

# *Express-Yourself!*

Intermediate to Advanced EFL Speaking Practice  
Year 01 Semester 2 Conversations Course Book



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Conversations Course Book

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# EP.express Year 01 Semester 2

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# EP.express Y01 L22 Going to the Movies

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## Questions

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1. When was the last time you watched a movie at the cinema as opposed to streaming, on TV or on DVD? What did you see?
2. How was it? Why?
3. What is your earliest memory of visiting the cinema to see a movie? How was it? Why?
4. There are many advantages to seeing a movie in the cinema as opposed to on the small screen. Name one.
5. There are many advantages to seeing a movie on the small screen as opposed to at the cinema. Name one.
6. Of the 11 films that have grossed over ¥15 billion in Japan, 6 are Japanese films; Spirited Away, Your Name, Howl's Moving Castle, Princess Mononoke, Bayside Shakedown 2 and Ponyo. Which of these did you see in the cinema? Which in your opinion is the best? Why?





## Questions

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1. How old were you when you had your first English lesson? Did you enjoy it? Why?
2. You are studying English now. Do you see this as a hobby, as a necessity or as both? If you answered “as a hobby”, why do you enjoy studying English? If you answered “as a necessity”, why is it necessary in your life? If you answered “both” please explain.
3. There are many approaches to learning English available to learners in Japan. These include cram school courses, vocational training courses, Eikawa courses, undergraduate courses, self-study (podcasts, tv, radio and books) and compulsory education courses at high school. Which experiences have helped you the most?
4. What has been your worst experience (losing time or money and getting no-where)?
5. Japan spends over \$40 billion dollars a year learning English yet only 3% of the population could give directions to the station. Why is the system so inefficient?
6. Do you think there is a generation of learners who are young now who will do better than your generation at learning English? Why?





# EP.express Y01 L24 Cars

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## Questions

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1. Can you drive? If yes, when did you get your license? How was learning to drive for you? How often do drive now? Why? If no, why not?
2. How many cars are there in your family, what are they, and who drives them?
3. Of all the cars your family has owned, leased or rented, which has been the best? Why?
4. Which as been the worst? Why?
5. If you had to buy a new car tomorrow what car or what kind of car would you buy? Why?
6. In the future, will car ownership become a thing of the past? Are you looking forward to the day that you no longer need to own a car? Why or why not?



# EP.express Y01 L25 Sightseeing

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## Questions

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1. There are many iconic tourist attractions in the world, name one. Have you ever been there? If yes, how was it? Why? If no, would you like to go there? Why?
2. What is the most famous tourist attraction in your country? Have you ever been there? If yes, how was it? Why? If no, would you like to go there? Why?
3. What would you recommend visiting in the area or region where you live? Tell me 2 things you know about that place that make it interesting or unique.
4. What is the most famous or iconic building or tourist attraction that you have visited? Was it as spectacular as you had hoped? Why?
5. What is the most interesting place you have ever visited or the place you would most recommend visiting? What makes this place so remarkable?
6. There are many places both domestically and internationally that have suffered from being too popular with tourists. Some places, such as Boracay and Komodo Island, have been forced to prohibit or restrict visitors. Tell us about somewhere that has both suffered and benefited from tourism. What happened?



## Questions

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1. There are many things that could be considered "unlucky" in your country. Name one. Do you know the origin of this superstition? If yes, please explain. If no, why do you think this thing is considered unlucky?
2. What do you keep in your house, car or bag, or do on a regular basis, that you believe brings you good fortune (or wards off misfortune)? If it is an object, tell us about where it is from. If it is an act, tell us about how and when you developed or learned this habit?
3. Tell us about a friend, family member or celebrity who has extreme, or funny, superstitious beliefs.
4. Would you kill a spider at night? Buy a house or apartment with the number "4" in the address? Pass food between chopsticks? Skip hatsumode because it is cold? Show your thumbs when a hearse passes? Get married on a Butsumetsu day? Step on the threshold to a temple or shrine?
5. Do you consider yourself a superstitious person? Why?
6. Are Japanese people more superstitious than people from other countries? Why do you think







