

**IN THIS UNIT YOU LEARN HOW TO:**

- describe flats, houses and areas
- explain how big places are
- discuss social and economic changes
- compare the past and now
- ask about house rules

**SPEAKING****1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.**

- Where do you think this photo was taken? Why?
- What do you think would be good / bad about living in a place like this? Think about:
  - the house
  - where it is
  - the local facilities
  - the people who live there
  - the way of life
- Would you like to live there? Why? / Why not?

# HOUSES

# HOME SWEET HOME

## VOCABULARY Describing homes

### 1 Label the picture with these words.

wood floor	garage	swimming pool
patio	gas central heating	open fire
back garden	balcony	attic
tiled floor	roof terrace	basement

### 2 Work in groups. Discuss the questions.

- Which of the things in Exercise 1 do you have where you live?
- Of the things you don't have, which two would you most like? Why?
- Which two things could you most easily live without?
- Which things make the biggest difference to the price of a house / flat in your country?

### 3 Match the sentences (1-10) with the follow-up comments (a-j).

- 1 It's lovely and **bright** in the summer.
- 2 It's nice and **compact**.
- 3 It's very **central**.
- 4 It's very **convenient** for transport.
- 5 It's very **spacious**.

- 6 The rent's very **affordable**.
- 7 I'm renting a room in a **shared apartment**.
- 8 I live in a **newly-built** apartment block.
- 9 It's quite **cramped** with four of us living there.
- 10 It's quite old and **run-down**.

- a It's the biggest place I've ever lived in by a long way!
- b I don't need that much space and it's easy to keep clean.
- c I'm only paying €80 a week plus bills.
- d Luckily, I get on OK with the five other students.
- e I can walk into town in ten minutes.
- f I mean, it's only a two-bedroom flat and there's only one bathroom.
- g It's great – and obviously I don't need to do any work on it!
- h It faces south, so we get a lot of sunlight.
- i We'll need to do some work on it.
- j There's a station five minutes' walk away and several buses go into town.

### 4 Work in pairs. Discuss which of the words in bold in Exercise 3 describe where you live. Explain why.

## LISTENING

### 5 ▶ 41 Listen to two people – Gavin and Lynn – talking about their friends' new apartment. Answer the questions.

- 1 Why did Nick and Carol move?
- 2 What is nice about their new place?
- 3 What are the problems with the new place?

### 6 ▶ 41 Listen again and complete the sentences with two words in each space.

- 1 Did I tell you I \_\_\_\_\_ to see Nick and Carol the other day?
- 2 I haven't seen them \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 They said \_\_\_\_\_ 'hello' to you.
- 4 That must be nice for them now the kids are \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 They wanted \_\_\_\_\_ for the kids.
- 6 It's on the \_\_\_\_\_ of an old block.
- 7 It has got \_\_\_\_\_, though.
- 8 I must go round and see them \_\_\_\_\_.

### 7 Work in groups. Discuss the questions.

- How many times have you moved in your life? Why?
- Have you ever done any work on your place? What?
- Have you ever shared a room? How was it?

## PRONUNCIATION

### 8 ▶ 42 Listen to six phrases said slowly. They all have an added /j/ sound to make it easier to move from one vowel sound to another. Practise saying the phrases in the same slow way. Then practise saying them as quickly as you can.

## DEVELOPING CONVERSATIONS

### Explaining how big a place is

We often explain the size of places by comparing them with things both speakers know, including the room we are in. We may also point and use gestures. Look at the patterns we often use:

*The front room is huge. It's about twice the size of this room.*

*It's got a great kitchen. It's a similar size to yours – maybe a bit bigger.*

*Her garden's nice. It's about the size of mine. // It's about the same size as mine.*

*Their bathroom is enormous. It's about from that wall over there to here, I guess.*

### 9 Correct the mistakes in these sentences. You may need to add extra words.

- 1 His bedroom's tiny. It's about half size of this room.
- 2 The kitchen is huge. It's three times the size of my ...
- 3 The bathroom's OK. It's about same size as yours – maybe a little bit bigger.
- 4 They've got a huge garden. It's twice the size of your.
- 5 They've got a small basement. It's a similar size of this room – maybe a bit smaller.
- 6 They've got a lovely front room. It's twice as wide as this room and maybe a little bit more long.
- 7 It's not that big – maybe about from here where that desk is.

