ESL Role Play Cards for Adults

Twelve real-life scenarios from A1 to C1, from checking in at a hotel to asking for a raise. Each role has a goal the other player does not see, so students have to ask, explain and negotiate to reach a deal.

LEVEL	STUDENTS	GROUPING	TIME
A1 to C1	Adults and older teens	Pairs	10 to 15 minutes each

Before class

1 Print
The pages for your students' level. Each page holds three scenarios.

2 Cut
Along the dashed lines. Keep the A and B cards of each scenario together.

3 Pick
One scenario per pair. Pairs at different levels can play different ones.

4 Hand out
Role A to one student, Role B to the other. Cards stay face down until you start.

How to run a role play

STEP 1 · 2 MIN

Read alone

Each student reads their card silently and underlines one phrase to use. Nobody shows their card or reads the goal aloud.

STEP 2 · 5 TO 8 MIN

Talk to a deal

Pairs talk until they agree or the time runs out. The secret goals clash, so nobody gets everything: they have to give something to get something.

STEP 3 · 3 MIN

Report and swap

Each pair tells the class what they agreed and who gave up what. Then they swap roles, or take a new scenario at the same level.

Language for the task

ASKING

Would it be possible to...?
What if we...?
Could you explain why...?

BUYING TIME

Let me think about that.
That's a good question.
Give me a second.

AGREEING

That sounds fair.
Shall we meet halfway?
OK, it's a deal.

Give feedback after, not during

NOTE THESE, FIX THEM AFTER

~~I want refund.~~ → **I'd like a refund, please.**

~~You must give me a discount.~~ → **Could you do a better price?**

~~No. Is not possible.~~ → **I'm afraid that's not possible.**

LET THESE GO

Articles and small tense slips in the middle of a deal.

Stopping a negotiation for an article costs the conversation more than the slip does. Tone is the point here: too direct sounds rude in English.

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01 · A1-A2 ROLE A

Signing up for a class

You are the **student**.

You want to start a beginner cooking class at the community centre. You are at the front desk.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You work every weekday until 6 p.m., so you can only come at weekends.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ I'd like to sign up for...
→ Is there a class on Saturday?
→ How much is it?

01 · A1-A2 ROLE B

Signing up for a class

You are the **receptionist**.

You work at the front desk of a community centre. A new student wants to join a cooking class.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

The Saturday class is full. There is a Tuesday class at 7 p.m. and an online class any time.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ Which class would you like?
→ Sorry, that class is full.
→ What about...?

02 · A1-A2 ROLE A

Checking in at a hotel

You are the **guest**.

You arrive at your hotel after a long trip. You booked a double room for three nights.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

Your booking says sea view. You want that room, and you don't want to pay more.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ I have a booking for...
→ My booking says...
→ Can I see the room first?

02 · A1-A2 ROLE B

Checking in at a hotel

You are the **receptionist**.

A guest is checking in. You check the computer.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

The system shows a double room without a view. The last sea view room costs 20 euros more a night.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ Can I see your passport, please?
→ I'm sorry, but...
→ I can offer you...

03 · A2-B1 ROLE A

At the doctor's

You are the **patient**.

You have had a headache for a week. You are at the doctor's.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You want antibiotics and a note for five days off work.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ I've had a headache for...
→ It hurts when...
→ Could you give me...?

03 · A2-B1 ROLE B

At the doctor's

You are the **doctor**.

A patient comes in with a headache.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You think it is stress and too much screen time. You can give two days off, but no antibiotics.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ How long have you had it?
→ Do you sleep well?
→ I'd recommend...

04 · A2-B1 ROLE A

Small talk at a party

You are the **guest**.

You are at a friend's birthday party. You don't know anybody here.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You are looking for a job in marketing. Find out what the other guest does and get their contact.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ So how do you know...?
→ What do you do?
→ That sounds interesting!

04 · A2-B1 ROLE B

Small talk at a party

You are the **guest**.

You are at a friend's birthday party. Another guest starts talking to you.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You work in marketing, but you don't want to talk about work tonight. Your last train is in 20 minutes.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ Nice to meet you.
→ Anyway...
→ I'm afraid I have to go soon.

