



Five College Center for the Study of World Languages

Conversation Preparation Guides

Title: Describing Extended Families

Topic: Descriptions in Conversation

Level: Novice-Intermediate

Practice on Your Own

- Read any cultural information from your textbook about families and family life in the country/ies where the language is spoken. Do families tend to be large or small? Do several generations usually live together in one home? Is divorce common or uncommon? If your textbook does not have much information, you can search for more information online.
- Practice saying words for different family members (mother, brother, aunt, grandfather, etc.) as you listen to audio examples. Pay attention to pronunciation.
 - Are family relationships described differently in the language you are studying than they are in English? Is there one word for “aunt,” or are there different words for your mother’s sister and your father’s sister? Are there different terms for an older brother and a younger brother?
 - Have you learned words for nuclear family, extended family, twins, stepparent, half-sister, blended family, divorce, etc.?
- Using photographs, drawings, or a family tree, practice identifying members of your immediate and extended family. Point to a person and say the appropriate term to describe the person’s relationship to you (father, sister, cousin, etc.).
 - Identify your mother, father, and siblings (sisters and brothers).
 - Identify relatives on your father’s side, such as grandfather, grandmother, aunts and uncles.
 - Identify relatives on your mother’s side, such as grandfather, grandmother, aunts and uncles.
 - Identify your cousins.
 - If you have learned numbers, practice saying the ages of your different relatives. Have you learned any adjectives that you could use to describe your family members?
 - Practice saying your own age and your position in the family – are you the first born, in the middle or last? Say if you are a twin.
 - Practice talking about your family as much as possible. You can talk to a friend if possible, or just speak to yourself out loud.

- If you haven't already done so, try drawing a family tree to help you recall what you have learned.
- Practice talking about other people's families as well. These could be your friends' families, celebrities' families, fictional families from books or movies, or families that you just make up. If you find visuals helpful, look for pictures of families or family trees online.
 - Try to use all of the family vocabulary that you have learned. For example, if you don't have any nieces or nephews yourself, talk about other people's nieces and nephews.

Practice in Conversation Session

- Be prepared for an activity in which you will talk about your family in similar ways to how you have been practicing on your own. You will do this with your conversation partner and your fellow students, who will have prepared like you. The conversation session will also give you the opportunity to practice comprehending family vocabulary as you listen to your conversation partner and fellow students talk about their families.
 - If you do not want to talk about your own family, you can make up an imaginary family.
 - Bring family photographs, drawings, or a family tree to discuss with your conversation partner and fellow students.
 - Point to each relative and say how she/he is related to you. You might mention the person's age or a description as well. Do this for both your nuclear and extended family.
 - Randomly point to different individuals and ask your conversation partner or fellow students to say who the person is and whether they are related to your father or your mother.
 - Can you say whether your family is blended, if there are any twins, etc.?