



## Expressing yourself: ways of agreeing and disagreeing

**Overview:** In this lesson, learners review, consolidate and practise expressions for agreeing and disagreeing.

**Total time for activities:** 45 minutes

**Level:** upper intermediate to advanced

EXPRESSING  
YOURSELF

Teacher's Notes

- Before class, make copies of the worksheets and cut up Worksheets B, C and D so that you have five individual worksheets for each learner.
- Display these two short dialogues and ask learners to comment on the difference between them:
 

'Computers will soon make teachers redundant.'  
'I'm afraid I can't agree with you. No computer can give the same kind of help and support as a teacher.'

'Computers will soon make teachers redundant.'  
'Rubbish. No computer can give the same kind of help and support as a teacher.'

They should recognize that 'I'm afraid I can't agree with you' is quite formal and respectful, whereas 'rubbish' is informal and potentially quite insulting. However:

  - 'rubbish' can be a perfectly acceptable way of disagreeing in a friendly conversation among people who know each other well,
  - the choice of words is not the only thing that matters; the effect of both ways of disagreeing depends to a large extent on the speaker's tone of voice and facial expression,
  - people usually try to justify their agreement or disagreement by adding an explanation or example – in this case: 'No computer can give the same kind of help and support as a teacher.'

Explain that this lesson will be about ways of agreeing and disagreeing.
- Distribute **Worksheet A**. Learners work on the task in pairs. Point out that there is more than one correct answer for questions 3 and 4.
- Elicit and confirm answers.

### Answers

- c (This is too formal for the situation.)
  - b
  - a and d
  - b and c
  - b (But note that the effect of 'I'm sorry' depends on tone of voice and facial expression; it could sound quite threatening.)
  - a (Sometimes 'I don't know' actually means 'I disagree'!)
  - b
  - c
- Distribute **Worksheet B**. This checks knowledge of the form of some expressions of agreement and disagreement. Learners work on the task individually and check in pairs. Note that, apart from the expression 'You must be joking', all of the expressions appear on Worksheet A. You could ask learners to put Worksheet A aside while they fill in Worksheet B and then use Worksheet A to check their answers.



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6. Elicit and confirm answers.

### Answers

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 <i>You can say that <b>again</b>.</i>  | 8 <i>You've got a <b>point</b> there, but ...</i>                                  |
| 2 <i>You're <b>telling</b> me.</i>   | 9 <i><b>Speak</b> for yourself.</i>  |
| 3 <i>I <b>couldn't</b> agree <b>more</b>.</i>  | 10 <i>Don't make me <b>laugh</b>.</i>  |
| 4 <i>I'm <b>inclined</b> to agree.</i>   | 11 <i>Are you <b>kidding</b>? (also possible: <b>joking</b> or <b>serious</b>)</i> |
| 5 <i>I agree <b>up</b> to a point, but ...</i>                                       | 12 <i>You must be <b>joking</b>. (also possible: <b>kidding</b>)</i>               |
| 6 <i>I <b>wouldn't</b> go as far as to say that.</i>                                 | 13 <i><b>Nothing</b> of the kind!</i>  |
| 7 <i>I <b>take</b> your point, but ... (also possible: <b>see</b> or <b>get</b>)</i> |  |

7. Distribute **Worksheet C**. Learners work on the task individually and check in pairs.

8. Elicit and confirm answers. Drill if necessary.

### Answers

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 <i>You can say <u>that</u> again.</i>                     | 7 <i><u>Speak</u> for yourself.</i>  |
| 2 <i><u>You're</u> telling me.</i>                          | 8 <i>Are you <u>kidding</u>?</i>   |
| 3 <i>I <u>couldn't</u> agree <u>more</u>.</i>               | 9 <i>You must be <u>joking</u>. / <u>You</u> must be <u>joking</u>. /<br/><u>You</u> <u>must</u> be <u>joking</u>.</i> |
| 4 <i>I'm <u>inclined</u> to <u>agree</u>.</i>               | 10 <i><u>Nothing</u> of the <u>kind</u>!</i>   |
| 5 <i>I <u>agree</u> up to a <u>point</u>, but ...</i>       | 11 <i><u>How</u> can you <u>say</u> that?</i>  |
| 6 <i>I <u>wouldn't</u> go as far as to say <u>that</u>.</i> |  |

9. Distribute **Worksheet D**. Allow time for learners to peruse it and to mark any expressions which are relatively unfamiliar to them, or which they tend to make mistakes with. Note that phrases like 'It isn't', 'It shouldn't', 'They didn't' etc are used when agreeing with negative statements. The same phrases can also be used to disagree with positive statements.

