

IELTS Speaking Part 2

Talk about a friendly or family gathering that happens regularly

You should say:

- what the occasion is
- how often does it happen
- what usually happens during this gathering

and say if you enjoy these gatherings as much as you did in the past

Model answer

Last year, me and some of my friends really **got into** poker. For those not **in the know**, it's a card game where both chance and skill determine the outcome. The first session was quite spontaneous, but it **grew up on** us so much that we decided to do it again. We ended up meeting up every other Friday, and to this day we spend the entire evening playing cards. If somebody can't make it for one reason or another, we reschedule. Since we are all adults now, we tend to have rather busy schedule, but the group is fairly flexible so we can always **make time for** each other. There is a little bit of money involved to make things more interesting, but the stakes are never high, in order to keep things **light-spirited**.

Even though the occasion is supposed to revolve around the game, we normally use it as an excuse to stay in touch, **share a bit of gossip**, and have some drinks. Such gatherings are usually filled with **banter** and **joviality**, so everybody enjoys it. At least I hope they like it just as much as I do. And yes, the meetings feel just as good as they did last year when we just started it. The enthusiasm for the game as well as the company runs pretty strong!

IELTS Speaking Part 3

Friends and acquaintances

Has technology changed the way we meet new people? If so, how?

I know that many people nowadays use dating apps. Finding a partner has been pretty much **commodified** and made really quick and easy. On one hand it enables us to engage with more people than in the past, but on the other, it **devalues** the experience somewhat. Quality and quantity rarely come together, and in this case, the **latter** tends to dominate.

Conventional social networks like Facebook have altered meeting new people as well. The creators of it run algorithms that suggest new people to be added as friends. The suggestion can be based on multiple factors, like shared interest in films or music, similar occupation or educational background, even your location plays a role. I guess this occasionally can give you a person who could become your **soulmate**, but **to date** I have had no such experience.

What are some qualities that people often look for in a friend?

Everyone has their own **criteria** for what they look for in a friend, but some qualities are generally considered essential by many people. One of them has to be **loyalty**. A friend who **stands by your side** no matter how dire the situation is definitely one everyone needs. I think many have had a moment in their lives when a supposedly loyal person disappears as soon as things **take a turning for the worse**. Nobody would want that to happen to them.

Another important personal quality is honesty. Being honest can be tough. Imagine that you had to tell your friend that their fiancée is not **a good fit** for them. You **know it for a fact**, but you also treasure your friend's feelings. However, ultimately you have to tell them the truth, being the honest person you are. That's what they call brutal honesty, I guess.

Finally, a friend needs to be supportive. They have to encourage you to **be your best self**. I believe that friends should push each other **to punch above their own weight**.

How important is it for friends to have similar interests?

I'd say it is essential to become friends, but not necessary to stay friends. Common interests normally serve as **a ground for** people **to gravitate towards one another**. Similar doesn't have to mean identical, though - on the contrary, it would help if friends introduced each other to new hobbies. I met one of my best friends at a music festival, so our taste in music brought us together, but other than that, we are **poles apart** as people. He later got me interested in hiking, doing something like that on my own would have never crossed my mind. I, in turn, encouraged him to **take up** playing the banjo. He ended up enjoying that profoundly, and he is an **avid** player to this day.

Family members

Do you think parents should have the right to choose their children's partners?

That's a tough one. If they have such rights, it sort of **implies** that they own their child, which is a very strange notion. It goes without saying that parents might want to control this **with the best of intentions**, but it takes away the most precious thing an individual has - their freedom. In some countries **arranged marriages** are a part of cultural tradition and young people have to **concede to** their parents' will. I believe that goes against everything that humanity strives for - independence, freedom, free will. Maybe this is an anachronism that will eventually go away, but the fact it exists in our day and age is truly **disheartening**.

How has the role of fathers changed over the years?

I don't think such fundamental things experience dramatic changes. One noticeable difference is that fathers are no longer the sole **bread-winners** in the family. Gender equality at the workplace allowed women to earn the same, if not higher salaries than men. This can sometimes make the roles of the household reverse - fathers as **housekeepers** and mothers as breadwinning, working professionals. This is partially due to shift in perception of gender roles and **destigmatisation** of gender-specific activities. As a result, households in general and fathers in particular have become more flexible, no longer **set in stone** by age-long **preconception** of who should do what.

How does parental involvement impact a child's academic performance?