05 · A2-B1 ROLE A

Returning headphones

You are the **customer**.

You bought headphones in this shop three weeks ago. The left side has stopped working.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You want your money back. You have lost the receipt, but you paid by card.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ I bought these here three weeks ago.
→ They don't work.
→ I'd like a refund, please.

05 · A2-B1 ROLE B

Returning headphones

You are the **shop assistant**.

A customer brings back a pair of headphones.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You can't give a refund without a receipt. You can repair them (two weeks) or swap them if the customer can prove the purchase.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ Do you have the receipt?
→ I'm afraid we can't...
→ What we can do is...

06 · A2-B1 ROLE A

A call on a noisy train

You are the **host**.

You are having a dinner party on Saturday. You call a friend to give them the details.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

Your friend must know the address (14 Mill Lane, flat 3), the time (7.30) and to bring a dessert.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ It's at 14 Mill Lane.
→ Let me spell that.
→ Did you get that?

06 · A2-B1 ROLE B

A call on a noisy train

You are the **friend**.

A friend calls you about a dinner party. You are on a very noisy train.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You keep missing words. Don't guess: check the address, the time and what to bring.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ Sorry, could you say that again?
→ Did you say 7.30 or 7.13?
→ So that's flat 3, right?

07 · B1-B2 ROLE A

Viewing a flat

You are the **tenant**.

You are viewing a one-bedroom flat. The rent is 950 euros a month.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You want the rent 100 euros lower, you want to move in in two weeks, and you have a cat.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ Is the rent negotiable?
→ Would it be possible to...?
→ What about pets?

07 · B1-B2 ROLE B

Viewing a flat

You are the **landlord**.

You are showing your flat to a possible tenant.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

Two other people are interested. Pets are not in the contract, but you might allow one for a higher deposit. You want a 12-month contract.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ The rent includes...
→ I've had a lot of interest.
→ I could agree to that if...

08 · B1-B2 ROLE A

The heating has broken

You are the **tenant**.

It is November. The heating in your flat stopped working three days ago. You call the building manager.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You want it fixed today. You work from home and the flat is very cold.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ I'm calling about...
→ It's been three days.
→ I really need it fixed by...

08 · B1-B2 ROLE B

The heating has broken

You are the **building manager**.

A tenant calls about a problem in their flat.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

The plumber can't come until Monday. You can bring an electric heater today.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ Can you describe the problem?
→ The earliest we can do is...
→ In the meantime, I can...

09 · B1-B2 ROLE A

Ordering coffee beans

You are the **café owner**.

You run a small café. You are meeting a new coffee supplier.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You want a 15% discount. You can only pay at the end of each month.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ What's the best price you can do?
→ That's a bit more than we expected.
→ Could you meet us halfway?

09 · B1-B2 ROLE B

Ordering coffee beans

You are the **supplier**.

You sell coffee beans to cafés. A café owner wants to order.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You can give 10%, or 15% if they sign a six-month contract. You prefer payment on delivery.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ Our standard price is...
→ I could offer...
→ That would depend on...

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10 · B2-C1 ROLE A

Asking for a raise

You are the **employee**.

You have taken on the work of two colleagues who left this year. You have a meeting with your manager.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You want a 10% raise. You have an offer from another company, but you would prefer to stay.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ I'd like to discuss my salary.
→ Since March, I've been...
→ What would it take to...?

10 · B2-C1 ROLE B

Asking for a raise

You are the **manager**.

A member of your team has asked for a meeting.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

The salary budget is frozen until January. You can offer a new job title, a training budget or an extra day working from home.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ I really value your work.
→ My hands are tied until...
→ What I can do right now is...

11 · B2-C1 ROLE A

Feedback to a colleague

You are the **team lead**.

One of your team's reports has been late three times this month, with mistakes in the numbers.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

Get your colleague to agree to a plan, without starting an argument.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ I wanted to talk about...
→ I've noticed that...
→ How can I help?

11 · B2-C1 ROLE B

Feedback to a colleague

You are the **colleague**.

