ESL LAB

Halloween Conversation Cards

Thirty questions that move from what students have done on Halloween to whether the holiday should exist at all. Each set has its own page: five cut-out cards with answer starters, and the worksheet for its activity. The numbers match the blog post on esllaboratory.com.

LEVEL	STUDENTS	GROUPING	TIME
A2 to C1	Adults and older teens	Pairs, threes, 1-to-1	10 to 15 minutes a set

What's inside, in the order of the blog post

1	**Have You Ever?** Three Follow-Ups	A2-B1 · Pairs · 10 min	**Page 2**
2	**What Scares You** The Scare Scale	A2-B1 · Pairs · 10 min	**Page 3**
3	**At the Door** Our Halloween Rules	B1-B2 · Pairs, then fours · 15 min	**Page 4**
4	**At the Store** The Class Survey	B1-B2 · Threes · 15 min	**Page 5**
5	**The Days for the Dead** Explain It to a Visitor	B2-C1 · Pairs · 15 min	**Page 6**
6	**Should It Exist?** Debate Motions	B2-C1 · Threes · 15 min	**Page 7**
	All 30 questions One page, for screen sharing	Every set, numbered like the post	**Page 8**

How to use the cards

Print only the set you need. Every page stands alone. Cut out the five cards, put them face down and work through them in order.

The starters are a ladder, not a script. At A2 and B1, students use the starter at the bottom of each card. Stronger students fold it under and answer without it.

The worksheet is the activity. The box under the cards is what turns five answers into real practice: follow-up questions, a scale, a set of rules, a survey, a visitor's questions, a judged debate.

One-to-one or alone. You and your student both answer every card. A student working alone answers in writing and follows the *Alone* line on each worksheet. Grammar check answers are upside down.

For the teacher

Not every student celebrates Halloween, and some choose not to. Sets 3 to 6 are about neighbors, money, memory and argument, so nobody needs to like the holiday to answer them, and set 6 lets the case against it win. Set 2 keeps fear to movies and stories. Set 5 is about traditions, never about the people students have lost: let anybody pass a card without saying why.

Free for classroom use. Share the link, not the file: **esllaboratory.com**

SET 1 · QUESTIONS 1 TO 5

Have You Ever?

A2-B1 · Pairs · 10 min
Activity: Three Follow-Ups

A yes is not an answer yet. When your partner says *Yes, I have*, ask three follow-up questions before the next card: *When? Who with? How did it go?*

SET 1 · QUESTION 1

Have you ever worn a costume to work, to school or to a party?

START *Yes, I have. I once wore ... to ...*

SET 1 · QUESTION 2

Have you ever carved a pumpkin or decorated your home for Halloween?

START *I've never ..., but I have ...*

SET 1 · QUESTION 3

Have you ever not recognized a friend because of a costume or makeup?

START *Once, at ..., I didn't recognize ...*

SET 1 · QUESTION 4

Have you ever watched a horror movie in a movie theater?

START *The last time I did was ...*

SET 1 · QUESTION 5

Have you ever answered the door to trick-or-treaters, or knocked on a door yourself?

START *When I was ..., I ...*

SET 1 · YOUR QUESTION

Three Follow-Ups

Tick your partner's answer. For every yes, ask the three questions and write one or two words in each box. For a no, ask *Would you like to?* and move on. **Alone:** fill in the grid about yourself.

CARD	ANSWER	WHEN?	WHO WITH?	HOW DID IT GO?
Ex.	☑ Yes ☐ No	Two years ago, at work	My whole team	Nobody knew who I was!
1	☐ Yes ☐ No			
2	☐ Yes ☐ No			
3	☐ Yes ☐ No			
4	☐ Yes ☐ No			
5	☐ Yes ☐ No			

EVER, THEN THE STORY

Have you ever ...? = at any time in your life: present perfect. *Have you ever carved a pumpkin? Yes, I have.*

The follow-ups ask about one time: past simple. *When did you do it? Who did you go with? How did it go?*

CHOOSE THE RIGHT FORM

a) (Have you ever been / Did you ever go) to a costume party?

b) Yes. I (have gone / went) to one last year.

c) What (did you wear / have you worn) that night?

d) I (have never seen / never saw) a horror movie in a theater.

Answers: a) Have you ever been b) went c) did you wear d) have never seen

SET 2 · QUESTIONS 6 TO 10

What Scares You

A2-B1 · Pairs · 10 min
Activity: The Scare Scale

Mark first, then talk. For cards 6 to 9, you and your partner each tick a reaction on the scale. Then talk about the card where your ticks are furthest apart.

