

## Follow-up questions by Tamzin Berridge

**Age:** Teenagers / Adults  
**Level:** Intermediate-Upper-intermediate  
**Time:** 60 minutes  
**Objectives:** To present and practise follow-up questions to encourage students to develop and extend conversations; to look at the differences between 'proper English' and informal English  
**Key skills:** Speaking  
**Materials:** One copy of worksheets 1 and 2 per student; one copy of the questions and statements sheet per pair, cut up; one copy of the correct answers for the follow-up questions per student (optional)

**Note:** This lesson can be tied in to practice for oral English language exams such as FCE and CAE. In subsequent lessons, students can use these questions, and similar ones, in the discussion parts of speaking exams.

### Procedure

1. Warmer – Distribute worksheet 1 and direct students towards the introductory questions. Ask them to discuss the questions in pairs.
2. Explain to students that they are going to be looking at the differences between what is seen as 'proper English' and English as it is spoken by British native speakers.
3. Direct students towards the next activity. Ask students to work alone to try and complete the conversations, writing questions to keep the conversation going. When they've finished, ask them to compare their ideas with a partner. Do a brief feedback session. (No key is given here because students will match questions to each conversation in a subsequent activity.)
4. Distribute one copy of the cut-up follow-up questions (1-6) and their meanings (a-f) to each pair of students. Ask the pairs to match each question with its meaning. Check answers with the whole class.

**Key:** 1. f; 2. a; 3. e; 4. d; 5. b; 6. c

Note: You can also distribute the sheet of correct answers to students so they can check their own answers.

5. Refer students back to the conversations they completed in the previous activity. Ask them to complete the conversations again, this time using the follow-up questions from the last activity. Check answers.

**Key:** 1. *What for?*; 2. *What's it like?*; 3. *What sort of thing?*; 4. *What does that involve?*; 5. *How come?*; 6. *how do you mean?*

Ask students to work in pairs to briefly compare the questions they wrote originally with the follow-up questions presented here.

6. Tell the students that you will now be discussing some features that distinguish formal from informal English. They should refer back to the questions from the last activity. Elicit from the class whole questions or features of those questions that are informal and may not be considered 'proper English'. Discuss contexts in which it would be inappropriate to use these questions/features.

**Key:** *What for?* – depending on the speaker's tone, could sound abrupt; yeah – common in speech, even relatively formal speech, but should not be used in formal writing; *How come?* – should not be used in formal contexts; say something like *Why is that?* instead; *Err* – depending on the speaker's tone, could sound rude; *how do you mean?* – use of *how* here is informal. It's also worth pointing out that the speaker's response most likely reflects their shock at the directness of the question, rather than a lack of understanding of the question. In other words, by saying *Err, how do you mean?* they may in fact be implying *Why are you asking me that?*

7. Pronunciation (intonation) – Model the question *What's it like?* with falling intonation. Ask students to listen and decide if the voice rises or falls. Ask students if the speaker sounds interested (yes) and wants the conversation to continue (yes). Drill the question. Put students in pairs to read out the other questions using the correct intonation.
8. Hand out worksheet 2. Still in pairs, students now read the completed dialogues, using the correct intonation. Monitor and correct.
9. Practice – Give each pair of students a copy of the cut-up statements. Student 1 takes a piece of paper and reads the statement. Student 2 must respond with an appropriate follow-up question, to

which Student 1 must respond appropriately. You could elicit one mini-dialogue with the whole class so students understand what to do.

**Example:**

A: I've got a lovely house.

B: Really? What's it like?

A: It's really spacious and light, with a huge back garden.

B: Oh, that *does* sound lovely.

10. Fluency practice – Put students in pairs or small groups. Ask them to choose two topics from the list on worksheet 2 and have a conversation based on the topics, using follow-up questions as appropriate. Monitor and make a note of errors or particularly interesting conversations to bring up in feedback.

## 1. Introductory discussion

Work together in pairs and discuss the questions.

- a. How often do you speak to native speakers of English?
- b. What do you find easy or difficult about speaking to native speakers?
- c. In what ways is the English that people speak in the UK, or in films and TV programmes, different from what you studied at school?

## 2. Complete the conversations with questions.

1. A. I'm going to Germany next week.  
B. Really? \_\_\_\_\_?
2. A. I bought a new outfit for my sister's wedding yesterday.  
B. Oh, yeah? \_\_\_\_\_?
3. A. Our sports club organizes lots of social events.  
B. That's nice. \_\_\_\_\_?
4. A. My sister's got a new job working for a charity.  
B. Sounds interesting. \_\_\_\_\_?
5. A. Maria ended up in Scotland.  
B. Oh? \_\_\_\_\_?
6. A. What's your domestic situation?  
B. Err, \_\_\_\_\_?

**3. Read the conversations. Use rising intonation on the follow-up questions.**

1. A. I'm going to Germany next week.  
B. Really? What for?
2. A. I bought a new outfit for the wedding yesterday.  
B. Oh, yeah? What's it like?
3. A. Our sports club organizes lots of social events.  
B. That's nice. What sort of thing?
4. A. My sister's got a new job working for a charity.  
B. Sounds interesting. What does that involve?
5. A: Maria ended up in Scotland.  
B: Oh? How come?
6. A: What's your domestic situation?  
B: Err, how do you mean?

**4. Choose two topics from the box below and have a conversation. You must use follow-up questions.**

something you've bought recently  
somewhere you're planning to go  
a job you have had/would like to have  
somewhere you have visited recently  
a place you really like  
something dangerous you've done/would like to do  
a hobby or sport you enjoy doing

### Questions

1. How do you mean (exactly)?	a. What do you have to do?
2. What does that involve?	b. Can you describe it to me?
3. How come?	c. Can you give me some examples?
4. What for?	d. Why? (What's the reason?)
5. What's it like?	e. Why / How did that happen? I don't understand.
6. What sort of thing?	f. Could you explain that more clearly?

### Statements

I've just got a job in a nightclub.	I do lots of sports in my free time.	I'm staying in lovely accommodation in London.
I went to Oxford last weekend.	I don't like people I can't trust.	My brother was really angry with me yesterday.



1. How do you mean (exactly)?	f. Could you explain that more clearly?
2. What does that involve?	a. What do you have to do?
3. How come?	e. Why / How did that happen? I don't understand.
4. What for?	d. Why? (What's the reason?)
5. What's it like?	b. Can you describe it to me?
6. What sort of thing?	c. Can you give me some examples?