Your team lead has asked for a quick chat.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You have been doing a sick colleague's work as well as yours for a month. You feel nobody has noticed.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ That's not entirely fair.
→ What you might not know is...
→ I'd appreciate it if...

12 · B2-C1 ROLE A

Not renewing a contract

You are the **manager**.

You manage a small team. A colleague's six-month contract ends next month.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

The company will not renew it. Explain clearly and kindly, and offer a reference.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ I have some difficult news.
→ The decision has been made to...
→ What I can offer is...

12 · B2-C1 ROLE B

Not renewing a contract

You are the **employee**.

Your manager has asked to see you. Your six-month contract ends next month.

YOUR GOAL · KEEP IT SECRET

You were going to ask for a permanent contract today. You want to know why, and what happens next.

USEFUL PHRASES

→ Can I ask why?
→ Was it something I did?
→ What happens next?

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Each pair's goals clash on purpose. The outcome below is one fair deal, not the answer: any agreement both students can explain is a success.

#	SCENARIO AND LESSON	HIDDEN CONFLICT	A FAIR OUTCOME	LISTEN FOR
01 A1-A2	**Signing up for a class** Lesson: Total Beginner	Weekend only vs. weekend full.	A Tuesday 7 p.m. class or the online option, or a waiting list for Saturday.	can + time phrases: on Saturday, at 7 p.m.; polite requests with I'd like to
02 A1-A2	**Checking in at a hotel** Lesson: Checking In, Checking Out	The booking says sea view; the system does not.	The sea view room at no extra cost for one night, or free breakfast.	There is / there are; I booked..., I have..., can I...?
03 A2-B1	**At the doctor's** Lesson: At the Doctor's	Antibiotics and five days vs. stress and two days.	Two days off, rest from screens, and a check-up next week.	Present perfect with for and since: I've had it for a week; should and could for advice
04 A2-B1	**Small talk at a party** Lesson: The Art of Small Talk	One guest wants to talk about work; the other wants to avoid it and leave.	They swap numbers and agree to talk next week.	Question tags and follow-up questions; polite ways to change the topic and end a chat
05 A2-B1	**Returning headphones** Lesson: Writing a Complaint	No receipt means no refund.	The bank app shows the payment, so the shop swaps the headphones.	Past simple for what happened; I'd like..., I'm afraid we can't..., what we can do is...
06 A2-B1	**A call on a noisy train** Lesson: Come Again?	The friend cannot hear, and the details matter.	The friend repeats all three details back correctly.	Clarifying questions: Sorry?, Did you say...?, So you mean...?; spelling and numbers
07 B1-B2	**Viewing a flat** Lesson: Viewing a Flat	Lower rent and a cat vs. other interested tenants.	Rent of 900 euros, the cat allowed with a bigger deposit, a 12-month contract.	First conditional for offers: If you sign for a year, I'll...; Would it be possible to...?
08 B1-B2	**The heating has broken** Lesson: Reporting a Problem	Today vs. Monday.	An electric heater today, the plumber first thing on Monday, and a small rent discount.	Present perfect continuous: It's been cold for three days; polite pressure: I really need...
09 B1-B2	**Ordering coffee beans** Lesson: Bargaining	15% and monthly payment vs. 10% and payment on delivery.	15% for a six-month contract, paid monthly.	Conditionals for offers; softeners: a bit, slightly, would you consider...?
10 B2-C1	**Asking for a raise** Lesson: Getting a Raise	A raise now vs. a frozen budget.	A new title and training now, a written promise to review the salary in January.	Present perfect continuous for achievements; hedging: I was wondering if..., What would it take...?
11 B2-C1	**Feedback to a colleague** Lesson: Defensive Colleague	Late reports vs. a hidden extra workload.	A shared deadline plan and some of the extra work moved to another colleague.	Softened criticism: I've noticed..., It seems that...; staying calm: I hear you, Let's look at...
12 B2-C1	**Not renewing a contract** Lesson: How to Fire Someone	The manager brings bad news; the employee came to ask for more.	A clear reason, a strong reference and help finding the next job.	Passive for distance: The decision has been made; empathy phrases: I understand this is hard