ACTIVITY 1

Winter Break Conversation Questions

A2 to C1 · groups of 3 · 15 minutes · cut on the dashed lines

1. Cut out the cards. Use Set A (green) or Set B (pink), or both. Put the cards face down.
2. Each student takes three cards: two to answer and one to ask the group. Answer the question on the card, or the **Plan B** question under it. You choose, and you don't need a reason.
3. After each answer, every listener asks one follow-up question: *Really? Why?*, *What was it like?*, *Would you do it again?*

SET A · A2-B1

What's one thing you ate, watched or read over the break?

PLAN B
What's a good film for a cold evening?

SET A · A2-B1

What's the best way to spend a cold day off?

PLAN B
What do people in your city do on cold days?

SET A · A2-B1

Did you sleep more or less than usual? Why?

PLAN B
How many hours of sleep do adults really need?

SET A · A2-B1

What did you do that you don't have time for in a normal week?

PLAN B
What do busy people never have time for?

SET A · A2-B1

What was the weather like where you were?

PLAN B
What's the weather usually like in your city in January?

SET A · A2-B1

Which part of your normal routine did you miss, if any?

PLAN B
Which is better: a holiday week or a normal week? Why?

SET B · B2-C1

What's one thing from the break you'd like to keep now that normal life has started?

PLAN B
Why is it so hard to keep holiday habits?

SET B · B2-C1

Did the break feel long or short? What made it feel that way?

PLAN B
Why do some weeks feel longer than others?

SET B · B2-C1

What would you recommend from the last few weeks: a book, a series, a recipe or a place?

PLAN B
Where do you usually find good recommendations?

SET B · B2-C1

What do people where you live usually do in the first week of January?

PLAN B
What would you change about the first week of January?

SET B · B2-C1

Did you manage to switch off from work or studies? How?

PLAN B
Is it possible to really switch off today?

SET B · B2-C1

Which is harder for you: starting a break or ending one?

PLAN B
What helps people get back into a routine?

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

ACTIVITY 2

The Cozy Day Ranking

A1 to A2 · pairs · 10 minutes · cut out the nine cards

1. Cut out the nine cards at the bottom. Read them together.
2. Put the cards on the diamond. Your favorite way to spend a cold day off goes at the top, number 1. Your least favorite goes at the bottom, number 9.
3. You and your partner must agree on every card. Talk before you put a card down. Use the phrases.

MY FAVORITE

1

2 3

4 5 6

7 8

9

NOT FOR ME

GIVE YOUR OPINION

I love ...

I don't like ...

... is boring.

ASK YOUR PARTNER

What about you?

Top or bottom?

AGREE OR NOT

Me too.

Really? I don't.

OK, number 2.

MY COZY DAY

On a cold day off, I like to ...

Cut out the nine cards

have a nap	have breakfast in bed	watch a series all day
take a long bath	go for a walk in the snow	read a book under a blanket
make soup	call a friend	play a board game

ACTIVITY 3

January Weather Report

B1 to B2 · pairs · 10 to 15 minutes · a pen

1. Look out of the window or at the weather app. What is the weather like this week?
2. Write about this week's weather three times, in three voices: two or three sentences each. Use at least two words from each box.
3. Swap pages. Read your partner's three versions and underline the best word in each one. Then talk: which voice was the most fun to write?

VOICE 1

Me

you, talking to a friend

freezing · icy · slippery · gray · it's pouring · I can't feel my fingers

> *It's freezing this week, and the sidewalks are really icy.*

This week it's ...

VOICE 2

The TV presenter

calm, clear, a little formal

temperatures will drop to · below zero · heavy snowfall · black ice · strong winds · it will feel like minus ...

> *Temperatures will drop to minus five tonight, with black ice on the roads by morning.*

Tonight, temperatures will ...

VOICE 3

The film narrator

slow, dark, very dramatic

the city froze · silence · endless · nobody dared to · it was as if · and then, without warning, ...