# EP.express Y01 L27 Birth

## Questions

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1. When is your birthday? How do you celebrate your birthday these days?
2. Where were you born? How old was your mother at the time? What do you know about your birth\*?
3. To what generation do you belong to\*\*? Do you feel lucky to have been born into that generation? Why?
4. What is your birth order (e.g. first son, second child)? How much older and younger are your siblings? Do you feel fortunate about your birth order? Why?
5. Do you have kids? If yes, what do you remember about their birth(s)? If not, would you like to have kids? Why?
6. Japan has a rapidly falling birth rate and an impending population crisis. Tell me about one thing you have heard about that families, celebrities, local governments, central government, businesses or non-profits have done to encourage more births in Japan.

\* time of day, location (home/hospital), complications at birth, duration of labor, first visits from family etc. \*\* 1920~1949 = "Interwar Baby", 1950~1969 = "Baby Boomer", 1970~1985 = "Generation X", 1986~1999 = "Millennial", 2000~ = "Centennial"





# EP.express Y01 L28 Screentime

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## Questions

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1. Do you have a smartphone? If yes, when did you switch from having a flip-phone? What model do you use? Is it good? Why? If no, why not?
2. Which carrier do you use? Are you happy with that carrier? Why?
3. There are over a billion smartphone users in the world. Tell me about one thing people around the world do on their smartphones? Do you do that? Why?
4. Doctors say we are spending too much time staring at computers, tablets and smartphones. Tell me about one thing you do with your 'screentime'?
5. Do you believe you spend an unhealthy amount of time each week staring at a screen? Why?
6. If you had a son, daughter, wife, husband, mother, father or friend who was getting too addicted to screentime, what would you do? Are smartphones hurting young people? Why or why not?



# EP.express Y01 L29 Injury

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## Questions

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1. Have you ever been in an accident that required you to ride in an ambulance? If yes, what happened? If no, tell us about someone you know who has had to be rushed to a hospital? What happened?
2. Have you ever been injured when driving, playing with friends or playing sports? If yes, what happened? If no, why do you think you have been so fortunate?
3. Tell us about a sports person or celebrity that has been in a serious or fatal accident? What happened?
4. There are many jobs in the world that are dangerous. Tell us one. Tell us either how people who do this job often get injured or tell us what injuries or ailments people in this job often suffer from?
5. What is the worst injury you have ever witnessed?
6. Are you accident-prone or accident-averse? Why?





## Questions

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1. There are many famous news shows on TV. Name one. Do you watch that show? Why?
2. There are many famous news anchors on TV. Name one. Do you like that news anchor? Why?
3. Is TV your main source of news? If yes, which is your favorite show and how often do you watch it? Why? If no, what is your main source of news? Why do you prefer this format?
4. Tell us about a news article from this week or from recent memory (tv news, online or newspaper) that shocked you.
5. TV News is usually a series of stories covering politics, crime, disasters, international affairs, business and markets, science and technology, celebrity gossip, obituaries, weather, human interest and sport. Which pieces interest you the least? Why?
6. When was the last time the area of Japan where you live or the industry that you work in was in the news? What happened?





## Questions

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1. How long have you lived in Nara? Why did you, your parents or your ancestors settle here?
2. Tell me about one thing that is famous in Nara (a landmark, tradition, drink, food, company or product).
3. Tell me about a famous or infamous person who is from Nara. Do you like this person? Why?
4. Nara is famous both for its natural beauty and historical landmarks. What is the most beautiful or interesting place you have been to in Nara?
5. Around Japan, people see Osaka as a busy place where people are friendly but blunt and Kyoto as a more relaxed place where people are artistic but aloof. In your opinion, how do people around Japan see Nara?
6. Are you glad you live in Nara? Why?