### 10 Think of how large the different rooms in your house / apartment are compared with the room you are in now. Then work in groups. Share your ideas, using the patterns in the box.

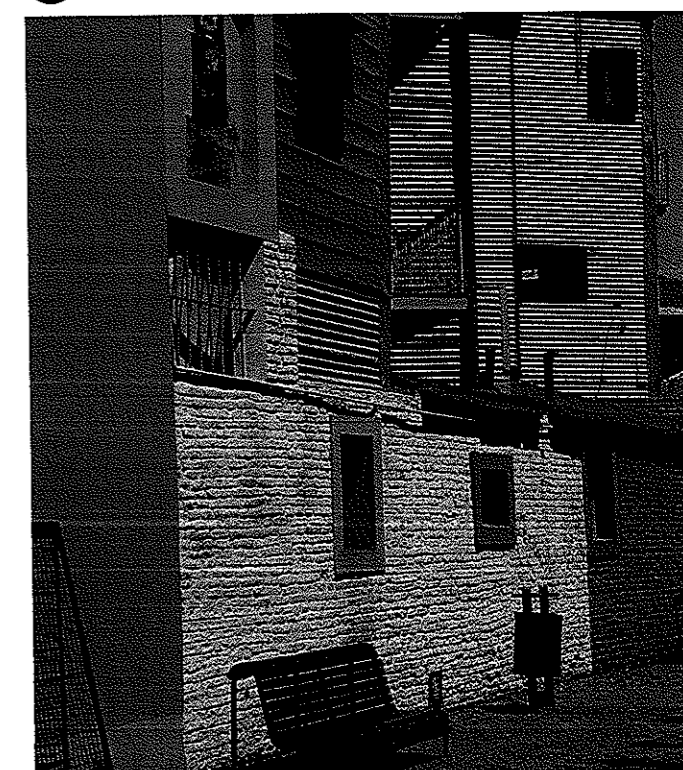
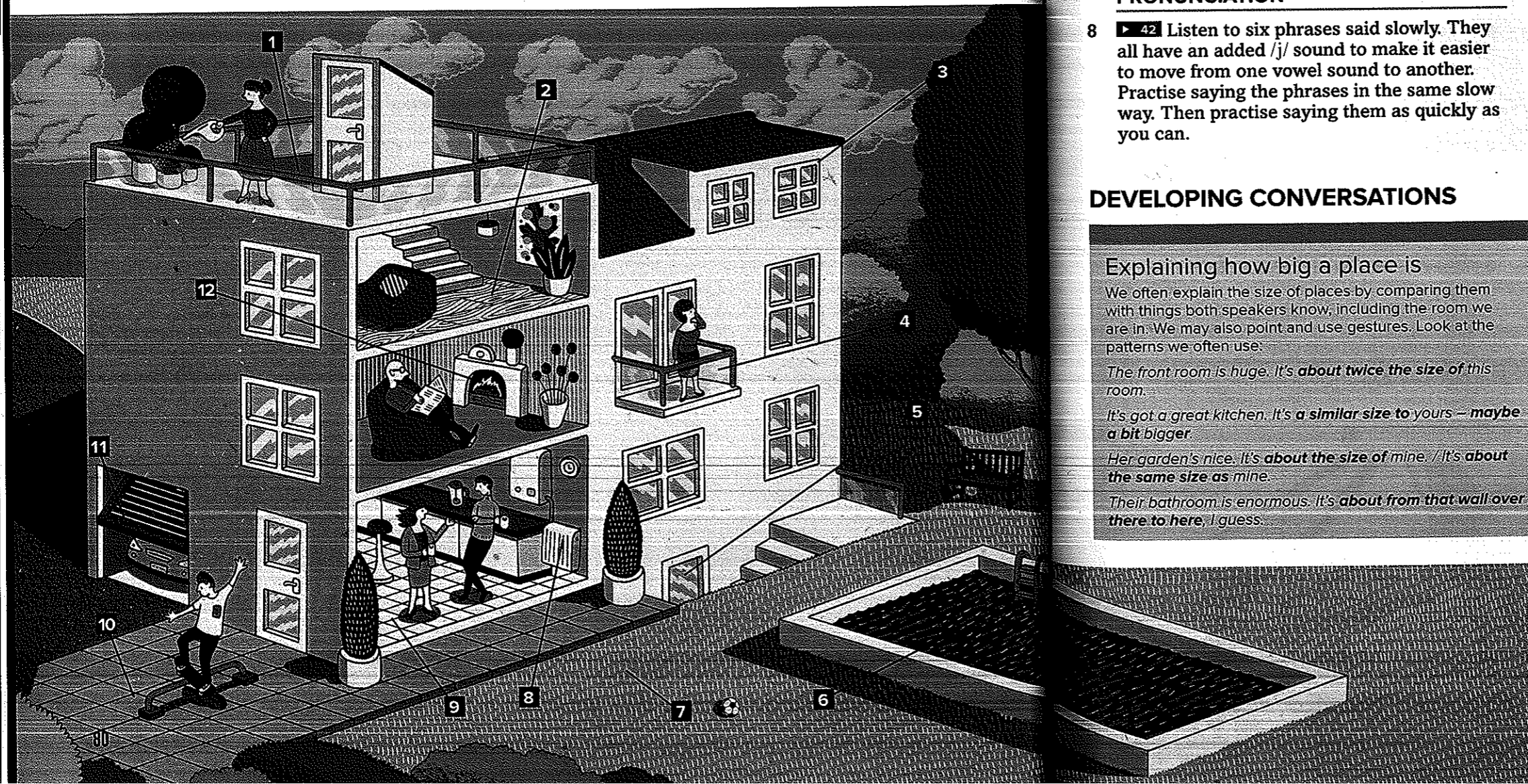
## CONVERSATION PRACTICE