SET 2 · QUESTION 6

You are watching a horror movie at home and the lights go out. What do you do?

START *I'd probably ..., and then I'd ...*

SET 2 · QUESTION 7

A friend invites you to a haunted house attraction. Do you go in first, in the middle, or not at all?

START *I'd go in ..., because ...*

SET 2 · QUESTION 8

You are home alone at night and you hear a door close upstairs. What do you do first?

START *The first thing I'd do is ...*

SET 2 · QUESTION 9

A friend tells a ghost story and says it happened in the house you are sitting in. How do you react?

START *I'd laugh / I'd ask ..., because ...*

SET 2 · QUESTION 10

When you were a child, what scared you that seems funny to you now?

START *When I was little, I was scared of ...*

SET 2 · YOUR QUESTION

The Scare Scale

Cards 6 to 9: you both tick one reaction, without looking. Then compare. Where are your ticks furthest apart? Talk about that card first. **Card 10** has no scale: it is a story. **Alone:** tick your own row and write why.

CARD	ME	MY PARTNER
Ex.	☐ I'd laugh ☑ I'd jump ☐ I'd hide ☐ I'd leave	☐ I'd laugh ☐ I'd jump ☐ I'd hide ☑ I'd leave
6	☐ I'd laugh ☐ I'd jump ☐ I'd hide ☐ I'd leave	☐ I'd laugh ☐ I'd jump ☐ I'd hide ☐ I'd leave
7	☐ I'd laugh ☐ I'd jump ☐ I'd hide ☐ I'd leave	☐ I'd laugh ☐ I'd jump ☐ I'd hide ☐ I'd leave
8	☐ I'd laugh ☐ I'd jump ☐ I'd hide ☐ I'd leave	☐ I'd laugh ☐ I'd jump ☐ I'd hide ☐ I'd leave
9	☐ I'd laugh ☐ I'd jump ☐ I'd hide ☐ I'd leave	☐ I'd laugh ☐ I'd jump ☐ I'd hide ☐ I'd leave

Our biggest gap was card ____, because

Card 10: what scared me as a child

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

An imagined situation: I'd (I would) + verb. *I'd turn on my phone light. I'd never go in first.*

Not will: it isn't happening now. *If the lights went out, I'd scream.*

CORRECT THE MISTAKE

a) I will hide under the blanket.
b) I'd to call my sister.
c) I would went in last.
d) I'd leaving the room.

Answers: a) I'd hide b) I'd call c) I would go d) I'd leave

SET 3 · QUESTIONS 11 TO 15

At the Door

B1-B2 · Pairs, then fours · 15 min
Activity: Our Halloween Rules

Every card becomes a rule. Agree with your partner on one rule for each card and write it down. Then compare with another pair: where do your rules differ?

SET 3 · QUESTION 11

Trick-or-treaters ring your bell and you have no candy in the house. What should you do?

START *I think you should ..., or at least ...*

SET 3 · QUESTION 12

Up to what age is trick-or-treating fine? Should adults be allowed to do it?

START *Kids should be allowed to until ..., and adults ...*

SET 3 · QUESTION 13

A candy bowl says "Please take one" and nobody is watching. Is taking two OK?

START *Taking two is fine / not fine, because ...*

SET 3 · QUESTION 14

A neighbor puts a very realistic fake body in the front yard, next to a school bus stop. Is that OK?

START *It's OK as long as ..., but ...*

SET 3 · QUESTION 15

Should an office or a school have a costume day? What should be off-limits?

START *Yes, but people shouldn't be allowed to ...*

SET 3 · YOUR QUESTION

Our Halloween Rules

Write one rule for each card, in one sentence. Use a phrase from the bank below. Then sit with another pair, read your rules aloud and tick: is their rule the same or different? Argue about the different ones. **Alone:** write your rules and the rule your family would make.

CARD	OUR RULE	THE OTHER PAIR
Ex.	You should turn off the porch light, so nobody rings.	☐ Same ☑ Different
11		☐ Same ☐ Different
12		☐ Same ☐ Different
13		☐ Same ☐ Different
14		☐ Same ☐ Different
15		☐ Same ☐ Different

YOU MUST	IT'S OK	IT'S NOT OK
You have to ...	You're allowed to ...	You shouldn't ...
You should always ...	It's fine to ...	You're not allowed to ...
Everybody needs to ...	Nobody minds if you ...	It's rude to ...