10. Distribute **Worksheet E** and divide learners into groups of three. Learner A calls out the number of one of the statements on Worksheet E – it could be a random number, or one which they think will be particularly interesting. Learner B reads out the statement to Learner C. Learner C responds by agreeing or disagreeing and adding some justification for their agreement or disagreement. The procedure is repeated ten times. Learner C should try to use a range of expressions, including those they are less familiar with; they can refer to Worksheet D if necessary. After ten rounds, Learner A gives feedback to Learner C: Did they respond accurately and appropriately? Did they use a range of expressions? Did they justify their agreement or disagreement?

Learners then swap roles and repeat the activity twice, so that everyone has a turn as A, B and C. They should feel free to improvise with the statements on Worksheet E, and/or add new ones.

### Follow-up

The activity described in step 10 can be repeated for a few minutes in subsequent lessons, perhaps with the following adjustments:

- ▶ Learners can provide their own lists of statements for agreement or disagreement.
- ▶ Learners can reduce Worksheet E to individual shortlists of expressions they feel they particularly need to practise.
- ▶ Any of the topics mentioned in Worksheet E could be developed into a longer discussion, with time given for learners to prepare points for or against.



## Expressing yourself: ways of agreeing and disagreeing

### Worksheet A

Agreeing and disagreeing: Select the correct answers.

**1. Which of these ways of agreeing is least appropriate here?**

The traffic in town's worse than ever today.

- a You're telling me. It took me ages to get home from work.
- b You can say that again. It took me ages to get home from work.
- c I agree entirely. It took me ages to get home from work.
- d It certainly is. It took me ages to get home from work.

**2. Which of these responses expresses tentative agreement?**

I think it'd be better to postpone the meeting till next week.

- a Exactly. Too many people are away this week.
- b I'm inclined to agree. Too many people are away this week.
- c I couldn't agree more. Too many people are away this week.
- d It would. Too many people are away this week.

**3. Which of these responses express reluctant agreement? (There is more than one correct answer.)**

It's getting late. I think we'd better go home, without calling round to see your parents.

- a I suppose so. Let's just phone them instead, shall we?
- b You're right. Let's just phone them instead, shall we?
- c I know. Let's just phone them instead, shall we?
- d I guess so. Let's just phone them instead, shall we?

**4. Which of these responses express partial agreement? (There is more than one correct answer.)**

Listening to English is really impossible.

- a Absolutely, but speaking it's even worse!
- b I agree up to a point, but it gets easier with practice.
- c I wouldn't go as far as to say that. It's difficult, but it's really just a matter of getting used to it.
- d That's right – so many of the words are unclear.

**5. Which of these responses gives an impression of politeness?**

The 1960s were the best decade for music.

- a Rubbish! Have you listened to any music since then?
- b I'm sorry, but have you listened to any music since then?
- c How can you say that? Have you listened to any music since then?
- d Are you kidding? Have you listened to any music since then?

**6. Which of these responses expresses disagreement most strongly?**

What use is history? Do you remember our history lessons at school? Most of what they taught us was completely useless, wasn't it?

- a I don't know. I don't think it's fair to say that, actually.
- b I take your point, but that was probably because of the way it was taught.
- c You've got a point there, but the problem was that the teachers didn't really show how it was relevant to us.
- d That's true, but I think it's taught a bit differently nowadays.

**7. Which of these responses is the most polite?**

I think we all agree that the writing was the hardest part of the test.

- a Speak for yourself.
- b Excuse me, but I'm not sure whether everyone thought so.
- c We all agree? You must be joking!
- d Nonsense! The listening was far worse.

**8. Which of these responses is the most polite?**

All public transport in cities should be free.

- a Don't make me laugh. How on earth would it be financed?
- b Nothing of the kind! How on earth would it be financed?
- c I'm afraid I can't agree with you. How on earth would it be financed?
- d Of course not. How on earth would it be financed?



