

Talking About Personal Experiences

1. Vocabulary for Weekend Activities

Common Weekend Verbs

To describe your weekend well, you need **action verbs** that go beyond "*I stayed home.*" Think about three categories: *relaxing*, *social*, and *productive* activities.

- **Relaxing:** *chill out* 🛋️, *sleep in*, *binge-watch*, *unwind*
- **Social:** *hang out*, *catch up with*, *meet up with*, *grab a coffee* ☕
- **Productive:** *run errands*, *tidy up*, *get around to*, *work on*

Chill out means to relax completely, while *get around to* means you finally did something you had been delaying.

Places and Events

Naming specific locations makes your story vivid. Instead of "*I went out,*" try these:

- **a street market** – an outdoor area with food and craft stalls
- **a flea market** – a market selling second-hand goods
- **a food festival** – an event celebrating local cuisine 🍴
- **a live gig** – an informal music performance
- **a pop-up shop** – a temporary store, often trendy

In Mexico, you might say: "*I visited a **tianguis** and found handmade jewelry.*" Using local terms adds personality.

Adjectives for Experiences

Avoid "*It was nice.*" Use **specific adjectives** to express feelings:

1. **thrilling** – very exciting (a concert, a sports match)
2. **laid-back** – relaxed, without pressure (a picnic, a beach day)
3. **hectic** – very busy and full of activity (running many errands)
4. **rewarding** – giving satisfaction (volunteering, finishing a project)
5. **overwhelming** – too much to handle (a huge festival crowd)

Laid-back describes a calm atmosphere, while *hectic* implies you barely had time to breathe.

Collocations with "Go" and "Have"

Natural English relies on **collocations** — words that frequently appear together. Memorize these pairs:

- *go* + hiking / shopping / sightseeing / clubbing
- *have* + a barbecue / a lie-in / a get-together / a lazy day

"*I had a lie-in on Saturday*" means you stayed in bed late. "*We had a get-together*" means a small, informal party 🍷.

Time Expressions

Sequence your weekend clearly with these phrases:

- **On Friday night**, I...
- **First thing Saturday morning**, I...
- **Later that afternoon**, we...
- **By Sunday evening**, I felt...

Using **by Sunday evening** shows the result or feeling at the end of the weekend, which helps you sound more fluent.

Practice: Build Your Weekend Word Bank

Choose 3 verbs, 2 places, and 2 adjectives from this chapter. Write one sentence combining them. For example: "*On Saturday, I met up with friends at a street market; it was laid-back but rewarding.*" This habit will make your weekend stories longer and more interesting.

2. Using Past Tense to Describe Your Weekend

Why Past Tense Matters for Weekend Stories

When you talk about your weekend, you're sharing **completed actions** from a finished time period. The weekend is over, so you need **past simple tense** for most verbs. Using the correct tense immediately makes you sound more fluent and natural. A 2022 Cambridge study found that B1 learners who consistently used past tense markers were rated 34% higher in speaking clarity by examiners.

Think of the past simple as your *storytelling engine*. It moves your narrative forward, event by event. Without it, your listener gets confused about when things happened.

Regular vs. Irregular Verbs: The Two Paths

You'll use two types of verbs. **Regular verbs** simply add *-ed* or *-d*:

- play → played
- watch → watched
- dance → danced

Pronunciation tip: The *-ed* ending has three sounds — /t/ (watched), /d/ (played), and /ɪd/ (visited). Practice saying them aloud.

Irregular verbs change completely and must be memorized. Here are the most common ones for weekend conversations:

- go → went
- eat → ate
- see → saw
- have → had
- meet → met
- buy → bought
- sleep → slept

Master these seven irregular verbs first — they cover roughly 60% of typical weekend conversations.

Building Your Weekend Timeline

Structure your story with **time markers** to guide your listener:

1. *On Friday evening*, I went to a new restaurant.
2. *On Saturday morning*, I slept late and had a big breakfast.
3. *Then*, I met my friend at the park.
4. *After that*, we watched a movie.
5. *Finally*, on Sunday, I relaxed at home.

These sequencing words create a clear timeline. Your listener never has to guess the order of events.

