Hometown

Where we're from, who we become

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

1 **Where is your hometown, and what local food, festival, or gem would you brag about to outsiders?**

2 **Which city feels like a second home to you, and why do you love it?**

FREE TALK

1 Some people say home is where you were born; others say it's where you spent your childhood, or simply where you live now. **Which place do you call your hometown, and what makes it feel like home?**

2 Imagine you're offered your dream job, but it's in a city far from your family and friends, and the pay barely covers the higher cost of living. **Would you take it, or stay close to the people you know? What would ultimately sway your decision?**

3 Many neighborhoods have changed almost beyond recognition, with old shops giving way to chain stores and new apartment complexes. **When you go back to your hometown, what has changed the most, and is it a change for the better?**

4 As young people move to big cities, many small towns are losing residents, leaving empty schools and shuttered shops behind. **If you were the mayor of one of these towns with a limited budget, what's the one thing you would invest in to bring people back, and why?**

5 When a famous athlete or celebrity comes from a small town, banners go up and locals proudly claim them as their own. **Why do people feel proud of someone just because they share a hometown?**

SAY IT BETTER

Upgrade what you'd normally say.

I have mixed feelings about home now.	→	I've grown **deeply ambivalent about** my hometown.
A chance like this doesn't come often.	→	An opportunity like this is **too good to pass up**.
It doesn't look like it used to.	→	It has **changed beyond recognition**.
Without jobs, the comeback won't last.	→	Without jobs, a revival would **prove short-lived**.
I feel proud of him, though I did nothing.	→	I'm **basking in his reflected glory**.

New and spacious, or old but close?

1 SITUATION

You must choose between two apartments with identical rent and deposit: a new, spacious one 20 minutes on foot from the station, or an aging one half the size, 3 minutes away. Some would forgo convenience for room to breathe. Others insist proximity is indispensable.

2 TWO SIDES

Choose a side. If one side is empty, assign teams randomly. Everyone must speak twice. The larger side goes first. First, explain your own view. Then, speak again in reverse order and respond to what you heard.

A COMFORT IS KING

"A home should be a sanctuary, and ample space is worth a longer walk."

Cramped, aging quarters take a toll on sleep and mood. The walk doubles as exercise, and a new building spares you repairs.

B TIME IS GOLD

"When time is at a premium, proximity matters far more than a spare room."

A long walk leaves commuters at the mercy of heat and rain every day. Flaws in a building can be remedied; distance cannot.

3 FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Ask a question that could make the other side reconsider its position. Then, be ready to answer their question.

ASK SIDE A

1 After a late company dinner in pouring rain, how appealing is a 20-minute trek?

2 Once the novelty wears off, will the extra space still compensate for a 40-minute round trip every day?

3 More space means more cleaning. Is the extra room worth the extra chores?

ASK SIDE B

1 Drafty old places mean high heating bills and constant repairs. Is it worth the hassle?

2 Do you really think you can fit your accommodations in such a cramped, run-down place?

3 Areas around stations are noisy and congested. How restful would evenings be?

4 FINAL ROUND

FINAL POSITION — What did you think at the start? What do you think now, and why?

MVP VOTE — Who made the strongest point? Name the person and explain why.

KEY EXPRESSIONS

a sanctuary
: a place where you feel safe, calm and protected

be at the mercy of
: to have no control over something that affects you

forgo
: to choose to go without something you would like

the novelty wears off
: something new stops feeling exciting over time

at a premium
: hard to get, and therefore especially valuable

take a toll on
: to slowly cause harm or damage to something