### 11 Work in pairs. You are going to roleplay a conversation like the one you heard in Exercise 5. Together, invent a person and details about their new home. Think about the following:

- the location: where they live, who with, when they moved there, and why
- the best / worst things about where they live
- the size of the place – and of the individual rooms
- the local area and facilities

### 12 Now work with a new partner and roleplay the conversation. Start by asking *Did I tell you I went round to see ... the other day?* When you have finished, change roles and have another conversation.

▶ 17 To watch the video and do the activities, see the DVD ROM.



# HOUSING BUBBLE

## SPEAKING

### 1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- What age would you normally expect to do the following things? Does your partner agree?
  - leave home
  - meet your partner for life
  - buy a home
  - earn a good salary
  - start a family
- Do you think the average age to do these things has changed in your country? Since when? In what way?

## READING

### 2 Read this article from 2015 about housing in the UK and China. Then work in pairs. In what ways are the situations in the UK and China similar to your country now or in the past? In what ways are they different?

### 3 Work in pairs. Decide if the sentences below are about the UK, China or both. Read again and check your answers.

- 1 Many young people don't have the money to buy a home even if they're working.
- 2 Property prices have risen quickly in the last year.
- 3 There aren't enough places for people to live.
- 4 In general, people prefer not to live too close to others.
- 5 Wages are generally increasing for middle-class people.
- 6 A lot of foreign people are buying property as an investment.
- 7 The current situation will probably change soon because of economic reasons.
- 8 Many people try to stop big building projects near where they live.

### 4 Work in groups. Discuss the questions.

- What do you think of the following solutions to the problems talked about in the article? What consequences might there be to each of these solutions?
  - Let house prices crash.
  - Make it more difficult for foreigners to buy housing.
  - Let poor people live in empty homes for free or at a discount.
  - If houses are empty for more than six months, the government can take them.
  - The government gives money to help young people buy a home.
- Can you think of one more solution?
- How much do house prices vary in your town / city / country? Where is the best place to buy?
- If you could live anywhere you wanted, where would you choose? Why?