# EP.express Y01 L32 Routines

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## Questions

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1. What time do you get up in the morning during the week? What time do get up on your day(s) off?
2. What is the first thing you do when you get up?
3. What time do you go to bed? Do you have any trouble sleeping at night? If yes, what do you do to try to get to sleep? If no, what is your secret to a good night's sleep?
4. Which, if any, meal(s) do you skip? Are you a healthy eater? What is your favorite meal (breakfast, lunch or dinner)? Why?
5. What for you is the duller time of the day OR what for you is the duller day of the week?
6. How do you find peace and calm in your daily or weekly routine?





# EP.express Y01 L33 Japanese New Year

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## Questions

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1. Japanese families do many things to celebrate the coming of the new year. Name one. Tell me about it.
2. Who will you be spending your next New Years Holiday with?
3. Are you looking forward to the New Year's holiday? Why?
4. What do you remember most vividly and fondly from New Years (Oshougatsu) when you were a child?
5. How is the New Years holiday different now compared to how it used to be when you were a child?
6. What do you find the most irksome or annoying thing you have to do over the New Years holiday?





## Questions

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1. Tell us about a celebrity from your country who is famous for being a mum. Do you like that person? Why?
2. It requires many strengths to be a good mum. Name one. Do you have that strength? Why?
3. What is/was your mum's name? Is she still with us? If yes, how old is she and what does she do? If not, when did she pass? How old was she when she died?
4. How would you describe your mother's personality? Was/Is she an easy person to get along with? Why?
5. Tell us about a time when your mum helped you out when you were overwhelmed.
6. What is the most important thing you have learned or attribute you have inherited from your mum?







## Questions

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1. When we were young we received lessons from many teachers, some good, some bad. Tell us the name of a teacher who you really liked. What did they teach? How old were you when you had his/her lessons?
2. Why did you like him/her so much?
3. What was the name of the worst teacher you have ever had lessons from. What did they teach? How did other students in the class feel about him/her?
4. Why did you dislike them/their lessons?
5. If for some mysterious reason, you were forced to become a teacher, what subject would you be the best at teaching? Why?
6. If for some mysterious reason, you were forced to become a teacher, what subject would you be the worst at teaching? Why?



## Questions

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1. There are many ways to access and enjoy listening to music; CD, radio, streaming (e.g. Spotify) to phone or tablet, YouTube, mp3, vinyl etc. What is your preferred way to listen to music? Why?
2. There are many places to enjoy our favorite music; driving/in the car, walking/cycling to work, in bed, at work, around the house. Where do you listen to music the most? How does it change your mood?
3. Can you play an instrument? If yes, tell us about how and when you learned and how often you play now. If no, do you regret never picking it up? If you could learn from today, which instrument would you choose and why?
4. What genre of music do you listen to the most (for example, JPop, JRock, JRap, 60s Classic Rock, Trad Jazz, German 90s House etc. etc.)? How old were you when you started to become interested in that genre? What got you into that genre?
5. What is your favorite album, single or recording from that genre? Tell us a bit about how you first heard it, how often you listen to it now and why it means so much to you?
6. What genre, artist or song do you consider annoying, impenetrable, undeserving of artistic merit or unlistenable?





# EP.express Y01 L37 Bad Habits

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## Questions

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1. There are many bad habits of other people that annoy us when walking on the street, sharing a train, driving in our cars or when we are at work. Tell me one using the pattern "I hate it when....".
2. What, if anything, do you do when someone does this?
3. We all have bad habits ourselves that we are not proud of. These include snacking too often, smoking, binge drinking, being idle around the house, being messy, being late, being disorganized, being too loose with money, being curt with strangers, putting others down, ignoring family members and eating things that taste good but may ultimately be hurting us. Tell us about a bad habit you have.
4. How, when and why did you pick up this bad habit?
5. How have you tried to beat this habit? Is it something you can beat?
6. Tell us about a bad habit you have made someone lessen or quit (a friend, spouse, colleague, sibling or son/daughter). Were you successful by carrot\* or by stick\*\* or by a combination of both?

