

UNIT 6 THE COMMUTE

UNIT OVERVIEW: In this unit students will talk about transportation and commuting.

Conversation Starters: *Getting to Work*

Friends talk about their commute.

Building Fluency

Complaining & dealing with complainers; adjective & verb phrases – complaining

Conversation Model

It's so boring. — Stress words for emphasis

Let's Talk About It: *What do you hate?*

Discuss "everyday complaints."

Conversation Idioms

am sick of the heat

am tired of studying

get some exercise

put up with it

is a waste of time

make the most of it

takes me two hours one way

fall asleep

get travel sickness

catch up on the news

am an information junkie

get stuck in a traffic jam

look forward to it

costs me \$20 every day

be just a 10 minute walk

is so much fun

have nothing to do

Additional Links for this unit: Martin from the United States and Tom from the U.K. discuss their commute.

<http://www.elllo.org/english/0601/T627-Martin-Commute.htm>

STEP 1 BUILDING THE ATMOSPHERE

- Tell your students that in today's lesson they'll be talking about commuting, or in other words, traveling to work or school. Play the **Erik and Amy introduction**, and ask your students to listen for the types of transportation that Erik and Amy use to commute to work. (Erik: subway, Amy: walking)

Script [Track 37]

Amy: Hi and welcome to Unit 6, The Commute. So, Erik, how do you get here every day? You take the subway, don't you?

Erik: Yeah, I take the subway. It usually takes me about 45 minutes to get here. How about you? You walk, don't you?

Amy: That's right — just a 10-minute walk.

Erik: Ohh, I'm soooo jealous!!

Amy: Well, some of us are lucky and live close to work. But most people have to commute. We asked our friends about their commute. Let's listen.

- Next, ask your students to brainstorm as many ways of commuting as they can. Write their ideas on the board. Finally, ask your students how they travel to school/work and how they feel about it.

STEP 2 CONVERSATION STARTERS: GETTING TO WORK

Students will listen to people talking about their commutes.

1. First Listening

- First, ask students what they think each picture represents and then quickly confirm as a class: (1 – open road / no traffic jams, 2 – sleeping, 3 – listening to an MP3 player, 4 – crowds, 5 – riding a bicycle, 6 – bus, 7 – walking, 8 – traffic jam).
- Tell students that they will be listening to people talking about their commute. For the first listening, tell students to decide which picture best represents each speaker. They should write the appropriate picture number in the table.

2. Second Listening

- For the second listening students should decide what each person feels about their commute. You may need to explain that “it’s OK” means that they don’t totally hate it, but that they are unsatisfied with something. Encourage students to give details for their answers. This will be helpful for the next activity.
- If you like, have your students summarize their answers using this model:
_____ hates / likes her commute because...
_____ thinks her commute is okay because...

Answer Key

First Listening:

1. Inna: 2, 2. Simon: 8, 3. Pia: 4, 4. Ken: 6, 5. Malik: 3, 6. Trish: 5

Second Listening:

1. Inna: hates it 2. Simon: hates it, 3. Pia: it’s OK, 4. Ken: it’s OK, 5. Malik: likes it, 6. Trish: likes it

BONUS:

As a class, go over the discussion questions. Elicit answers and reasons why.

Next, use the images and topic for further discussion. On the board, write the following assessment scale:

1 Point = I love it.

2 Points = I like it.

3 Points = It’s OK.

4 Points = I dislike it.

5 Points = I hate it.

For each image ask a question to the class. Have students mark their score. See sample questions below:

#1: How do you feel about traveling long distances in a car?

#2: How do you feel about flying? (Note: Is that supposed to be a plane?)

Next, have students compare their scores. Put a simple pattern on the board to serve as a model.

A: *What do did you say for #5?*

B: *I love it because it is a good way to get exercise. What about you?*

A: *I hate it because you get all sweaty.*

Script: [Tracks 38-43]

1. Inna

Gosh, I hate commuting! I go to school every day by train. It takes me two hours one way. Can you believe it? It’s such a waste of time, 4 hours every day. I know that I should try studying on the train, but I always fall asleep. I wish I lived closer to school!

2. Simon

I’ve been commuting to work by car for years now. And it’s so tiring. The worst thing is the traffic. Every day there are traffic jams and car accidents, and it’s very stressful. When I arrive at work, I feel tired and I don’t feel like working at all.

3. Pia

I take the subway to university every day. I don’t mind it so much late in the morning. But during rush hour it’s awful. There are so many people and everyone’s pushing and shoving and there are no empty seats. I have to stand all the way to my station. I hate crowded subways.

