

How to talk about yourself in English

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How many times have you heard the phrase *Tell me about yourself*?

You might hear it when you meet someone new, whether it's at a party or at an interview. You may also hear it in the classroom, as a way for people to get to know each other.

So, where do you begin?

Phrases to try – Questions and Answers

What's your name?

My name is _____

How old are you?

I'm _____ years old.

*What do you do? (This question is like asking:
Are you a student? Are you working? Are you
not in a job right now?)
I'm a/an _____.*

*Where do you live? Do you like living there?
I live in _____. I like/don't like living
there because _____.*

What are your hobbies? (Hobbies are things you like to do when you're not working or studying; i.e. playing sports, art, writing, music etc.)

I like to _____ in my spare time.

In a party situation, people often want to know how you know the person who's hosting the party (unless you are that person, of course!).

You can say

We met at _____

I know him/her from _____

Remember, this is a general set of questions so you don't need to use all of these! They depend on the situation.

In a formal situation like an interview, people want to hear about your educational background and your working background, as well as what you enjoyed in both areas – and why these made you apply for the job.

In an informal situation like meeting someone at a party, people would like to hear about what you do, how you know people at the party and what you enjoy doing in your spare time.

1. Interview example

I'm 21 years old and have just finished my degree in Philosophy. I am looking to develop other skills to work in politics. I really enjoyed being the president of the debating society, which helped me to construct arguments from different points of view. I also met many interesting people in that position. I want to learn on the job, which is why I'd like to work for _____.

2. Party example

I've just finished my degree in Philosophy – it was a really tough three years but it was worth it! I met Sally last year at the debating society party and we got on really well. It must've been our love of techno music! How about you?

words and phrases for talking about studying

The word school is different – for Brits, the question ‘Where did you go to school?’ refers only to primary or secondary school (i.e. up to the age of 18), whereas for North Americans, it can refer also to any form of higher education including colleges and universities.

Another thing to remember is that speakers of British English talk about people being at school/college, etc. (*My daughter's at school.*), while in the US they are in school (*We learned that in school.*).

The word **college** is also used in slightly different ways. In the UK, it most often refers to a place where students study practical subjects and which is less academic than a university, although confusingly it can also mean a place which is part of a university, such as King's College, Cambridge.

In US English, college means a place where you study for a degree, which can be a two-year course at a community college or a four-year course at a larger college or university.

In British English, you **go to university to do, take or get** a degree.

In American English, you **go to college to get or earn** a degree.

Students studying for a first degree are undergraduates, while Master's degree or PhD students are postgraduates in British English or graduate students in American English.

In British English, the verb graduate is used only for degree students, but in the US, students also **graduate from high school**.

To talk about the subject you are studying, you can say you are studying **economics**, physics, etc.; you can also say you are doing (UK English) or taking (US English) a subject instead. In US universities, where students often study a wide range of subjects, students who focus on one subject more than others say they are majoring in that subject.

When talking about exams, it is important to know which verbs to use. We say that we **take** an exam (in British English we can also say **do** an exam): *I'm taking my Economics exam tomorrow.*

Be careful with the phrase pass an exam. This means to be successful, not simply to take an exam: *He worked hard and passed all his exams.* If you are not successful, you fail.