SET 4 · QUESTIONS 16 TO 20

At the Store

B1-B2 · Threes · 15 min
Activity: The Class Survey

Ask, note, report. Ask two classmates every card and write short notes. Then tell a new partner what they said: *Carmen said she would never spend …*

SET 4 · QUESTION 16

How much would you spend on a costume you will wear only once?

START *I'd spend about …, and not a cent more.*

SET 4 · QUESTION 17

Stores start selling Halloween things in early September. Is that too early, or just business?

START *It's too early / just business, because …*

SET 4 · QUESTION 18

Which Halloween purchase is worth the money, and which is a waste?

START *… is worth it, but … is a waste.*

SET 4 · QUESTION 19

Have imported holidays like Halloween or Black Friday changed how people in your country shop?

START *Ten years ago people …, but now …*

SET 4 · QUESTION 20

Is a holiday still a holiday if you have to buy things to celebrate it?

START *I'd say it is / isn't, because …*

SET 4 · YOUR QUESTION

The Class Survey

Ask two classmates every card. Write their answers in a few words, not full sentences. Then find a new partner and report: *Carmen said she would spend …* **Alone:** ask two friends or family members, in English or your own language, and report in English.

CARD	CLASSMATE 1: NAME _____	CLASSMATE 2: NAME _____
Ex.	Lucas: 20 dollars, max	Carmen: nothing, makes her own
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		

REPORTING WHAT THEY SAID

Move the verb one step back. *"I spend too much."* becomes *He said he spent too much.*

will becomes would, can becomes could. *"I'll buy one."* becomes *She said she would buy one.*

REPORT IT

a) "I never buy decorations." She said she …
b) "I'll make my own costume." He said he …
c) "I can't stand the music in stores." She said she …
d) "Prices are crazy." They said prices …

Answers: a) never bought b) would make c) couldn't stand d) were crazy

SET 5 · QUESTIONS 21 TO 25

The Days for the Dead

B2-C1 · Pairs · 15 min
Activity: Explain It to a Visitor

Your partner is a visitor. Explain a tradition from your country. The visitor must ask three *why* questions before you move on to the next card.

SET 5 · QUESTION 21

Is there a day in your country for remembering the dead? What do families do on it?

START *In my country, on ..., families usually ...*

SET 5 · QUESTION 22

Some cultures remember the dead with music and color, others quietly. Which feels right to you?

START *The ... way feels more natural to me, because ...*

SET 5 · QUESTION 23

Movies and stores often mix up Halloween and Mexico's Day of the Dead. Does the difference matter?

START *It matters, because ... / It doesn't, as long as ...*

SET 5 · QUESTION 24

Should children take part in traditions about death, or be protected from them?

START *Children should ..., but only if ...*

SET 5 · QUESTION 25

Can one culture borrow another culture's holiday respectfully? What would that look like?

START *It's respectful when ..., and it isn't when ...*

SET 5 · YOUR QUESTION

Explain It to a Visitor

Before you talk: fill in the notes about one tradition from your country or your family. **The visitor** writes three *why* questions while you listen, then asks them. **Alone:** write the notes, then the questions a visitor would ask, and answer them.

THE TRADITION AND ITS DATE	WHO TAKES PART
WHAT PEOPLE DO, EAT OR BRING	WHAT IT MEANS TO THE PEOPLE WHO KEEP IT

	THE VISITOR'S WHY QUESTION	THE ANSWER
Ex.	Why do people bring food to a grave?	The idea is that the dead visit for one night.
1		
2		
3		

CAREFUL Ask about traditions, not about people students have lost. Anybody can describe a tradition they have read about instead of their own, or pass a card without saying why.

EXPLAINING
It's a day when ...
Traditionally, people ...
The idea behind it is ...

ASKING WHY
Why do people ...?
What's the point of ...?
Does everybody ...?

COMPARING
Where I'm from, we ... instead.
It's similar to ..., except ...
We don't have anything like it.

SET 6 · MOTIONS 26 TO 30

Should It Exist?

B2-C1 · Threes · 15 min
Activity: Debate Motions

You argue the side you draw. Two students take a side card at random, For or Against, whatever they really think. The third student judges with the scorecard.

SET 6 · MOTION 26

Countries that never celebrated Halloween should not adopt it.

