

“The Dance of Conversation”

Resource Worksheet for LEAP



Introduction

This resource worksheet provides conversation tips and strategies to help you break the ice, connect with others, and advance your goals. Conversation skills are important because they

- Connect with others,
- Expand your network,
- improve communication with peers and co-workers, and
- help problem solve any current or potential issue(s).

Before we get started, first ask yourself:

- When in a group of people, is it difficult for you to follow and/or hear conversations?

- Are you more comfortable choosing the topic and leading the conversation? or being quiet and an “observer?”
- Do you **“know your number?”** What this means is, do you know how many people you can comfortably follow along with in a group setting without getting lost? It's okay if it's just one person, you might be more comfortable one-on-one!
- Are you more comfortable in one-on-one conversations, or in group conversations?

Conversation Strategies

As humans, we are social beings. We use conversation to relate, share, dream, discuss, argue, comfort, you name it... It can be nerve-racking to start a conversation with someone new, someone we may be shy around, or someone older than us, like our teachers, coaches, or boss at work. .

We use conversations to express our feelings, to share ideas, to get to know someone better, or to learn something new. The best ways to do this is to take initiative and “break the ice” with someone to get a conversation going.

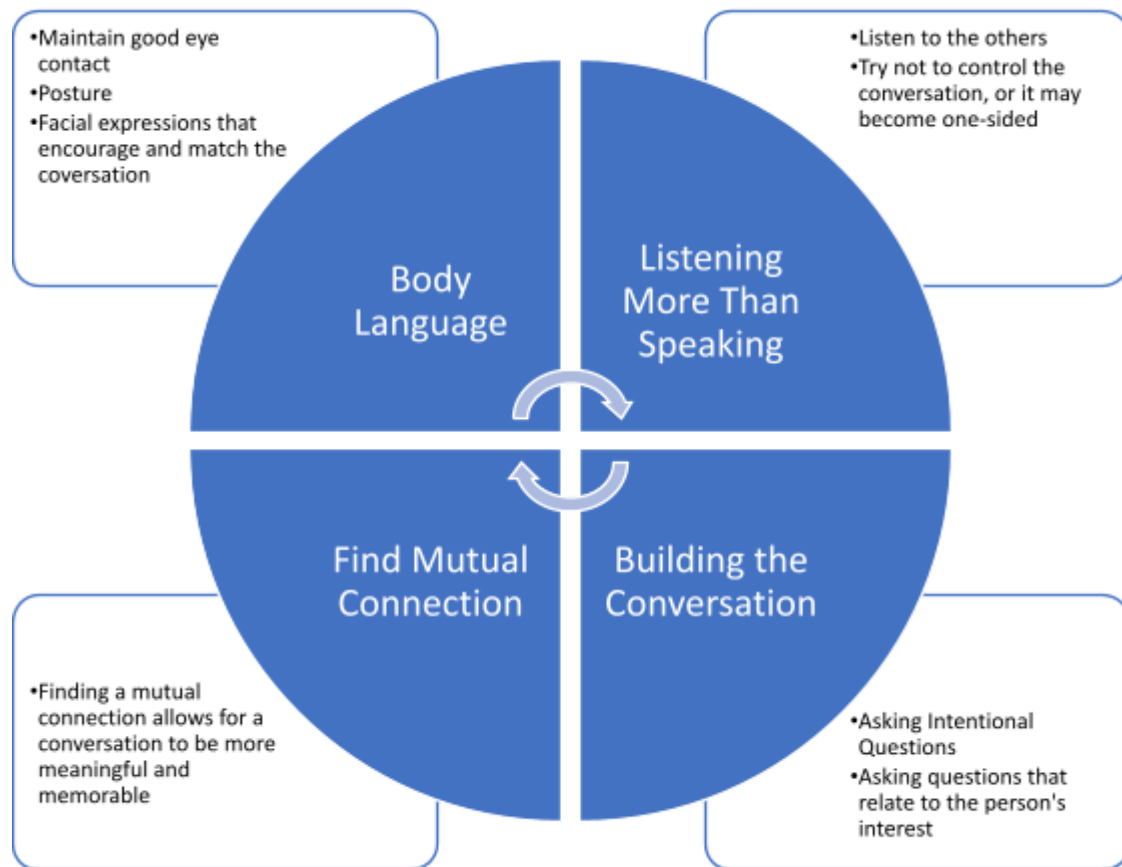
Ice Breakers

An “ice-breaker” is an expression to ‘warm up’ a room full of people, or an interaction between two people. This gets people in a relaxed state. In good conversation practice, people should typically start with one ice-breaker and then use follow-up questions from the conversation.