## VOCABULARY Social issues

### 5 Complete the sentences with these words and phrases.

climate change	cost of energy	house prices
immigration	crime rate	divorce rate

- 1 The sharp rise in \_\_\_\_\_ is largely because of the economic problems in nearby countries.
- 2 I heard the increase in the \_\_\_\_\_ is mainly due to conflicts going on in oil-producing regions.
- 3 The fact that couples work such long hours may have something to do with the high \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ must have something to do with all this recent strange weather.
- 5 The sharp fall in \_\_\_\_\_ has something to do with the fact that banks are lending less money.
- 6 The \_\_\_\_\_ is going down due to better policing and the fact that the economy is doing well.

## GRAMMAR

### Present perfect simple and present perfect continuous

The present perfect simple and the present perfect continuous can be used to talk about changes or trends from some time in the past to now.

### 6 Look at these sentences from the article. Then work in pairs and answer the questions below.

- a Property prices in China **have been rising steadily** for over a decade.
- b Over the last year prices **have increased sharply**.
- c I **have seen** one or two places on sale with a discount.

- 1 Which two phrases show a period of time when the change took place?
- 2 Can both the present perfect simple and continuous be used with these phrases?
- 3 Why is the continuous used in sentence a)?
- 4 Which of the two forms is used to show finished events before now?

**G** Check your ideas on page 176 and do Exercise 1.

### 7 Write sentences about trends using the prompts below and a word from each box.

Population / 57 to 60 million / 10 years

The population has been rising gradually over the last ten years.

fall      go down      rise      go up

gradually      slightly      dramatically      a lot

- 1 The crime rate / 250,000 to 170,000 / twenty years
- 2 Unemployment / 8% to 15% / two years
- 3 House prices / down 27% / year
- 4 The birth rate / down from 2.4 to 1.9 / ten years
- 5 The average wage / up €2 / three years
- 6 Petrol prices / up one dollar a litre / two months

**G** For further practice, see Exercise 2 on page 177.

## SPEAKING

### 8 Think of four social or economic changes that have taken place in your country. Then work in groups. Discuss the changes you thought of. Use some of the phrases in bold in Exercise 5 to say what caused them.

## WAITING FOR THE BUBBLE TO BURST

### Priced out of the market

Li Jian is a 28-year-old salesman from Guangzhou, China. He is a member of China's growing middle class, who are highly educated and in good jobs with rising salaries, but who cannot afford to buy a home. Property prices in China have been rising steadily for over a decade and the price of a home is currently 25 times the average wage. Li Jian is frustrated by the situation:

'It's impossible for me to buy a home now. I will need the help of my parents, but I also need to find a wife and that's not easy if all I can offer is life in a tiny apartment. I have seen one or two places on sale with a discount, so maybe now the market is beginning to slow down, but then that is a new problem. When do you know the market has hit the bottom? I don't want to buy somewhere and find it's worth less a year later!'

The Shanghai building boom



### A worldwide problem

China is not alone in experiencing problems with house prices. From London to Seoul and Oslo to Taipei, young people in work are finding that their opportunities in life are being limited by high housing costs. Research in the UK has found a growing gap between reality and people's expectations for 'life goals'. In general, young people expect to earn £30,000 a year by the time they're 31. However, over 70% fail to reach this target. Interestingly, even when they do, most people can still not afford to buy the house of their dreams because property prices have risen so much faster than wages. It is, therefore, not surprising that although the average person expects to leave home before they're 22, nearly 10% of adults aged between 30 and 34 still live with their parents. Similarly, while most people hope to have found love by the age of 25, one third are actually still single 15 years later.

