ESL LAB

New Year Resolution Cards

Thirty conversation questions that follow a resolution through its year: why people make one, the plan, the money, the phone, and whether it lasts. Every set has one talk rule that stops one-line answers, and a short task that practices the grammar the questions pull out. The numbers match the blog post on esllaboratory.com.

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

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

1	**Why People Make Them**	A2-B1	Present simple for opinions, then Most Popular Where I Live	**Page 2**
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How to use the cards

Cut out the six cards of one set. Put the green rule card face up in the middle and the five questions face down. One student takes a card and answers it. Their partner holds them to the rule on the green card, and then takes the next card. The task under the cards practices the same grammar: do it before the cards to warm up, or after them to fix what you heard. A student working alone can write answers to the cards and then do the task.

For the teacher

> Nobody has to share a real goal. Every set works about people in general or about a friend, and sets 1 and 6 say so on the rule card. There are no questions about weight, dieting or how much anybody earns. One-to-one, you and your student both answer every card.

The six rules

SET 1	SET 2	SET 3	SET 4	SET 5	SET 6
People first	Pick one, give two reasons	A when and a how	Every answer has an if	Before and now	A yes needs the story

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

SET 1

Why People Make Them

A2-B1 · Pairs · 10 min · questions 1 to 5 · present simple for opinions

Cut out the six cards. Rule card face up in the middle, questions face down.

SET 1 · THE RULE

People first

Answer about people in general first. Then add yourself, only if you want to.

A2-B1 · 1

Why do so many people make resolutions in January and not in June?

A2-B1 · 2

What are the most popular resolutions where you live?

A2-B1 · 3

What do people get from a resolution, even if they don't keep it?

A2-B1 · 4

Which resolution do you hear about every year from people who never start it?

A2-B1 · 5

What would be a better day than January 1 to start something new, and why?

TASK

Most Popular Where I Live

Alone: number the resolutions from 1 (the most popular where you live) to 8. **In pairs:** compare, then explain your top two with a sentence from the strip.

RESOLUTION	WHERE I LIVE	WHERE MY PARTNER LIVES
sleep more		
learn a language		
save money		
spend less time on the phone		
read more books		
cook at home more		
call family more often		
walk or exercise more		

MOST PEOPLE	USUALLY	NOT ME
Most people want to...	People usually start on...	I don't think people really...
A lot of people try to...	It usually lasts about...	Only a few people...

SET 2

Learning Something New

A2-B1 · Pairs · 10 min · questions 6 to 10 · would rather

Cut out the six cards. Rule card face up in the middle, questions face down.

SET 2 · THE RULE

Pick one, give two reasons

Both is not an answer. Choose one side and give two reasons for it.

A2-B1 · 6

Would you rather learn one skill well this year or try five new ones?

A2-B1 · 7

Would you rather learn from a teacher or teach yourself from videos?

A2-B1 · 8

Would you rather speak English fast with mistakes or slowly and perfectly?

A2-B1 · 9

Would you rather learn something useful or something just for fun?

A2-B1 · 10

Would you rather study for ten minutes every day or for two hours every Sunday?

TASK

Would You Rather

Alone: answer two of the cards in writing, with your two reasons. **In pairs:** write one new would-you-rather question for your partner and answer theirs.

1 I'd rather _____

because _____

and _____

2 I'd rather _____

because _____

and _____

My question: Would you rather _____ or _____?

Watch the verb. I'd rather learn. Not ~~I'd rather to learn~~ or ~~I'd rather learning~~.

SET 3

Time and Sleep

B1-B2 · Pairs · 15 min · questions 11 to 15 · be going to for plans

Cut out the six cards. Rule card face up in the middle, questions face down.

SET 3 · THE RULE

A when and a how

A plan isn't finished until it says when and how. Talk about a friend's plan if you prefer.

B1-B2 · 11

What is one thing you're going to do with your mornings this year?

B1-B2 · 12

Which is harder to change, the time you go to bed or the time you get up?

B1-B2 · 13

How are you going to make time for something you enjoy?

B1-B2 · 14

What are you going to do less of in the evenings?

B1-B2 · 15

How are you going to remember your plan on a busy day in March?

TASK When and How

Alone: finish each plan. Add a when and a how, then write the full plan. The last row is yours, or a friend's. **In pairs:** read your plans aloud. Your partner asks *When, exactly?* until the answer is a day or a time.