START *I'd argue that ..., because ...*

SET 6 · MOTION 27

Being frightened for fun is good for you.

START *There's a strong case that ...*

SET 6 · MOTION 28

Schools should ban Halloween costumes.

START *I take the point about ..., but ...*

SET 6 · MOTION 29

Selling a tradition is how it survives, not how it dies.

START *If you look at ..., it's clear that ...*

SET 6 · MOTION 30

If Halloween did not exist, something like it would be invented.

START *People would still need ..., so ...*

SET 6 · YOUR QUESTION

Debate Motions

Cut out the three side cards and deal them face down. Two minutes to prepare, two minutes each to speak. Swap cards for every motion. **Alone:** pick a motion and write one paragraph For and one Against.

For

You agree with the motion, whatever you really think. Speak first: one reason and one example.

Against

You disagree with the motion, whatever you really think. Answer the For speaker, then give your own reason.

Judge

You don't speak. Tick the scorecard while they argue, then name the winner and say why.

MOTION	FOR: DID THEY ...?	AGAINST: DID THEY ...?	WINNER
26	☐ Reason ☐ Example ☐ Answered	☐ Reason ☐ Example ☐ Answered	☐ For ☐ Against
27	☐ Reason ☐ Example ☐ Answered	☐ Reason ☐ Example ☐ Answered	☐ For ☐ Against
28	☐ Reason ☐ Example ☐ Answered	☐ Reason ☐ Example ☐ Answered	☐ For ☐ Against
29	☐ Reason ☐ Example ☐ Answered	☐ Reason ☐ Example ☐ Answered	☐ For ☐ Against
30	☐ Reason ☐ Example ☐ Answered	☐ Reason ☐ Example ☐ Answered	☐ For ☐ Against

ARGUING

I'd argue that ...
The main reason is ...
Take ..., for example.

CONCEDING

I take the point about ..., but ...
That's true up to a point.
Even so, ...

JUDGING

The For side won, because ...
Both of you gave a reason, but ...
Nobody answered the point about ...

ALL 30 QUESTIONS

The whole deck on one page

Share your screen, or give it to a one-to-one student

SET 1 · A2-B1

Have You Ever?

1. Have you ever worn a costume to work, to school or to a party?
2. Have you ever carved a pumpkin or decorated your home for Halloween?
3. Have you ever not recognized a friend because of a costume or makeup?
4. Have you ever watched a horror movie in a movie theater?
5. Have you ever answered the door to trick-or-treaters, or knocked on a door yourself?

SET 2 · A2-B1

What Scares You

6. You are watching a horror movie at home and the lights go out. What do you do?
7. A friend invites you to a haunted house attraction. Do you go in first, in the middle, or not at all?
8. You are home alone at night and you hear a door close upstairs. What do you do first?
9. A friend tells a ghost story and says it happened in the house you are sitting in. How do you react?
10. When you were a child, what scared you that seems funny to you now?

SET 3 · B1-B2

At the Door

11. Trick-or-treaters ring your bell and you have no candy in the house. What should you do?
12. Up to what age is trick-or-treating fine? Should adults be allowed to do it?
13. A candy bowl says "Please take one" and nobody is watching. Is taking two OK?
14. A neighbor puts a very realistic fake body in the front yard, next to a school bus stop. Is that OK?
15. Should an office or a school have a costume day? What should be off-limits?

SET 4 · B1-B2

At the Store

16. How much would you spend on a costume you will wear only once?
17. Stores start selling Halloween things in early September. Is that too early, or just business?
18. Which Halloween purchase is worth the money, and which is a waste?
19. Have imported holidays like Halloween or Black Friday changed how people in your country shop?
20. Is a holiday still a holiday if you have to buy things to celebrate it?

SET 5 · B2-C1

The Days for the Dead

21. Is there a day in your country for remembering the dead? What do families do on it?
22. Some cultures remember the dead with music and color, others quietly. Which feels right to you?
23. Movies and stores often mix up Halloween and Mexico's Day of the Dead. Does the difference matter?
24. Should children take part in traditions about death, or be protected from them?
25. Can one culture borrow another culture's holiday respectfully? What would that look like?

SET 6 · B2-C1

Should It Exist?

26. Countries that never celebrated Halloween should not adopt it.
27. Being frightened for fun is good for you.
28. Schools should ban Halloween costumes.
29. Selling a tradition is how it survives, not how it dies.
30. If Halloween did not exist, something like it would be invented.