

First impressions

"Don't judge a book by its cover." — English proverb

Unit 1 · Around the World — First impressions can deceive.



UNIT 1 · AROUND THE WORLD

1A. First impressions

B2 · 60–75 min · Grammar: question formation · Vocab: describing people and places · Pron: intonation – showing interest

LESSON GOALS

Lesson goals

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Form direct, indirect and negative questions accurately.
- Describe people and places using B2-level adjectives.
- Use intonation to sound genuinely interested in a conversation.

1. WARM-UP

Warm-up

5 min

In pairs (or on your own), think for one minute about each prompt, then share your answers.

- 1 When was the last time you met someone new from another country? Where were you?
- 2 What's the first thing you usually notice about a new place — the sounds, the smells, the people?
- 3 Have you ever had a strong first impression that turned out to be completely wrong?

2. LEAD-IN: FOUR CITIES, FOUR FEELINGS

Lead-in: four cities, four feelings

8 min

Look at the four photos. Match each one to the adjective that best describes it, then compare with a partner.



Match: **bustling** · **sleepy** · **gritty** · **scenic**

Answer: Top-left = bustling · Top-right = sleepy · Bottom-left = gritty · Bottom-right = scenic

Follow-up: Which city would you most like to visit? Why? Use at least two adjectives from the list.

3. READING: THE SEVEN-SECOND RULE

Reading: The seven-second rule

10 min

Psychologists often claim that we form a first impression of a new person in about seven seconds. The same is true, more or less, of new places: within minutes of stepping off a train, most of us have already decided whether a city feels welcoming or stand-offish, vibrant or sleepy, gritty or charming. The problem, of course, is that these snap judgements are based on almost nothing — the weather on the day we arrive, a rude taxi driver, the strange smell of the metro. A bustling Tuesday afternoon in Lisbon feels nothing like a wet Monday morning in the same neighbourhood. And the laid-back local who chatted to us at breakfast may not be at all representative of the people we meet later. So what can travellers do? Experienced travellers suggest two simple habits. First, give a new place at least 48 hours before you decide what you think of it. Second, ask questions — lots of them. The fastest way to move past a stereotype is to be genuinely curious about the person in front of you, and to show that curiosity in your voice.

Comprehension

1. According to the text, how quickly do we form first impressions?
 - a. In about seven seconds.
 - b. After 48 hours.
 - c. Only after meeting several people.
2. Why are these first impressions unreliable?
 - a. Because people lie to travellers.
 - b. Because they are based on small, accidental details.

- c. Because cities change every Tuesday.
3. What is the writer's main piece of advice?
- Avoid talking to locals on the first day.
 - Trust your instincts and move on quickly.
 - Be patient, and ask lots of questions.
4. The phrase "snap judgements" in paragraph 2 means...
- decisions made very quickly with little thought.
 - judgements that change every day.
 - official decisions made by a court.

Vocabulary in context — match each word to the closest meaning.

stand-offish	cold and unfriendly towards strangers
bustling	full of busy activity
laid-back	relaxed and easy-going
snap judgement	a fast decision based on little evidence
representative	typical of a larger group
genuinely	in a real and honest way

4. VOCABULARY: DESCRIBING PEOPLE AND PLACES

Vocabulary: describing people and places

10 min

People

laid-back	very relaxed; not easily stressed
outgoing	sociable and friendly with new people
reserved	quiet; doesn't show feelings easily
down-to-earth	practical, modest, easy to talk to
witty	clever and funny in conversation
stand-offish	cold or distant towards strangers

Places

bustling	busy and full of life
sleepy	very quiet, with little going on
charming	pretty and pleasant in an old-fashioned way
gritty	rough and a bit run-down, often in an interesting way
scenic	with beautiful natural views
off the beaten track	far from the usual tourist routes

Practice — complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the lists.

- She's very ____ — she'll talk to anyone within five minutes.
- The old town is so ____ — narrow streets, little cafés, flowers in every window.
- Don't be put off. He seems ____ at first, but he's actually really kind.
- We found a tiny ____ village in the mountains with only one bus a day.

5. Try to get ____ if you can — the touristy areas are always packed.
6. My host was so ____ — she made me feel at home immediately.

