

UNIT 8 EXCUSES, EXCUSES

UNIT OVERVIEW: In this unit students will talk about their health habits.

Conversation Starters: *Health Habits*

Friends talk about their good and bad health habits.

Building Fluency

Making excuses; adjective, verb and noun phrases — excuses

Conversation Model

I'm too busy. — Jump /t/ and /d/ sounds

Let's Talk About It: *How healthy are you?*

Complete a survey about your health habits and practice making excuses.

Conversation Idioms

have a healthy diet

eat too much junk food

work out every day

am on a diet

am not a morning person

am not in the mood

am out of shape

do not feel like it

get some rest

crave junk food

sleep in on a Saturday morning

put on 10 pounds

get stressed with work

deal with my stress

am too lazy

am too tired

is good exercise

Additional Links for this unit: Al from England talks about smoking. <http://www.elllo.org/english/0551/568-Al-Smoking.html>

STEP 1 BUILDING THE ATMOSPHERE

Have your students quickly check the word “excuse” in their dictionaries. Play the **Amy and Erik introduction** and have them listen for the excuse Erik gives for being late (his dog was sick). Ask them if they think this excuse sounds real or made-up, and if they think it's a good or a bad excuse. Have students brainstorm some other “good” and “bad” reasons for being late. Next, move closer to the unit theme of health by sharing one of “your” bad health habits. With your students, brainstorm some typical “good” and “bad” excuses for this bad health habit.

Script [Track 50]

Amy: Hi, everyone. This is Amy, and... Hey! Where's Erik?

Erik: Oh, hi, um, sorry, I'm late. You see my dog was sick, and I had to...

Amy: Oh, Erik. Excuses, excuses.

Erik: I'm really sorry.

Amy: Well, actually, that's the title of Unit 8, Excuses, Excuses. We asked some friends to talk about their good and not so good... health habits. Let's listen.

STEP 2 CONVERSATION STARTERS: HEALTH HABITS

Students will listen to people talk about their good and bad health habits.

OPTIONAL WARM UP: Skimming and Previewing

Have students close their books. Tell the students they have 30 seconds to quickly preview the possible answers. Then, ask who may talk about the following:

eats too much
never plays sports
has a healthy diet

Elicit the answers and then explain that when taking tests or doing a listening exercise it is always essential to quickly preview the questions and be familiar with their location on the page so that when the students hear the answer they are able to navigate quickly to where that particular question and answer are.

1. First Listening

Inform the students they are going to hear people talk about health and the reasons they eat and live the way they do. Play the audio and have students answer the questions. Inquire if the students need to hear the audio a second time. Have students compare answers in pairs and then go over the material as a class.

2. Second Listening

Play the audio again and have students circle the reasons. Have students go over their answers in pairs and then check as a class.

Answer Key

First Listening:

1. b, 2. a, 3. a, 4. b, 5. b

Second Listening:

1. b, 2. b, 3. a, 4. a, 5. a

VOCAB TROUBLESHOOTING:

Junk food – unhealthy food, like chips and chocolates

Work out – to exercise, particularly at a gym

BONUS:

Have students warm up by discussing the two questions in the box. Then, have students share the names of one person they know who matches each person in the audio. Write a sample discussion on the board to facilitate speaking:

A: *Do you know anyone like TJ?*

B: *Yeah, my uncle Jay. He loves to smoke. He has tried to quit many times but he can't. What about you?*

A: *Yeah, I have an aunt that smokes, too. She smokes like a chimney.*

Note: For this you can introduce simple metaphors that relate to smoking (smokes like a chimney), drinking (drinks like a fish), eating (eats like a horse) etc.

Script: [Tracks 51-55]

1. TJ

You know, actually, my doctor told me the other day that I should quit smoking — that smoking is affecting my health. I know. She's right. And I want to quit. Believe me. I've tried...many times. But it's too hard. I just like smoking too much!

2. Soon

I always feel healthy because I have a really healthy diet — lots of fruit and vegetables. I never crave junk food. It's disgusting!! People often complain that it's hard to have a healthy diet. But I think they're just lazy. It's easy! Just eat some fruit!

3. Simon

I don't understand people who say they don't have time to exercise. No matter how busy I am, I always find the time to go jogging every morning. Alarm clock goes off at 6 a.m. — and wham, I'm out the door. Sleeping in on a Saturday morning is a waste of time. All I want to do is go for a run!

4. Trish

I guess I don't have the best diet in the world — croissants and hot chocolate for breakfast, Lamingtons and biscuits for snacks during the day, chips and soft drink at night. My friends are always telling me I should be healthier. But honestly, I just don't care. I love junk food. I don't see what the problem is.