It goes without saying that parental involvement is very likely to positively affect how well the child does at school. When parents are involved in their child's education, they can help **foster** a supportive learning environment at home by monitoring their child's homework and school assignments, providing resources such as books and other learning materials, and encouraging their child's academic pursuits. The **latter** could be done through various incentives like increased allowance.

Parents who show interest in their child's education will positively affect their motivation and attitude towards learning. They are likely to be more engaged in their schoolwork and more motivated to succeed academically. And to add, parents **in the loop** of the school curriculum will have a much easier time communicating with **respective** teachers as both will be on the same page regarding the current academic topics.

Friends and family vocabulary

Make time for smth/smb - to dedicate some of your time to a person or an activity. *I can't really make time for any meetings this week, I'm too overwhelmed with my current tasks.*

Light-spirited (adj) - not meant to be serious; cheerful or joking. *We had a light-spirited meeting with the director to discuss some insignificant details of the marketing campaign.*

Share a bit of gossip - to talk about rumours.

Banter (n) - calling each other names in a non-offensive, friendly manner, usually as a joke.

Joviality (n) - fun and friendliness, characterised by humorous behaviour.

Soulmate (n) - a person you connect with on an deep personal and emotional level.

Loyalty (n) - if a person is loyal, they remain your friend and support you even in times of hardship.

Stand by your side - to support you either emotionally or literally i.e. in a fight.

A good fit - something that fits or matches. Often used about compatibility between people. *Rachel is a really good fit for Michael, wouldn't you agree?*

Be your best self - to be as good and successful as you can - emotionally, spiritually and professionally.

To gravitate towards somebody - to feel natural attraction to someone, either on a romantic or just friendly way. *Smart people tend to gravitate to one another.*

Poles apart - if two things or people are poles apart, they are completely different or complete opposites of each other. *Nick and Jane are poles apart when it comes to their opinion of the President.*

Arranged marriage - a marital union in which the fiancé of one or both sides gets chosen by their families, for political, financial or other reasons. It can often be against of or both fiancé's will and can result in an unhappy marriage.

Housekeeper (n) - a person who does chores around the house such as laundry, washing the dishes, cooking and others.

Foster (v) - (here) to encourage growth and development of something or somebody.

General vocabulary

Get into something - to start doing something, to take up something new.

In the know - if somebody is in the know it means they are well-informed about something that others are not. *People in the know warned me that new economic crises might come soon.*

To grow up on somebody - if something grows up on you it means that you start liking it more and more, especially if you didn't enjoy it at first.

Commodify (v) - to turn something into commodity, a thing you can buy. Can also be used in a broader sense to mean that something has lost its value for one reason or another. *Dating has become more commodified with the introduction of apps like Tinder.*

Devalue (v) - to make something lose value, become less expensive or desirable.

Latter (adj) - usually used in pair with 'former'. Latter is used to refer to the second thing mentioned in context. *London and New York are quite different. The former is much older, however the latter is probably more developed.*

To date - up to now, nowadays. He is the most prominent scientist in his field to date.

Criteria - a mark or quality used to characterise something. *A good criteria for choosing a used bike is to look at its service history - when was the last time it had its wheels and chain changed etc.*

Take a turning for the worse - to become worse or more serious.

To know something for a fact - to be completely sure of something, to be certain.

To punch above your weight - to take part in something like a competition or an activity in which you seem no chance of winning or succeeding, respectively.

Ground for something - reason or basis for something. *There was no ground for him to get upset about the result of the game - his team was unlikely to win it and he knew it all too well.*

Avid (adj) - enthusiastic about something. *She's an avid gardener - she spends most of her weekend digging in the backyard planting flowers.*

Imply (v) - to say something indirectly. *By saying that I won't have to come to work tomorrow she actually implied that I was fired.*

With the best of intentions - meaning and wishing only good things. *Your parents sent you to that fancy school with the best of intentions. They really want you to become professionally capable.*

Concede to smth - to agree to something without much desire.

Disheartening (adj) - something that makes you upset or depressed because it makes you lose confidence and spirit. *Seeing his brother's business fail was really disheartening.*

Bread-winner (n) - a person in a family who earns money to cover expenses.

Destigmatisation (n) - taking negative beliefs and ideas away, that previously surrounded something. *Destigmatisation of gay marriages is a big topic nowadays.*

Set in stone - something that doesn't change, permanent. *These rules are set in stone and we are not going to change them just because you don't like them!*

Preconception (n) - an idea that is not based on any prior experience.

In the loop - if somebody is in the loop it means they know something i.e. your plans because you have told them about it.

Respective - a contextual word that helps connect ideas together. *The employee received their respective paychecks based on their position and work hours.*