THE PLAN	WHEN?	HOW?	THE FINISHED PLAN
I'm going to walk more.	after lunch on workdays	with a colleague	I'm going to walk for twenty minutes after lunch with a colleague.
I'm going to read more.			
I'm going to sleep more.			
I'm going to learn to cook.			
I'm going to call my parents more often.			
_____			

Watch the form. I'm going to read. Not ~~I will going to read~~ or ~~I going to read~~.

SET 4

Money

B1-B2 · Groups of 3 · 15 min · questions 16 to 20 · first conditional

Cut out the six cards. Rule card face up in the middle, questions face down.

SET 4 · THE RULE

Every answer has an if

If I save ten dollars a week, I'll... Talk about habits and plans, never about what you earn.

B1-B2 · 16

What is the most popular money resolution where you live?

B1-B2 · 17

If you save a little every week, what will you do with it at the end of the year?

B1-B2 · 18

What do people buy in January that they regret in February?

B1-B2 · 19

If you plan your spending, will you enjoy the year more or less? Why?

B1-B2 · 20

Which is easier to keep, a resolution to save more or a resolution to buy less?

TASK

If... I'll...

Alone: finish each chain. The end of one link starts the next one. **In a group of three:** say a chain one link each, as fast as you can. The group decides where the chain stops making sense.

EXAMPLE

If I cook at home more,	I'll spend less on takeout.	If I spend less on takeout, I'll save for a trip.
If I take lunch to work,	If I _____, I'll _____	If I _____, I'll _____
If I wait a week before I buy something,	If I _____, I'll _____	If I _____, I'll _____
If I check my spending every Sunday,	If I _____, I'll _____	If I _____, I'll _____

Watch the if half. If I save, I'll travel. Not ~~If I will save~~.

SET 5

Phones and Screens

B2-C1 · Pairs · 15 min · questions 21 to 25 · present continuous for changes in progress

Cut out the six cards. Rule card face up in the middle, questions face down.

SET 5 · THE RULE

Before and now

Compare the old habit with the new one: *I used to check my phone in bed. Now I'm leaving it in the kitchen.*

B2-C1 · 21

What are you doing differently with your phone this year, if anything?

B2-C1 · 22

Which app are you trying to use less, and what is replacing it?

B2-C1 · 23

Why is it so hard to cut down on screen time when everybody says they want to?

B2-C1 · 24

Is anybody you know taking a break from social media? How is it going?

B2-C1 · 25

Should apps be made less addictive, or is screen time our own responsibility?

TASK Before and Now

Alone: fill in three rows or more. Write about yourself or a person you know. **In pairs:** read one row aloud. Your partner asks one question about the change.

TOPIC	BEFORE	NOW	IS IT WORKING?
social media	I used to scroll through it on the bus.	Now I'm reading a book on the bus.	Mostly
your phone at night	I used to	Now	
the first ten minutes of your day	I used to	Now	
one app or game	I used to	Now	
messages and notifications	I used to	Now	
a person you know	I used to	Now	

Watch the -ing. I'm trying to use it less. Not ~~I'm try to use it less~~.

SET 6

Keeping It

B2-C1 · Groups of 3 · 15 min · questions 26 to 30 · have you ever, then will for a promise

Cut out the six cards. Rule card face up in the middle, questions face down.

SET 6 · THE RULE

A yes needs the story

Every yes needs when it happened, what went wrong and what you learned. A friend's story counts too.

B2-C1 · 26

Have you ever kept a resolution for a whole year? What helped?

B2-C1 · 27

Have you ever given up a resolution in the first two weeks? What happened?

B2-C1 · 28

Have you ever started the same resolution more than once? Why did you try again?

B2-C1 · 29

Have you ever made a resolution together with a friend? How did it go?

B2-C1 · 30

What is one promise you'll make for next year, and how will you keep it?

TASK

A Yes Needs the Story

Alone: map one resolution story, yours or a friend's, then write a promise for next year. **In a group:** tell the story from the map without reading it.

The resolution
Have you ever...? Yes, I have.

When
It was in 2023. I started on...

What happened
In the second week, I...

What I learned
Now I know that...

MY PROMISE FOR NEXT YEAR

Next year, I'll _____

I'll keep it by _____

Watch the switch. Yes, I have. I kept it in 2023. A time moves the story to the past simple.