5. Malik

I started my new job this April. And I've put on 10 pounds already. It's horrible. The thing is, when I get stressed with work, I eat. And I get stressed a lot — working with a lot of high-powered people, crazy deadlines. I know I need to stop eating so much, but it's the only way I can deal with my stress.

STEP 3 BUILDING FLUENCY

Students will practice making excuses.

1. Expressions

- Working individually, have students match the responses to the requests. Go over them as a class. Then, do peer drilling for vocalization practice. In pairs have students prompt each other to say the invitations first clearly, then quickly, then without looking and finally by substituting a word. See the sample below:

A: *Number 2*

B: *Do you want to order pizza for dinner?*

A: *Faster*

B: *Dya wanna order pizza for dinner?*

A: *Without looking*

B: *Dya wanna order pizza for dinner?*

A: *Switch*

B: *Dya wanna order pizza for LUNCH?*

- Have students swap roles and give multiple prompts for ample practice. It might be a good idea to go over the reduced forms of “Do you want to” (dya wanna) and “Could you” (cu:ja:).

Answer Key

1 – b, 2 – c, 3 – a

2. Vocabulary

- Have students mark if they think the excuses are good or bad and then go over them as a class. Then, in pairs have student think of other ways to say the words in bold. Have them write other ways to say the words in the space below. See samples below. Once finished, go over the answers as a class.

I'm not a morning person. (I don't like waking up early.)

I'm too busy. (I have a lot of work to do.)

VOCAB TROUBLESHOOTING:

Not a morning person – I have trouble waking up early in the morning

It's freezing out – it's cold outside

I'm not in the mood – I don't feel like it

I'm out of shape – I haven't exercised for a long time and am in poor physical condition

I'm not going to do this exercise – this exercise / activity in my textbook

I don't feel like it – I don't want to do it

Go to bed – get in bed in order to sleep

Answer Key

Answers will probably differ according to personal opinion and situation. Here is one interpretation:

1 – B, 2 – B, 3 – B, 4 – B, 5 – B, 6 – G, 7 – B, 8 – G, 9 – B, 10 – B, 11 – B, 12 – G

HOW THE GRAMMAR WORKS:

Use the examples in the **How the Grammar Works** box and the **Expressions** section to demonstrate to your students how, in conversations, it is very common to omit the verb phrase when responding to invitations. Common replies are “I'd love to (but),” “(I'm sorry but) I can't,” “I would (but),” etc. To quickly practice making natural responses to invitations, say some invitations or requests to your class and have individual students respond using the common replies. You may want to write these common replies on the board to facilitate the activity.

Note: When we decline an invitation (or disagree with an opinion) it is common to do so following this pattern: say something positive + but + decline the offer / disagree with the opinion. Point this out in the various examples found in **1. Expressions** and the **How the Grammar Works** box.

3. Let's Practice

Have students practice making invitations and giving excuses. Go over the language in the grammar box to serve as a resource. Put up a conversation pattern that encourages students to use the language previously practiced. Have students practice in pairs. If possible, have students mingle to maximize chances to speak.

A: *Do you want to go for pizza?*

B: *I would love to, but I am on a diet.*
A: *What do you mean? You look great.*
B: *No, I want to lose 10 pounds.*
A: *Well, I think they have a salad bar.*
B: *Well, in that case...*

STEP 4 CONVERSATION MODEL: I'M TOO BUSY.

Students will look at how “t” and “d” sounds often join with vowel sounds.

Optional Warm Up:

Write the following questions on the board.

- 1) *What does the woman invite the man to do?*
- 2) *What is his excuse?*
- 3) *How does the woman respond back?*

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, have students compare answers in pairs and then check as a class.

1. Situation

- Books open. Have your students check the conversation for unknown words, and explain any difficult phrases.

HOW THE PRONUNCIATION WORKS: JUMP /t/ AND /d/ SOUNDS

Explain the unit grammar point to your students. When a “t” or “d” sound comes before a vowel sound, it often jumps and joins with the vowel sound. This happens naturally when we quickly say strings of words. In the case of “but I”, the “t” in “but” jumps and joins with the “I” to sound like “butai” or even “budai.” In the same way, “good exercise” becomes “goo dexercise”. Again, students do not have to pronounce phrases in this way, but it is very important for them to be aware of this, especially for listening comprehension purposes. This “jumping t & d” appears in many of the **Conversation Model** activities throughout *Impact Conversation*. We recommend briefly reminding your students of the “jumping t & d” each time it appears.