> *The city froze. Nobody dared to go outside, and the buses never came.*

It was the coldest week ...

A2 class? Use the sentence starter in each box and choose one word from the list.

ACTIVITY 4

First Day Back Inbox

B1 to C1 · pairs · 20 minutes · a pen

1. It's your first morning back at work. Four emails are waiting. You take emails 1 and 2, and your partner takes 3 and 4. Working alone? Answer all four.
2. Write a reply of two to four sentences under each email. Use at least one phrase from the box in every reply.
3. Swap pages. Check your partner's replies: did they answer the question, and is the tone right for the person?

START

Happy New Year!
Welcome back to you too.
Thanks for your email.

ANSWER

Thursday works for me.
Sorry for the delay.
You'll have it by …
I'd love to come.
I'm afraid I can't make it.

FINISH

Speak soon,
Best wishes,
Looking forward to working with you this year.

1 **Lucía Ramos**
a colleague · Monday, January 4

Subject: Welcome back!

Welcome back! I hope you had a restful break. Quick question: can we move our Tuesday meeting to Thursday at 10? Something came up.

Your reply: Say yes or suggest another time.

2 **David Okafor**
a client · Monday, January 4

Subject: Following up

Happy New Year! Just following up on the price list you promised before the holidays. When can I expect it?

Your reply: Apologize and give a date.

3 **Julia Becker**
your manager · Monday, January 4

Subject: January priorities

Hi, I hope the break was good. Before Friday, could you send me your top three priorities for January? A short list is fine.

Your reply: Send three priorities.

4 **Tomás Silva**
the team · Monday, January 4

Subject: New Year lunch

We're having a team lunch on Wednesday at 1 p.m. to start the year. Are you in? Please reply by Monday evening.

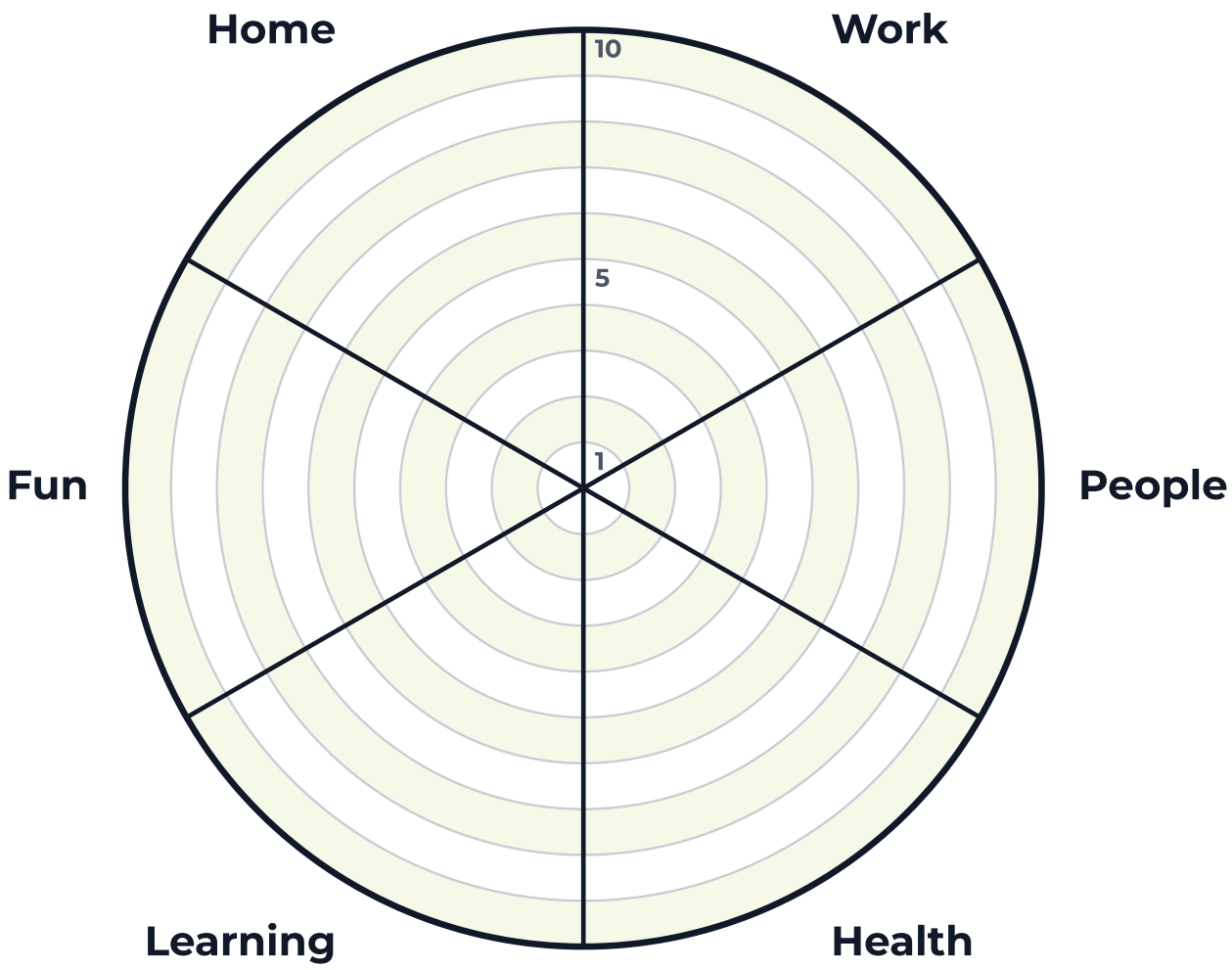
Your reply: Accept or say no politely.

