of the questions is going to be about native country, with learner input, get all the names of countries up on the board or on flip chart paper so it will be easily accessible when learners begin to work on their own grids.
2. Hand out the grids and explain the task: “Today you’re going to interview five classmates. You will write their answers to your questions on this form.”
3. Discuss conversation questions, e.g., “What is your job now?” “What do you like to do in your free time? What else do you like to do?”
4. Talk about possible answers such as *construction worker*, *play soccer*, *watch soccer on TV*.
5. Model the task with one or two learner volunteers. It’s important to model several answers and questions so that learners know that full sentence answers such as “I am a construction worker” or short answers such as *construction worker* are both acceptable. **Note:** As in all activities, modeling correct answers to issues such as “Her name” vs. “she name” is more effective than giving a big explanation about the correct grammar. This is especially true with formulaic phrases that use structures not yet discussed in class.
6. Check comprehension of instructions. For example, ask, “How many questions are you asking each classmate?” “How many people will you speak with today?”
7. Once learners begin the activity, monitor the process and be ready to assist learners if they ask for help. **Note:** Some will finish only one conversation while others may do several. That’s okay; people process, learn, and interact at different rates.
8. When the general buzz quiets down, it is time to stop the activity. Discuss the information with the class, for example, “Tell the class something you learned about one of your classmates.” You can tabulate information on a master grid or have learners work in small groups to do a tabulation of their grid information.

Samples :

1. Personal Identification

Personal Identification (All Levels)

What is your first name? (Spell it please)	Where are you from?	What is your address?
Rosario	Mexico	701 N. Oak St.

2. Work

Work (Intermediate and Advanced Levels)

What's your name?	What's your job now?	How long have you had this job?	What was your job in your home country?
Jose Gomez	construction worker	5 months	engineer

3. Free Time

Free Time (Intermediate and Advanced Levels)

What's your name?	What do you like to do in your free time?	When do you have free time?	What did you do in your free time in your country?
Hajib Mansoor	play soccer	on Sunday afternoon	play soccer and go fishing