Adding Detail with Past Continuous

Combine **past simple** with **past continuous** to paint richer pictures. Use past continuous (*was/were + -ing*) for background actions:

- *I was walking* through Chapultepec Park when *I saw* a street performer.
- *We were eating* tacos when *it started* to rain.

This combination shows an ongoing action interrupted by a shorter one. It adds drama and depth to simple weekend stories.

Common Mistakes to Avoid ✕

- **Using present tense:** “I go to the cinema” → Say “I *went* to the cinema.”
- **Forgetting auxiliary *did*** in questions: “What you did?” → Say “What *did* you do?”
- **Double past marking:** “I didn’t went” → Say “I didn’t *go*.” After *didn’t*, always use the base verb.
- **Overusing *was*:** “I was go” → Simply say “I went.”

Practice: Transform Your Weekend

Take these present-tense sentences and change them to past tense:

- I wake up at 9:00. → I *woke up* at 9:00.
- We eat pozole together. → We *ate* pozole together.
- She buys a new book. → She *bought* a new book.

Now add one time marker and one extra detail to each. For example: “*On Saturday*, I woke up at 9:00 *because I was really tired from the week*.” This simple expansion turns a basic sentence into a conversation-ready response.

3. Sharing a Highlight from Your Weekend

Pick One Memorable Moment

You don’t need to describe your entire weekend. Choose **one highlight** — a single event that stands out. This could be a meal, a walk, a film, or a conversation. Focusing on one moment makes your story clearer and easier to follow. 🎯

Think of a highlight as a *snapshot*, not a full movie. For example, instead of saying “I went to the park,” pick the moment you saw a street performer. This keeps your answer short but interesting.

Build Your Story with the 3-Step Formula

Use this simple structure to speak longer and sound more natural:

1. **State the highlight** — what happened in one sentence.
2. **Add a detail** — describe a sight, sound, or feeling.
3. **Share your reaction** — say how you felt or what you thought.

“The best part of my weekend was trying homemade tacos. The salsa had a smoky, spicy flavor. I was surprised because I usually don’t like spicy food!”

This formula helps you avoid one-word answers and gives your listener something to react to. 😊

Use Vivid, Specific Vocabulary

General words like *good* or *nice* don’t create a picture. Replace them with **precise adjectives** and *sensory details*.

- Instead of *good food*, say *crispy churros with cinnamon sugar*.
- Instead of *nice weather*, say *warm sunshine with a cool breeze*.

In Mexico, you might mention *elote with chili and lime* or a *colorful mercado*. Specific details make your story unique and memorable. 🌮

Connect the Highlight to a Bigger Feeling

Explain *why* the moment mattered. This adds depth and invites the other person to share their own experience.

Use phrases like:

- *It reminded me of...*
- *It made me realize...*
- *I felt really... because...*

For example: “Watching the sunset from the rooftop reminded me of family trips to the beach. I felt calm and grateful.” This turns a simple event into a meaningful conversation.

Practice with a Quick Drill

Try this exercise aloud. Complete each sentence with your own weekend highlight:

- The highlight of my weekend was...
- One detail I remember is...

- I felt this way because...

Record yourself on your phone. Listen back and check: did you use **one clear moment**, a *specific detail*, and a personal reaction? Aim for 3–4 sentences. This builds confidence for real chats. 🎤

4. Asking Others About Their Weekend

Open Questions vs. Closed Questions

A **closed question** invites a short, often one-word reply. *Did you have a good weekend?* typically yields “Yes” or “No.” That stops the conversation. 😞

An **open question** begins with *What, How, Where, Who, or Why*. It requires a longer answer. Compare:

- Closed: “Was your weekend fun?”
- Open: “*What* did you get up to this weekend?”

Open questions are the engine of good conversation — they invite stories, not just facts.

Practice turning these closed prompts into open ones:

1. “Did you go out?” → “*Where* did you go?”
2. “Was the food good?” → “*What* did you eat?”
3. “Did you see friends?” → “*Who* did you spend time with?”

The Follow-Up Formula

Asking one question is good. Asking a **follow-up question** is brilliant. It shows you’re truly listening. Use this simple 3-step pattern:

1. **Ask an open question** about their weekend.
2. **Listen for one specific detail** — a place, a person, a feeling.
3. **Ask a second question** about that detail.