ACTIVITY 5

The Wheel of the Year

B2 to C1 · pairs · 15 minutes · a pen

1. Think about last year, one slice at a time. Shade each slice from the center: 1 is the center, 10 is the edge.
2. Choose **one** slice to explain to your partner. Any slice: you never have to explain the low ones.
3. Your partner asks two follow-up questions. Then swap. At the end, fill in the box at the bottom.



LANGUAGE FOR LOOKING BACK

- It was a year of ...
- I'd give it a 7 because ...
- Things got better when ...
- Looking back, ...
- I didn't expect ...
- To be honest, ...

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

- What made it a 7, not a 9?
- Was it like that all year?
- What surprised you?

ONE SLICE FOR THIS YEAR

This year, I'd like my _____ slice to be a _____ because _____

ACTIVITY 6

New Year Around the World

B1 to B2 · groups of 3 · 15 minutes · cut on the dashed lines

1. Cut out the eight tradition cards and the eight place cards. Match each tradition to a place. Talk about every card before you decide.
2. Check your answers with the key at the bottom of the page (turn the page around).
3. Talk: Which tradition would you bring to your country? Which one would never work where you live? Why?

TRADITION A **In the first days of January, millions of people visit a shrine or a temple.**	TRADITION B **On the night of January 5, an old woman on a broom brings sweets to children, or coal.**
TRADITION C **At midnight, people eat twelve grapes, one for each chime of the clock.**	TRADITION D **On January 6, families share a ring-shaped cake with a tiny figure hidden inside.**
TRADITION E **The first visitor after midnight brings small gifts, like shortbread or a piece of coal.**	TRADITION F **Some people walk around the block with an empty suitcase, hoping to travel in the new year.**
TRADITION G **People stand on chairs and jump off at midnight, to jump into the new year.**	TRADITION H **Many people wear white on New Year's Eve, and some jump over seven waves at the beach.**

Brazil	**Colombia**	**Denmark**	**Italy**
Japan	**Mexico**	**Scotland**	**Spain**

KEY A Japan · B Italy · C Spain · D Mexico · E Scotland · F Colombia · G Denmark · H Brazil