5. GRAMMAR FOCUS: QUESTION FORMATION

Grammar focus: Question formation

15 min

1. Subject vs object questions

When the question word (Who / What / Which) is the **subject**, do NOT use do/does/did:

- Who told you that? (Who = subject)

When it is the **object**, use the normal auxiliary:

- Who did you tell? (You = subject, who = object)

2. Indirect questions

After polite openers like *Could you tell me...*, *Do you know...*, *I was wondering...*, the word order becomes statement order and there is no do/does/did:

- Where is the station? → Could you tell me where the station **is**?
- What time does it open? → Do you know what time it **opens**?

3. Negative questions

Negative questions often show surprise, expectation or polite suggestion:

- Haven't we met before? (I think we have)
- Don't you like it? (I'm surprised you don't)
- Why don't we sit outside? (suggestion)

Exercise A — Make it indirect

Rewrite each direct question as an indirect question starting with the words given.

1. Where is the nearest metro station?

Start: *Could you tell me...*

Answer: Could you tell me where the nearest metro station is?

2. What time does the museum close?

Start: *Do you know...*

Answer: Do you know what time the museum closes?

3. How much does a taxi to the airport cost?

Start: *I was wondering...*

Answer: I was wondering how much a taxi to the airport costs.

4. Why is the café closed today?

Start: *Have you any idea...*

Answer: Have you any idea why the café is closed today?

5. Did the train leave on time?

Start: *Could you tell me...*

Answer: Could you tell me whether the train left on time.

Exercise B — Subject or object?

Make a question from each prompt. Decide whether the question word is the subject or the object.

1. Someone called you. (Who)

Answer: Who called you?

2. You called someone. (Who)

Answer: Who did you call?

3. Something happened. (What)

Answer: What happened?

4. She said something. (What)

Answer: What did she say?

5. One of the trains was cancelled. (Which)

Answer: Which train was cancelled?

Exercise C — Find and fix the mistake

Each question has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. Could you tell me where is the bathroom?

Answer: Could you tell me where the bathroom is?

2. Who did told you about this place?

Answer: Who told you about this place?

3. Do you know what time does the bus leave?

Answer: Do you know what time the bus leaves?

4. Why don't we to sit on the terrace?

Answer: Why don't we sit on the terrace?

6. PRONUNCIATION: INTONATION — SHOWING INTEREST

Pronunciation: intonation — showing interest

8 min

In English, your intonation often matters more than the words. A flat voice on “Really?” can sound bored or even rude; a wide pitch range on the same word sounds genuinely curious.

- Start higher and let your voice fall further on the stressed word.
- Lengthen the vowel a little when you want to sound impressed.
- Short reactions (Wow, No way, Seriously) need clear intonation or they sound sarcastic.

■ *Audio drill — listen and repeat: open the lesson page online to play the audio.*

Really? • That's amazing! • Oh, wow! • No way! • You're kidding!

Practice — interested reactions

Read each statement aloud. Then respond with one of the reactions above, using lively intonation.

