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).

Follow-up questions

1. 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.


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

5. Time: 60 minutes

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.


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