## Expressing yourself: ways of agreeing and disagreeing

### Worksheet B

Complete these expressions of agreement and disagreement.

1. You can say that \_\_\_\_\_.
2. You're \_\_\_\_\_ me.
3. I \_\_\_\_\_ agree more.
4. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ to agree.
5. I agree \_\_\_\_\_ to a point, but ...
6. I \_\_\_\_\_ go as far as to say that.
7. I \_\_\_\_\_ your point, but ...
8. You've got a \_\_\_\_\_ there, but ...
9. \_\_\_\_\_ for yourself.
10. Don't make me \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Are you \_\_\_\_\_?
12. You must be \_\_\_\_\_.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ of the kind!



### Worksheet C

Where are the main stresses in these expressions of agreement and disagreement?

1. You can say that again.
2. You're telling me.
3. I couldn't agree more.
4. I'm inclined to agree.
5. I agree up to a point, but ...
6. I wouldn't go as far as to say that.
7. Speak for yourself.
8. Are you kidding?
9. You must be joking.
10. Nothing of the kind!
11. How can you say that?



### Worksheet D

Ways of agreeing and disagreeing:

#### Agreeing

That's right.  
You're right.  
I know.  
Exactly.  
Absolutely.  
You can say that again.  
You're telling me.  
I agree (entirely / absolutely).  
I couldn't agree more.  
(Yes.) It is / It should / They did etc.

#### Agreeing tentatively or reluctantly

I suppose so.  
I guess so.  
I'm inclined to agree.

#### Agreeing partially

I agree up to a point, but  
I wouldn't go as far as to say that.  
I take your point, but ...  
You've got a point there, but ...  
That's true, but ...

#### Disagreeing

I'm afraid I can't agree with you.  
I'm sorry, but ...  
Excuse me, but ...  
Of course not.  
I disagree.  
I don't know.  
Speak for yourself.  
Don't make me laugh.  
Are you kidding?  
You must be joking.  
Nothing of the kind!  
Rubbish!  
Nonsense!  
How can you say that?  
(No.) It isn't / It shouldn't / They didn't etc.



## Expressing yourself: ways of agreeing and disagreeing

### Worksheet E Statements to practise agreeing and disagreeing:

1. People spend far too much time shopping – shops should be closed in the evenings and at weekends.
2. English is a very polite language.
3. All motor vehicles should be excluded from city centres – this would result in a vast improvement in people's quality of life.
4. Literature is without doubt a higher form of art than cinema.
5. It's absolutely scandalous that people like film stars and rock musicians earn such high salaries.
6. In the future, everybody will speak English, and all other languages will eventually die out.
7. A miner and a doctor should earn the same salary.
8. The mobile phone is one of the best inventions ever.
9. Everybody should have the freedom to work flexitime – to start and finish work when it suits them.
10. All medical treatment should be free.
11. Music is more important than economics.
12. When a text is translated, something is always lost.
13. Dolphins are more intelligent than human beings.
14. If I had the opportunity to make one journey to the past, I'd go back to the period when dinosaurs roamed the earth.
15. I think it's important to support small shops, instead of doing your shopping in supermarkets and big stores.
16. There must be life on other planets.
17. It's a waste of time learning Latin nowadays.
18. Separating and recycling of rubbish is more trouble than it's worth.
19. If you aren't sufficiently gifted, you'll never be a good language learner.
20. Walking is the best way to travel.
21. Basic medical training should be a part of every school curriculum.
22. Shopping's boring.
23. I think air travel should be subject to hefty surcharges to compensate for carbon dioxide emissions from aircraft.
24. Having different retirement ages for men and women is grossly unfair – countries that have different retirement ages should be forced to make them the same.
25. Everyone knows that climate change is man-made.
26. Fossil fuels are responsible for far more deaths than nuclear power.
27. Modern technology means that people are losing the ability to read and write properly.
28. I think everyone would agree that English spelling is illogical.
29. The younger you are when you start learning a language, the better you'll be able to speak it.
30. Human beings will never colonize other planets.
31. Passengers on trains and buses should have to wear seatbelts.
32. So-called 'special offers' in shops are always a con.
33. Colonialism is always wrong, and always has been.
34. All governments should have an equal number of male and female ministers.
35. Space exploration is a complete waste of money – it will never yield any practical benefits, and there are far more urgent needs here on earth.