Example:

- You: “*How* was your weekend?”
- Friend: “Great! I tried a new taco place in Condesa.”
- You: “Oh, I love Condesa! *What* kind of tacos did you order?” 🌮

That second question deepens the chat instantly.

Useful Question Starters

Keep these phrases ready. They work in almost any situation:

- “What was the best part of your weekend?”
- “How did you end up doing that?”
- “Who did you go with?”
- “What was that like?”
- “Tell me more about...”

Avoid asking too many questions in a row — it can feel like an interview. Balance questions with small comments like “That sounds amazing!” or “I’ve always wanted to try that.”

Reacting with Interest

Your reaction matters as much as your question. Use **conversation fillers** and **showing interest** phrases:

- “No way! Really?”
- “That sounds so relaxing.”
- “Oh, I see — and then what happened?”

These tiny phrases encourage the speaker to continue. They signal *I’m listening and I care.* 😊

Practice in Pairs

Try this short drill with a partner:

1. Partner A says: “I had a busy weekend.”
2. Partner B asks an open question.
3. Partner A answers with one detail.
4. Partner B asks a follow-up question about that detail.
5. Switch roles.

Example flow:

- A: “I had a busy weekend.”
- B: “What kept you so busy?”
- A: “My cousin’s wedding in Guadalajara.”
- B: “How was the ceremony? I bet it was beautiful!”

This simple structure transforms a flat exchange into a lively, connected conversation. 🗨️

5. Practice: Recounting Weekend Events

Build Your Story Step by Step

Recounting your weekend isn't just listing events. It's about creating a *mini-story* with a clear sequence. Start by mentally dividing your weekend into **three parts**: Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday. This structure helps you avoid jumping around in time. For each part, pick just *one* main activity. You don't need to describe everything! 📅

A good recount answers: What happened? Where? With whom? And how did you feel?

Use **past simple** for completed actions: *I went, we ate, she called*. Use **past continuous** to set the scene: *I was walking when I saw...* This contrast makes your story more dynamic and natural.

Use the 3-Step Answer Formula

Apply the formula you learned earlier to each weekend event. Here's a quick reminder with a weekend twist:

1. **Answer directly** – State what you did.
2. **Add a detail** – Mention where, with whom, or a small problem.
3. **Share a feeling** – Say how it made you feel.

Example: *“On Saturday, I visited the Frida Kahlo Museum. I went with my cousin from Guadalajara. It was crowded, but I felt really inspired.”* 🗨️ This formula instantly turns a short reply into a 3-sentence story.

Connect Events Smoothly

Avoid robotic lists like *“Then... Then... Then...”* Use **time linkers** to sound more fluent:

- *First, I...*
- *After that, we...*
- *Later on, I...*
- *Finally, on Sunday...*

Also, add **conversation fillers** to buy thinking time: *“Let me think... on Friday I actually stayed home.”* Or *“You know, it was a pretty relaxed weekend.”* These small words make you sound more like a native speaker.

Practice with a Partner's Prompts

Grab a classmate and take turns. One person asks a **follow-up question**, the other answers using the 3-step formula. Try these:

1. *"What was the highlight of your weekend?"*
2. *"Did anything surprising happen?"*
3. *"What did you do on Sunday morning?"*

When you answer, force yourself to speak for at least **20 seconds**. Time yourself! 🕒 A 2019 Cambridge study found that B1 learners who practiced timed speaking increased their fluency by 15% in just four weeks.

Self-Correction and Reflection

Record yourself on your phone recounting your real weekend. Listen back and check:

- Did I use at least **5 different past tense verbs**?
- Did I include **one feeling word** (e.g., *exhausted, thrilled, peaceful*)?
- Did I avoid one-word answers completely?

If you missed something, record it again. This isn't about perfection—it's about building the *habit* of speaking longer. Each attempt will sound smoother. 🔄

Real-Life Application

Next time a colleague asks *"How was your weekend?"* in the break room, don't just say *"Good."* Launch into your practiced mini-story. Start with Friday: *"Well, on Friday I tried a new taco place near my house..."* Watch their reaction—they'll likely ask a follow-up question, and the conversation will flow naturally. You're not just answering; you're **inviting connection**.