



Five College Center for the Study of World Languages

Conversation Preparation Guides

Title: Taking about Religion

Topic: Complex Topics

Level: Intermediate-Advanced

Practice on Your Own

Religion is an important matter in many communities. It is important to be able to talk about religion in an appropriate manner.

- Learn some words to talk about religion.
 - Religion, religious, god, sacred book, prophet, holy...
- Practice names of some religions and related words.
 - Christianity/Christian, Islam/Muslim, Hinduism/Hindu, Buddhism/Buddhist, Judaism/Jew...
- Prepare some words and sentences related to sacred places and rituals.
 - Church, mosque, temple, monastery, synagogue, shrine...
 - Christians pray in churches.
 - Muslims pray in mosques.
 - Hindus pray in temples...
- Do online research to find out about the most common religions in the country/ies where the language is spoken.
- Practice describing religious identities, practices, and sacred places in countries where your language is spoken. Make your descriptions as detailed as possible.

Practice in Conversation Session

- Show the vocabulary list that you have prepared to your conversation partner. Read the words out loud to check your pronunciation. Practice using the words in meaningful sentences talking about religion.

- Have a discussion with your conversation partner about the common religions in the country/ies where the language is spoken and etiquette related to religion. In what situations is it appropriate to discuss religion? Are there certain questions you should avoid asking?
- Discuss and practice asking about someone’s religious identity or adherence.
 - Discuss with your conversation partner whether and in what situations it is appropriate to ask someone about their religious identity. When and how can you ask “What is your religion?” or “What is their religion?”
- Discuss and practice asking about religious practices and observances.
 - Discuss what it is permissible to ask about. What questions would be considered to private? It is often better to ask general questions about how things are done in someone’s family or community than to ask specific questions about a particular individual’s practices.
- Practice talking about sacred places.
 - Ask questions about sacred places and then practice describing the places and telling why a particular place is important.
 - If you want to visit some religious sites, are there certain things you should do or wear in order to be respectful?
- Practice describing religious practices, observances, and rituals. Give as much detail as you can.