\*carrot=誘因、動因、インセンティブ, \*\*stick=意欲をそぐ、行動を妨げる、阻害要因、脅迫、脅し、罰すること、処罰されていること





## Questions

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1. Tell me about a famous politician/law-maker from your country. Why are they famous?
2. Do you like this person? Why?
3. Following the law exactly is almost impossible. Tell us about a law in your country that people break all the time because it is simply too impractical to follow it.
4. Tell us about a time that you felt a criminal punishment in your country was either way too harsh or way too lenient (either from the news or someone you know or have heard about locally).
5. Tell us about something in your country that, in your opinion, needs an update in the law. Choose from; environmental laws, gambling laws, broadcasting laws, capital punishment (death penalty), laws of the road, smoking laws, building & construction laws, laws to protect women, the elderly or children.
6. Tell about something that you think should be made illegal in your country or globally that is not illegal yet and should be (anything is OK!).





## Questions

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1. Japan has many prefectures. Tell me one. What is this prefecture famous for?
2. Have you ever been to this prefecture? If yes, how was it? If no, would you like to go? Why? What would you do there?
3. How often do you get on a train, get on a bike or get in a car and visit the countryside? Where do you go? What do you do there? How does it affect your mood?
4. What is the most beautiful scene, scenery or countryside you have ever seen? Tell about how and when you went there and why you feel it is so beautiful?
5. Tell us about a secluded or remote place in the world that you would like to visit one day. Why do you want to go there? What would you do?
6. Do you feel the place where you live now is too remote, too urban or just right? Why?



# EP.express Y01 L40 Sports on TV

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## Questions

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1. There are many sports on TV. Name one. Have you ever watched this sport on TV? If yes, how was it? Do you watch this sport on TV often? If no, why not?
2. Have you ever played this sport? If yes, how was it? If no, what sports have you tried and liked?
3. What sports events do you watch on TV regularly or do like to see reported in the news? Who is your favorite player or team? Why?
4. Tell me about a national or international sporting tournament that will be televised on Japanese TV this year. When is it? How popular will it be? Who will it be popular with?
5. Will you be watching? If yes, what are you looking forward to? If no, why not?
6. What is the most gripping sporting match you have ever watched on TV or in person? Who triumphed? How? Why did this match matter to you?







# EP.express Y01 L41 Plural Japan

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## Questions

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1. Who was the first non-Japanese born person you can remember in your life having a conversation with? How old were you? How did you meet that person?
2. How many non-Japanese people do you know socially or work with today?
3. People from abroad come to Japan everyday as tourists, students, short term workers or to become permanent residents. Tell us about a tourist attraction, university, college, factory or business in your area that attracts many non-Japanese people. What impact does this have on the economy?
4. Tell us about a town or area in the prefecture/county/state either (i) where you live now or (ii) where you grew up that has suffered from depopulation\*, underpopulation\*\* or aging population\*\*\*? What happens when there are not enough people to fill jobs? What did the local government do to attract people from elsewhere?
5. Have you ever seen a shop, hotel, bar or hot spring hang up a "Japanese Only" sign or explain to a non-Japanese that "foreigners are not allowed"? If yes, how did you react? If no, how would you react?
6. What benefits will the 5 to 10 million non-Japanese who will settle in Japan over the next 10 years bring to the economy and to society? Will an internationalized Japan be better off than an aging and isolated one?

depopulation\*=過疎問題, underpopulation\*\*=過疎化現象 aging population\*\*\*=老齡 [老人・老年・高齢化する] 人口



## Questions

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1. Does the country where you are from have a royal family? If yes, how far back does the lineage run? If no, how and when did your country manage to escape indefinite servitude to a overprivileged, unaccountable and unelected elite?
2. What is the name of the king, queen, emperor or empress? When were they born? How long have they been on the throne?
3. Who do you think is the most popular royal figure in your country? Why do people like him/her so much?
4. Have you ever seen or met a royal? If yes, please tell us about how and when and how you felt. If no, would you like to? Why?
5. Tell us either a disadvantage or an advantage of having a royal family (or if you are feeling ambitious, tell us both)?
6. Would you like to have been born into a royal family? Why?





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