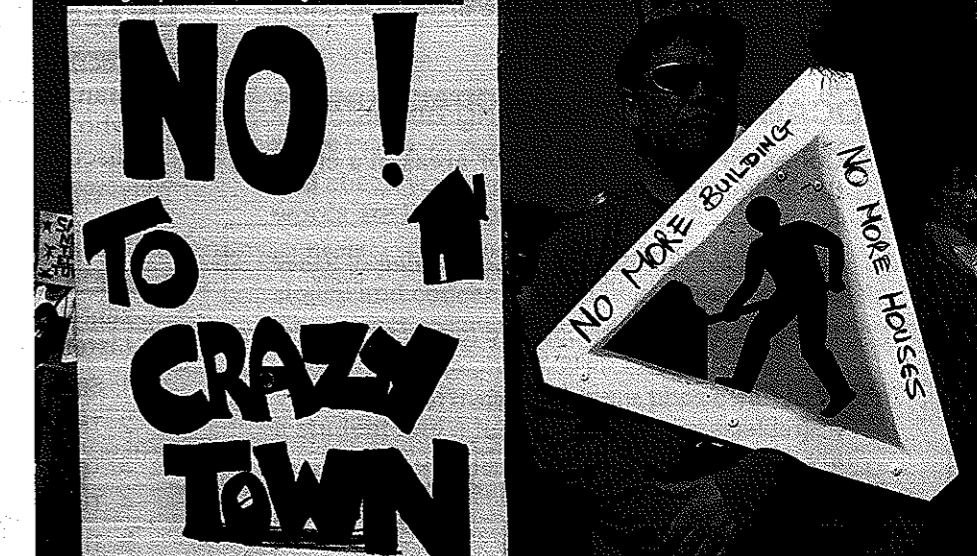
### Hope in a crash

So what hope is there for people like Li Jian? Well, there are people who believe that the best hope is for the property bubble to burst. Some believe that the current high price of real estate is not good for standards of living or the economy and with over 20% of all homes in China's urban areas currently empty, it is entirely possible that prices could crash in the near future.

Economics correspondent Tim Gordon

January 29 2015

Protesting to preserve the Englishman's castle



### Cultural barriers to change

In the UK, the problem is different. There is a shortage of housing which generally keeps prices high and over the last year prices have increased sharply – to 15 times the average income. The problem is particularly bad in London, where investors from abroad are buying huge amounts of property. However, there are also cultural attitudes that prevent change. Take, for instance, the saying 'An Englishman's home is his castle.' As it suggests, many people in the UK like their space and privacy and will fight for it. As such, most buyers prefer to own a house with a garden, rather than live in an apartment block. Finally, when there are plans to build new large blocks, many local people often protest, to protect their homes from the shadows of large buildings and the increased people, noise and traffic they bring. Without a change of attitudes, falling house prices are less likely than in China.

# ROOM TO RENT

## SPEAKING

- 1 Work in pairs and look at the photos of Berlin. What do you know about the city?
- 2 Read the adverts for six host families for foreign students studying in Berlin. Rank them from 1 (= best) to 6 (= worst) according to your opinion.



### Close to U-Bahn underground station.

8km from the city centre – near airport, Lake Tegel and woodlands. Huge and beautifully decorated house. This very friendly family offers half board (€260) or self-catering (€190) accommodation.

### BRIGHT APARTMENT

in the up-and-coming area of Freidrichshain. Self-catering rooms for two single students sharing with a friendly lady owner. Relaxed atmosphere. Within walking distance of lively nightlife. (€180)

### COMPACT ROOM

with access to own kitchen facilities. Large old house owned by a retired couple offering quiet, comfortable accommodation. Very central. (€220)

### Good-sized room

in lovely big apartment. A 45-minute bus ride from the centre. A very pleasant family of four (children 16 and 20). The flat is beautifully decorated. Half board (very good cuisine). Two dogs. Non-smoking girls only. (€200)

This cheerful household consists of a young couple, two-year-old boy and baby. Breakfast and evening meal included. Lovely, spacious room in a flat in smart residential area near Tiergarten Park and embassies. (€290)

Beautiful country house in village 35km from Berlin. Very green! Young and friendly homeowner. Internet access. 15 minutes to train station. (€170 with breakfast)

- 3 Work in groups. Discuss the order you chose and why.

## VOCABULARY Describing areas

- 4 Complete the descriptions of areas in a city with these words.

rough	isolated	connected	smart
dead	multicultural	filthy	lively

- 1 There are a lot more bars and restaurants than there used to be, so it's quite \_\_\_\_\_ at night now.
- 2 There's a lot of crime and quite a few social problems, so it's a bit \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 A lot of immigrants have settled there so it's a lot more \_\_\_\_\_ than it was in the past.
- 4 It used to be a fairly cheap, working class place, but it's become a very \_\_\_\_\_ residential area – and very expensive!
- 5 It's in the middle of nowhere. You basically need a car or you'll be a bit \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6 The streets are \_\_\_\_\_. They're covered in litter and there's graffiti everywhere.
- 7 There's absolutely nothing to do around there so it's pretty \_\_\_\_\_ at night. There isn't even a café.
- 8 It's better \_\_\_\_\_ than it was thanks to the new tram line.

