

Talk Time Topic: Current Events

Let's get started...

Where do you get your news from? Do you get news from different sources? Do you notice a difference in what news gets covered by different sources? How does the news media in the U.S. compare to your home country?

Background:

Many Americans like to know what is happening in local, national, and world news. Some people believe that to live in a democracy, it is important to stay informed about the important issues facing our world. Americans read about the news on the Internet and in newspapers and magazines, listen to the news on the radio, and watch the news on TV. Many Americans like to talk about current events and the news with their families, friends and co-workers. There are some controversial topics in today's news such as the war in Iraq, US immigration reform, & the threat of global warming. It is very common for current events and the news to be the topics of small talk.



In pairs for 5 minutes, talk about the following question or do the following activity:

What are the most important issues facing our world today? (energy, nuclear weapons, human rights, global warming, hunger, etc.) Why?

Activity:

Imagine that you are a reporter for a local news station. You are assigned to interview one person about living in Washington State. After you interview someone, report back to your group. You can use the questions below or create your own.

In your opinion, what is the best time of year to live in Washington? Why?

In your opinion, what is the best city in Washington? Why?

In your opinion, what are the best places to visit in Washington? Why?

Share your partner's answers with the group.

Discussion Questions:

Do you prefer to watch or read about current events and the news in English or in your native language?

How often do you watch the news on TV or read the newspaper? What is your favorite television station or newspaper? Why?

How often do people in your native country watch the news or read newspapers?

Is it common for people to talk about the news in your native country?

Do you keep up with the news in your native country? If yes, how? If no, why not?

What is the last thing that you learned from the local, national, or world news?

What kinds of things do reporters talk about in the news in your native country?

What do reporters talk about in the news in the US?

Do you think that it is easy or difficult to watch the news on TV? Why?

What time of day do you watch the news? Why?

In the U.S., it is common for TV stations to interrupt other TV shows to show “Breaking News” reports. Is this common in your native country?

Do you think that the news shows too much violence on TV? Why or why not?

Do you let your children watch, read, or listen to the news? Why or why not?

In your opinion, is American news objective or biased?

- ◆ Reporters often talk about politics in the news. Politics is one of the most common topics of conversation when people are talking about current events.

Tell about an important political event in your country’s recent history.

What do you think is the most important political issue right now in your home country? What about in the U.S.? Why?

What type of information – if any – do you think a government should keep from its citizens? Why?

New words and idioms:

Sound bite, news cycle, breaking news, break the news, politically correct, under fire, up in arms, up and coming, armed and dangerous, human interest story, protest, etc.

Advanced Discussion Questions:

The following questions may be considered controversial. Please remember that we need to respect each person's opinion.

How do you feel about the war in Iraq? Was it necessary? What do you think about President Bush's reasons for going to war (weapons of mass destruction)? Should we have had the support of the UN first? Have you changed your mind about it in the past 3 years? Are there other reasons that the US should be there?

How is the US perceived by the rest of the world? How is the US perceived in your home country? How does that compare to a decade ago?

How do you feel about the current debate about our immigration system? Is the current immigration system unfair? Should people who have been in the country illegally be allowed to stay? Is it fair to bring people here for work and then send them home when the work is done?

Is it okay to offer a path to citizenship for people who haven't played by the rules? Does it make a difference if the rest of their family lives here? Is offering them citizenship fair for immigrants who have done everything the way they were supposed to?

Are you concerned about our environment? Do you think global warming is a serious problem? What changes do you think we could make to have an effect on this problem?

Talk about a top news story of the week.
Will we still be talking about this same story next week? Next month? Next year?

Do you follow local news? Why or why not?