

Good and bad how questions game

In groups of two or three, have real conversations using “How...?” questions and responses like those below, avoiding unsuitable conversations by thinking carefully about:

- When you are speaking
- Your relationship (and so how personal you can be)
- What you already know about your partner
- What questions and responses are rarely suitable or never suitable

You can't repeat questions that you or other people have used (or use just “How about you?”/ “And you?” to do that), but try to make the next question or topic similar if you can to make the conversation go smoothly. You can also ask extra follow-up questions like “Why...?” if you like.

Ask about any questions or responses below which you don't know how to use and/ or don't know how to respond to.

Underline questions and responses which are rarely suitable/ which you should be careful about using.

Compare with the ones in bold below. Other answers are possible, so check if you highlighted different things.

Find questions and responses which have (basically) the same meanings.

Compare with the suggested answers below. All others probably have different meanings, so check that you understand the differences.

Suggested answers 2

- How are things?/ How are you doing?/ How's it going?/ How's life (treating you)?
- A nightmare/ An absolute nightmare/ Terrible/ Awful
- Not so good/ Not so great
- Nothing special/ Same ole same ole
- Alright/ Okay
- Can't complain/ Mustn't grumble
- Not bad/ Good
- Wonderful/ Fantastic/ Superb/ Amazing/ Fabulous/ Excellent
- Mind your own business/ Never you mind/ None of your business/ That's none of your business
- How about you?/ What about you?/ And you?

Roleplay similar small talk conversations, first as yourselves and then as other people who you might speak to in English such as:

- client/ customer
- supplier/ vendor
- colleague
- boss
- acquaintance

Possible small talk questions with how (including probably unsuitable questions)

- How are things?
- How are you coping with...?/ How are you dealing with...?
- How are you doing?
- How are you feeling?
- How are you getting on with...?
- How are you?
- (But) how are you really?
- How did... go?/ How did you get on with...?/ How did... react to...?
- How has your day been (so far)?
- How has your trip/ visit/ stay been (so far)?
- How has your week been (so far)?
- How have you been (since we last met)?
- How is working in/ for (*name of a company/ division/ department/ section/ team/...*)?
- How is working under (*name of a boss*)?
- How is working with (*name of a colleague*)?
- How was (*name of place*)?
- How was the party (last night)?
- How was the traffic (coming from.../ this morning/ on... road)?
- How was your bank holiday/ public holiday?
- How was your date?
- How was your day off?
- How was your evening?
- How was your flight?
- How was your (summer/ Xmas/ New Year/ Easter) break/ holiday/ vacation?
- How was your journey?
- How was your lunch/ dinner/ meal?
- How was your trip?
- How was your week?
- How was your weekend?
- How was...?
- How's (*name*)?
- How's business?
- How's it going?
- How's life?/ How's life treating you?
- How's married life?
- How's the weather now/ outside now/ in.../ where you are/ over there?
- How's work?
- How's your boyfriend/ girlfriend/ husband/ wife/ partner...?
- How's your cold?
- How's your daughter/ son getting on at university?/ How's... getting on with/ at/ in...?
- How's your diet going?
- How's your family?/ How are your family?
- How's your hangover?
- How's your hotel?
- How's your leg (recovering)?/ How's your... (recovering)?

- How's your love life?
- How's your new office/ desk/ job/ position/ flat/...?
- How's your project going?/ How's.... going?
- How's your (football) team doing?/ How's your team getting on?
- I heard that you... How was it?/ How was the weather?/ How did you get on?/ How...?
- You said that you were going to... How was it?

Possible responses (including probably unsuitable responses)

<p>A nightmare/ An absolute nightmare Absolutely hectic Absolutely terrible Absolutely wonderful Actually, I can't remember Alright Amazing/ Superb Awful Can't complain/ I can't complain Don't ask! Excellent Fairly busy Fabulous/ Fantastic Hmmm okay I guess I don't want to talk about it I'd rather not say, if you don't mind I'd rather not say I'm perfect Mind your own business Mustn't grumble Never you mind (That's) none of your business Not bad Not so busy Not so good Not so great Nothing special Okay Really good Really busy Really great Really relaxing Same ole same ole So stressful So-so Very productive You don't want to know!</p>	<p>I.....</p>	<p>(How about you?) (What about you?) (And you?)</p>	<p>.....?</p>
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Suggested answers 1

Ones which are probably not suitable or you need to be careful about using are **in bold**.

- How are things?
- How are you coping with...?/ How are you dealing with...?
- How are you doing?
- **How are you feeling?**
- How are you getting on with...?
- How are you?
- **(But) how are you really?**
- How did... go?/ How did you get on with...?/ How did... react to...?
- How has your day been (so far)?
- How has your trip/ visit/ stay been (so far)?
- How has your week been (so far)?
- How have you been (since we last met)?
- How is working in/ for (*name of a company/ division/ department/ section/ team/...*)?
- **How is working under (*name of a boss*)?**
- **How is working with (*name of a colleague*)?**
- How was (*name of place*)?
- How was the party (last night)?
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- **How's your diet going?**
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- **How's your love life?**
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- How's your project going?/ How's... going?
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