4. Ken

I have to commute by bus. It only takes about 45 minutes, so it’s not so bad. But it is boring. If I could read a book it

would be OK. But I get travel sickness when I try to read on the bus. I start to feel sick, like I might vomit. It's awful.

5. Malik

I get to work by train every day, from my home in Oakland, down to my job in Silicon Valley, and it takes about an hour or so one way. But I don't mind it at all. In fact, I love it. I always make the most of my travel time and catch up on the news. I am an information junkie. I listen to the world news on my MP3 player, I always bring the newspaper with me and I have a couple of news magazines. I love going to work!

6. Trish

I used to drive my car to work — hated it. But since last year I started commuting by bicycle, and I love it. It's much quicker and I never get stuck in traffic jams! It's also great exercise and so much fun. I really look forward to going to work every morning!

STEP 3 BUILDING FLUENCY: COMPLAINING AND DEALING WITH COMPLAINERS

In this unit, students will practice ways of complaining, ways of responding to complaints and some common complaints.

1. Expressions

- First, have your students decide which response goes with which complaint. Next, they must decide if each response is “positive / sympathetic”, “negative / unsympathetic” or “neutral.” In order to decide, students need to look at the whole response, not just the underlined portion.
- Mention to your students that the meaning of “too bad” depends on how it is said. If said sincerely, it means that you are sympathetic to the complainer's situation. If said sarcastically, it means that you have little sympathy for their problem.

Answer Key

1. d, 2. e, 3. a, 4. b, 5. c

Positive: a, d Negative: b, e Neutral: c

1. Vocabulary

- In pairs have the students match the words. Then go over as a class. Be sure to check students' understanding of “so tiring” (makes me feel tired) and “a waste of time” (unnecessarily takes up too much time which I could spend doing things I like).
- Next reinforce the vocabulary by having students cover the words above the images with a piece of paper or cards. Then, have students quiz each other using only the images as prompts:
A: *What is image “h”?*
B: “So annoying.” What is image “f”?
A: “So boring.”

BONUS ACTIVITY: Mime Game

On slips of paper, have students write down any five phrases from the vocabulary box. Next, put students in pairs and give them 30 seconds to try to mime their phrase to their partner (and vice versa). After each student has had a turn, have them swap lists and get a new partner. Continue the game for three or four rounds.

Answer Key

1. e, 2. f, 3. g, 4. a, 5. h, 6. c, 7. b, 8. d

VOCAB TROUBLESHOOTING:

Sick / Tired of = it's so annoying and troublesome. I don't want to do it anymore.

Look on the bright side = think of the positive points

Put up with it = persevere with the situation

What can you do? = the situation can't be changed, so there's no point worrying / complaining / etc

Make the most of it = try to take advantage of the situation

So tiring = it makes me feel tired

A waste of time = it unnecessarily takes up too much time

So annoying = it makes me feel frustrated and angry

Too crowded = there are too many people

HOW THE GRAMMAR WORKS:

Refer students to the use of “so” in complaints 4 & 5 from Part (1) and ask them if “so” can also be used with “hate.” Use the grammar box to point out to your students the differences in the adverbs we can use for hate and for sick/tired of. Although we can use “really” with both hate and sick/tired of, we can’t use “so” with hate. Also, while we can use “absolutely” with hate and sick, it sounds a little unnatural with tired.

3. Let’s Practice

Have your students decide which of the phrases in step (2) can be used as reasons for the complaints in step (1). They should join these together to make complaints. The partner should use the response phrases from step (1) to respond to the complaints. Encourage students to elaborate and provide extra detail.

STEP 4 CONVERSATION MODEL: IT’S SO BORING.

Students will practice stressing words for emphasis.

Optional Warm Up

Write the following questions on the board.

- 1) *Where are the speakers?*
- 2) *What does he not like about it?*
- 3) *Is the woman positive, negative, or neutral?*

Books closed. Direct the students to the questions on the board. Next, have the students listen to the audio and try to answer the questions above. After listening as needed, students compare answers in pairs and then as a class.

1. Situation

Books open. Have your students check the conversation for unknown words, and explain any difficult phrases. Next, play the conversation model [Track 44].

VOCAB TROUBLESHOOTING:

Tell me about it = I also think so

HOW THE PRONUNCIATION WORKS: STRESS WORDS FOR EMPHASIS

- Next, discuss the use of stress and stretching in the phrase “It’s so:: bo::ring”. We stress sounds for many reasons, one being for emphasis. Repeat this phrase with and without the stress and stretching and ask your students if they can feel the difference. Practice this a few times as a class. Another feature of this conversation that you may like to point out is “voice tone” which was covered in **Unit 3**. As both characters are bored, they often talk in a rather flat tone of voice.
- As a class do a choral practice of this conversation, focusing particularly on stress and stretching in “It’s so:: bo::ring”. Say each line or chunk, and have your students repeat.