- 5 Write a list of areas you know. Then work in pairs. Swap your papers and ask *What's X like?* Answer using language from Exercise 4.

## LISTENING

- 6 ▶ 43 Listen to a conversation between an English man, Shola, and a German woman, Anastasia, who has a room to rent. Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- 1 Which of the places in Exercise 1 is he visiting?
- 2 Do you think he'll rent the room? Why? / Why not?

- 7 ▶ 43 With your partner, decide which of these sentences are true based on what you heard. Listen again and check your answers.

- 1 Shola walked to the area to meet Anastasia.
- 2 The flat is on a main road.
- 3 The area has changed over recent years.
- 4 The weather is sunny and warm on the day they meet.
- 5 The building where the flat is is old.
- 6 Anastasia's been looking for a tenant for a while.
- 7 Anastasia suggests they can share the cooking.
- 8 Shola really likes rap music.

## GRAMMAR

### Comparing now and the past

We often make comparisons between situations and things as they are now and as they were in the past.

There are **a lot more bars and restaurants than there used to be.**

- 8 Look at these sentences from Exercise 4 and the conversation. Then work in pairs and answer the questions.

- a *There are fewer cars on the road than before.*
- b *There's much less crime now.*
- c *It's more popular than it used to be.*
- d *I'm much thinner than I was.*
- e *It was so much worse in the past.*
- f *I'm not as fit as I used to be.*

- 1 Which sentences use nouns in the comparisons? Which use adjectives?
- 2 When do you use *fewer* to compare and when do you use *less*?
- 3 What time words and phrases are used to refer to the past?
- 4 What usually comes first in the sentence – the situation now or the situation in the past?
- 5 What do you remember about the rules for comparative adjectives from Unit 6?

**G** Check your ideas on page 177 and do Exercise 1.

- 9 Work in groups. Discuss the questions.

- What's better and what's worse about your area now compared with the past?
- What's better and what's worse about the city or region you live in?
- What's better and what's worse about your country now?
- What's better and what's worse about your life compared with five years ago?
- What's better and what's worse about the world than it was twenty years ago?

**G** For further practice, see Exercise 2 on page 177.

## DEVELOPING CONVERSATIONS

### Asking about rules

In the conversation, you heard Shola check the rules of the house. For example:

S: *Is it OK if I cook here whenever I like?*

A: *Sure – as long as I'm not preparing something.*

When we reply, we often say 'no' using *I'm afraid not* or we suggest limits using *as long as*, *it depends* or *within reason*.

- 10 Match the questions (1–6) with the replies (a–f). Notice the phrases in bold.

- 1 **Would it be OK** if I have friends to visit?
  - 2 **Would you mind** if I cooked for myself sometimes?
  - 3 **Do I have to** be home before a certain time?
  - 4 **Can I** use the washing machine whenever I like?
  - 5 **Would it be possible to** move a table into my room?
  - 6 **Is it OK** if I play music in my room?
- a **No, not at all – as long as** you're quiet if you're back late.
  - b **I'm afraid not**, no. The two we have are needed downstairs.
  - c **Not at all – as long as** you clean up after yourself.
  - d **It depends how long for**. It's fine if it's just a few days.
  - e **Of course, within reason**. Obviously, you shouldn't play it too loud.
  - f **Within reason**. Obviously, I don't want you washing clothes in the middle of the night!

## PRONUNCIATION

- 11 ▶ 44 Listen to the exchanges from Exercise 10 and check your answers. Notice how some words are linked together.
- 12 Work in pairs. Practise saying the exchanges slowly and concentrate on linking the words. Then practise saying them as quickly as you can.
- 13 With your partner, roleplay a phone call between a student and a host family. Use as much new language from this unit as you can. When you have finished, change roles and have another conversation.

Student A: you are the student. Ask questions about:

- the house.
- the area.
- rules.
- any special requests.

Student B: you are a member of the host family.