- Next, play the conversation model [Track 56] and encourage students to listen out for the “jumping t & d”.
- As a class do a choral practice of this conversation, focusing particularly on the pronunciation point. Say each line or chunk, and have your students repeat.

EXTRA PRONUNCIATION POINTS: REDUCE SOUNDS

Basketball → *baskeball*

Want to → *wanna*

2. Substitution

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

Answer Key

Tired – get some rest

Out of shape – practice more first

Busy – watch my favorite TV show

3. Practice

- Have students use the **substitution** words to practice the conversation. Remind them to take particular care with the “jumping t & d”. Have early finishers create their own conversations.
- Choose a pair to demonstrate the conversation. Comment on their pronunciation of “but I” and “good exercise” and offer pronunciation and intonation advice as necessary.

STEP 5 LET'S TALK ABOUT IT: HOW HEALTHY ARE YOU?

Students complete a survey about health habits and practice making excuses.

Optional Warm Up:

Work on reduced forms with listening. Tell the students to number a sheet of paper from 1 to 10. Dictate the sentences to the students. Be sure to say them at natural speed. If students struggle, be sure to keep the natural reductions, but add pauses between the chunks. See below:

1. Dya eat ----- at least ----- two pieces ----- of-fruit ----- a day?
2. Dya drink ----- less than ----- one can-a-soda ----- a day?

Dictate the sentences and have students compare what they wrote down. Then, have students open their books and check their answers.

1. Get ready

Have students fill in the table. They should write key words only (not complete sentences) in the reasons column.

2. Let's Talk

Model the pronunciation of the questions. Drill and practice as a class. You can use the speed drilling activity (Optional Warm Up) again as an option. Put students in pairs and have them take turns interviewing each other and tabulating their scores.

Encourage students to have their partners justify their bad health habits by asking questions like "Why not? You should!" or "Why? You shouldn't!" Students should reply with their excuses, beginning with phrases like, "I know I should, but...", "I want to, but...", "I would, but..." and "I'd like to, but...". You may want to write a sample dialogue on the board:

A: *Do you relax at night?*

B: *No. Not usually.*

B: *Why not? You should!*

A: *I know I should, but I'm too worried about passing my English test.*

3. Follow Up

Students work in groups of four to answer the question. Discuss the results of the survey as a class.

BONUS: Speaking Activity

If time permits, have students try the bonus speaking questions. This could be done as either a pair/group/class discussion or an extemporaneous speaking exercise.

BONUS ACTIVITY: School Poster

Have students work to make posters for the school in an effort to increase everyone's health. You can give some cute slogans to get them started:

Forsake the cake ...Eat fruit instead

Ban the can...Save your waistline and the planet. Drink water!!!!

Encourage students to add creative images to go with the posters.

STEP 6 LANGUAGE AWARENESS

Assign the language awareness activity on page 88 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. Smoking is affecting my health
2. to quit smoking
3. crave
4. to have a healthy diet
5. no matter how busy I am
6. I always find the time to go jogging every morning
7. She uses plural nouns for the countable nouns because she's talking about her "everyday" diet, or what she eats "in general".
8. I don't see what the problem is
9. put on (I've put on 10 pounds)
10. I get stressed a lot

STEP 7 ERIK'S HUMOR TIP

Erik's humor tip introduces two "classic" English language excuses which, while probably not actually used in actual conversation these days, often appear in movies and comics. It is beneficial to introduce little tidbits like these to students in order to provide them with the kind of cultural background knowledge that native speakers and proficient non-native speakers take for granted. If you can find examples of these excuses actually used in movies or comics – even better!!

BONUS ACTIVITY:

A nice follow up activity for this unit would be a creative writing exercise where students have to write crazy, humorous and unbelievable excuses. Students could submit these for homework, present them as a skit in front of the class, or you could even have a class vote for the most unbelievable/funny excuse. It would probably facilitate the activity to provide prompts such as:

"Why were you late?", "Where's your homework?", "Who ate my chocolate," etc.

STEP 8 UNIT TEST

Make copies of the Unit Test for each student. Start by playing the audio for the Listening section (download Track 8 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 know I'm out of shape. I'm short of breath when I climb the stairs or run for the bus. I really want to get more exercise and I'd like to get back in shape. Really I would! But I just don't have the time. If I had more free time, then I'd go to the gym. But at the moment I'm just too busy.

Answer Key

Part A.

1. c
2. b

Part B.

3. to go jogging
4. would love to
5. me make
6. is too

Part C.

7. shape
8. mood
9. diet
10. person