EXTRA PRONUNCIATION POINTS: REDUCE AND BLEND SOUNDS

Don’t you hate commuting? – *donchu (don ya) ha(t)e commuting?*

Tell me about it – *tell me about dit*

What can you do? – *wha can you do?*

I guess we just have to make the most of it – *I guess we jus tave to make the mos tovit*

2. Substitution

Have students work individually to connect the phrases and sentences in the columns to make a coherent conversation. Then have students compare answers in pairs.

Answer Key

- | | |
|--|--|
| a) so expensive – It costs me \$20 every day | b) so crowded – I always have to stand |
| c) such a waste of time – It take me 2 hours one way | d) so tiring – I always fall asleep |

3. Practice

- Have students use the **substitution** words to practice the conversation. Remind them to take particular care with stress and stretching. Have early finishers create their own conversations. You could also have students substitute COMMUTING for other activities, like studying, taking tests, dieting, etc.
- Choose a pair to demonstrate the conversation. Comment on their use of stress and stretching and offer pronunciation and intonation advice as necessary.

STEP 5 LET'S TALK ABOUT IT: WHAT DO YOU HATE?

Students will discuss several "everyday complaints."

Optional Warm Up

Books closed. On the board, draw four large squares. Label each of the squares with one of the topic areas from the survey. See sample below:

Commuting	School	Housework	Weather

Have students copy the grid on a piece of paper or in a note-book.

Then, randomly, read the common complaints from the book to the students. Have students listen and identify the complaints and put them in the appropriate category in the grid.

Finally, have students open their books and check their comprehension.

1. Get Ready

Have students check the table for any words or phrases they don't know. Next, students should decide how they feel about each complaint and tick the appropriate column. Get them to also briefly write down their reasons.

VOCAB TROUBLESHOOTING:

Traffic jams = when the roads are full of vehicles which are unable to move

Do the laundry = wash your clothes

2. Let's Talk

Have students discuss in pairs. Rotate pairs three or four times. Each time, encourage students to only discuss one of the categories on the survey (for example, commuting) and have students talk about a different category with each partner. Encourage students to respond to "complainers" using the expressions introduced on page 30. To help students get started, write the following questions on the board:

How do you feel about...?

Do you mind...?

How about you?

3. Follow Up

Have your students briefly compare their answers with another pair or group. Wrap up the activity by having each group summarize their discussion and share who their biggest complainer was.

BONUS: Speaking Activity

Have students ask each other the questions in the bonus section, but as they practice, allow only one student to look at the book (the one asking the question) and have the respondent try to answer the question with their books closed. Encourage the questioner to create new questions.

STEP 6 LANGUAGE AWARENESS

Assign the language awareness activity on page 86 for homework. If necessary, do the first one or two questions together as a class. Leave 5 or 10 minutes at the beginning of the next class to go through the answers.

Answer Key

1. one way
2. such – we use "such" with noun phrases and "so" with adjectives and adverbs
3. NO – we say "I'm tired" = "I feel sleepy" and "It's tiring" = "It makes me feel tired"
4. When I arrive at work, I feel tired. No / Yes. He uses present tense to say that he feels tired everyday.
5. YES
6. rush hour

7. a short time
8. YES
9. (I) don't mind it at all.
10. NO (but he could say "with" my MP3 player)
11. much / NO
12. (I really) look forward to (going to work).

STEP 7 ERIK'S LEARNING TIP: MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR COMMUTE

This study tip is about using your commute time to study English. Students often say that they don't have enough time to study English. However, there are many ways we can practice or use English without necessarily setting aside "study time." Discuss the 5 study ideas on page 32. Do any of your students do these already? Can your class think of any others?

STEP 8 UNIT TEST

Make copies of the Unit Test for each student. Start by playing the audio for the Listening section (download Track 6 from <http://www.elttestcenter.com>). Decide whether you give them one or two listenings. Then, allow the students about 5-10 minutes to complete the rest of the test. Correct the test in class, and record the score.

AUDIO Script

I have a one-hour commute to my part-time job that I do three days a week. I love it! I don't know what you're talking about! Riding the train is the best thing ever! I listen to Latin Jazz on my MP3 player for an hour. It's the best personal time I have in the entire day.

Answer Key

Part A.

1. c
2. b

Part B.

3. can you do
4. put up with it
5. the most of it
6. tired of

Part C.

7. c
8. f
9. d
10. a