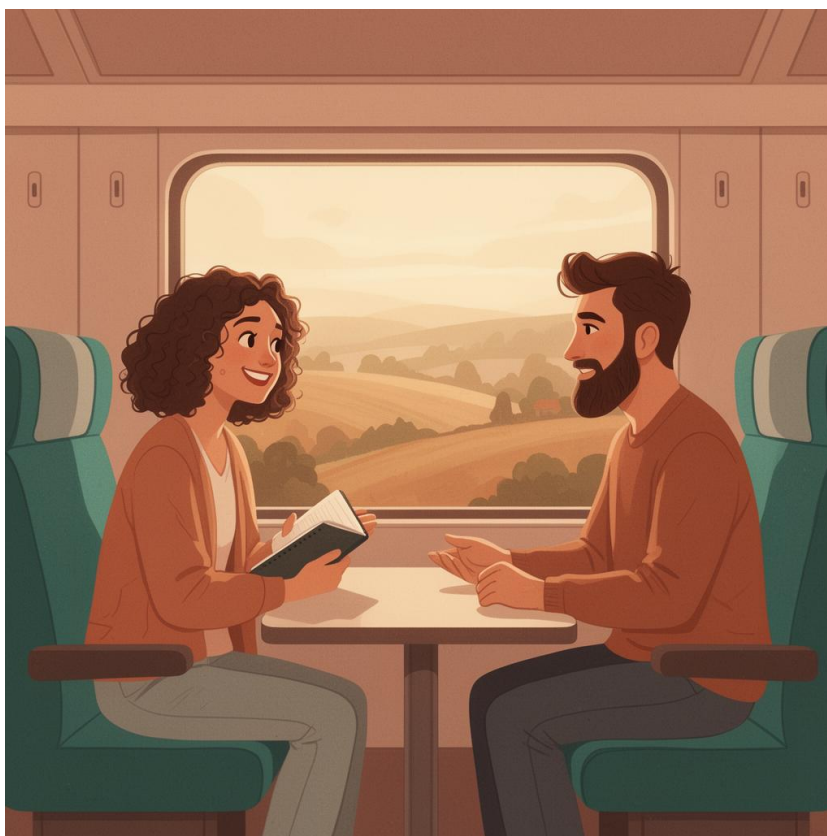
- 1 I just got back from three months in Patagonia.
- 2 My grandmother is learning to skateboard.
- 3 We walked 30 kilometres yesterday.
- 4 I once met the president of Iceland in a coffee shop.

7. LISTENING: MEETING ON A TRAIN

Listening: Meeting on a train

12 min

Maya is travelling to a friend's wedding in Lisbon. She sits down opposite Tom, who has been to the city before.



■ Dialogue audio is on the online lesson page (Meeting on a train).

Before you listen

- What questions do you think Maya will ask Tom?
- What advice do you think Tom will give about Lisbon?

First listen — gist

1. Why is Maya going to Lisbon?

Answer: For a friend's wedding.

2. Has Tom been to Lisbon before?

Answer: Yes, once, years ago.

3. How would Tom describe the city in two words?

Answer: Charming, but a bit sleepy in the mornings and lively at night.

Second listen — detail

1. Which neighbourhood does Tom recommend?

Answer: Alfama.

2. Which area does he tell her to avoid?

Answer: The touristy spots near the castle.

3. Where is the most famous pastel de nata bakery?

Answer: In Belém.

4. Does Tom think the famous bakery is much better than the small ones?

Answer: No — he says the small ones near the metro are just as good.

Transcript

Maya: Excuse me, is this seat taken?

Tom: No, go ahead. Are you heading to Lisbon as well?

Maya: Yeah, just for the weekend. Have you been before?

Tom: Once, years ago. What brings you there?

Maya: A friend's wedding, actually. I don't really know the city. What's it like?

Tom: Honestly? Charming. A bit sleepy in the mornings, but really lively at night. The food is incredible.

Maya: Oh, wow. Any neighborhoods I should check out?

Tom: Definitely Alfama — it's the old part, full of narrow streets and tiny restaurants. Avoid the really touristy spots near the castle if you can.

Maya: Good tip. Could you tell me where the best place to try pastel de nata is?

Tom: Ha! Everyone asks that. There's a famous bakery in Belém, but to be honest, the small ones near the metro are just as good.

Maya: Sounds perfect. By the way, I'm Maya.

Tom: Tom. Nice to meet you.

8. SPEAKING: ROLE-PLAY

Speaking: role-play

10 min

Choose ONE situation. Take turns being Student A and Student B. Use at least three indirect questions and two adjectives from today's lesson.

At an airport gate

A: You're waiting for a delayed flight to a city you've never visited.

B: You live in that city and are flying home.

At a hostel breakfast

A: You arrived last night and have one day to explore.

B: You've been staying for a week and know the area well.

On a long bus journey

A: You're moving abroad for a new job.

B: You grew up in the country your seatmate is moving to.

9. WRITING MINI-TASK

Writing mini-task

5 min (or homework)

Write a short message (60–80 words) to a friend who is visiting your city next week. Include: one piece of advice, two adjectives describing the city, and one indirect question they should ask a local.

10. WRAP-UP

Wrap-up

2 min

- One adjective from today you'd like to use this week.
- One question form you're still not sure about.
- One thing that surprised you in the dialogue.

