**Awkward Questions**

**Teacher Notes**

A

Focus students on section A on the worksheet, and ask students to discuss which topics they would and wouldn’t talk about when they first meet people.

Conduct whole-class feedback, and try to dig into any cultural differences (e.g. in Japan, Korea and China, blood group is a common topic for getting to know someone, as it’s thought to be related to personality)

B

Look at section B on the worksheet, and ask students to do the exercise.

Answers:

*P: … if you don’t mind my asking? You don’t have to say if you don’t want to, but … Would you mind telling me … Can I ask …*

*A: (in order, more polite to less polite) I’d rather not say, if you don’t mind. I don’t really want to talk about it. That’s rather a personal question, isn’t it? You can’t ask that! That’s none of your business!*

C

Play a mingling game: explain that the aim is to discover as much personal information about your classmates as possible. The students mingle, and ask each other awkward questions, using the ideas from Exercise A and the phrases to make questions more polite from Exercise B. However, if someone doesn’t want to answer a question, they can block it using one of the phrases to avoid answering (also from Exercise B). If this happens, the questioner should simply say “I’m so sorry” and move on. To encourage mingling, they can only ask each person one question before moving on to talk to someone else. After the mingle, students discuss in pairs what they discovered about their classmates, and then share with the class one or two interesting discoveries.

D

Write the following questions on the board and ask students to discuss them in pairs or threes:

- Why is it sometimes necessary to talk about awkward topics?

- When was the last time you had an awkward conversation? Who was it with? What was it about? Why was it awkward?

**Awkward Questions**

**A.**

**What topics do you usually ask someone about when you’ve only just met them?**

blood group age religion

brothers and sisters weight films/books

politics where they live their work/studies

the news income their interests

their husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend

**What topics do you avoid? Why?**

**With a partner, write one question for each of these topics.**

**B.**

**Look at the list of phrases. Which ones could you use to make an awkward question more polite? Label these ones P. Which ones could you use to avoid answering an awkward question? Label these ones A.**

* … if you don’t mind my asking?
* You can’t ask that!
* You don’t have to say if you don’t want to, but …
* That’s rather a personal question, isn’t it?
* Would you mind telling me …
* I’d rather not say, if you don’t mind.
* I don’t really want to talk about it.
* That’s none of your business!
* Can I ask …

**Look at the phrases labelled A. Which ones are more polite, and which ones less polite?**