There are a number of ways that you can present an “ice-breaker” question to get the other person relaxed and warmed up to you, such as::

- Do you play any instruments?
- Do you play any sports?
- Are you involved in any after-school activities or clubs?
- If you could donate a million dollars to any charity, what cause would you choose?
- if you had a blank plane ticket, where would you travel to?
- What subject gets you most interested?
- What are you most excited about this year?
- What shows are you binging on?
- Are you reading any good books?

For more ice-breaker questions, visit <https://museumhack.com/list-icebreakers-questions/>



Composure During a Conversation

How you “show up” during a conversation impacts the quality and direction. If you are engaged and listening, the conversation will be able to continue. If on the other hand, you multitask, don't follow-up with questions, or dominate the conversation by talking all about yourself, the conversation may not go very far. There are four components of a conversation that feed into each other:

Body Language

It has been suggested that body language may account for between 60 to 65% of all communication. (Source, “Understanding Body Language and Facial Expressions,” [VeryWell May 2019](#))

As deaf and hard of hearing individuals, we are more “in-tune” to body language than most. When in a conversation, we see eye-contact, nodding, or smiles, that is our signal that the conversation is going well and to keep going.

On the contrary, if others' arms are crossed, facial expressions are stoic, or they are checking their watch or mobile device / looking around, the conversation isn't going to be very fluid or engaging.

As we "read" this in others, we should be mindful of how we are presenting *ourselves* to others, too. As we may rely more on lip-reading, we are giving the impression of paying "extra attention" to what others' are saying, which gives them a confidence boost and a cue to keep going.

Here are a few suggested body language 'markers' to be mindful of in conversation:

- Eye Contact (Yes, it's ok if you're lip-reading!)
- Facial Expressions to indicate response
- Posture (Open vs. Closed (arms crossed, legs crossed))
- Paying attention (not being distracted)
- Phone screen "down" on table, or off table altogether.

Listen More than Speak

"Every good conversation starts with good listening."

People like to talk about themselves! Ask questions to get them talking, refer back to the [ice-breaker](#) questions if you need ideas.

A hallmark of a good listener is in how you ask the follow-up questions. Are they related to what was said? For example if someone is speaking about their dream vacation destination, ask what kinds of activities they'd like to be doing? It is appropriate to respond in mutual interest and agreement, but do not "steal their thunder" and make it one-sided by dominating the conversation. If you get carried away, it's okay to 'check yourself' and put it back on them with a follow-up question.

Build the Conversation

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, build up the conversation by asking related follow-up questions. Be intentional and ask questions that you think relate to their interests. If you find that the conversation is getting off track or in an area that you don't necessarily agree with, ask intentional questions to get back to the conversation in a more neutral manner. (See "[Redirection](#)" Section below.)

Find Mutual Connection

As you present positive body language, listen, and build the conversation, find mutual interests that you both can relate to. This builds rapport and a basis to keep the conversation "flowing."

When this occurs, a positive association forms and the person will develop a good memory of the interaction and will be more willing to both continue the conversation and engage the next time you approach them..

Asking Questions

There are two types of questions that may be asked in a conversation, one stops a conversation, and the other keeps a conversation flowing. Being careful on how you ask your question influences whether or not the conversation continues.

Close-ended Questions:

- Require a yes-or-no answer.

Open-ended Questions:

- Allows for more beyond "yes or no" answers, often with input, opinion, or perspective answers.

To keep conversation moving, it is recommended that you do ask **open-ended questions**:

Here are some examples:

Close-Ended Questions (Avoid)	Open-Ended Questions (Recommend)
Is this easy to use?	What worked well for you? What was frustrating?
Do you like this?	What was the best part about this? What would you want done differently?

For more examples, visit:

<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/open-ended-questions/#:~:text=Open%2Dended%20questions%20are%20questions,or%20All%20of%20the%20Above>.

Conversation Characteristics:

In this section we will cover some conversation characteristics to help you keep a conversation flowing, repair it, and how to "close" it.

Redirecting Conversation:

Have you ever reached an uncomfortable topic, such as, relationship status, politics, religion, or gossip? It is not uncommon for conversations to become awkward, but there are tips to redirect the conversation to keep it going, just on a different topic.

Scenario	Technique	Example of a Response
Someone mentions your ex	Acknowledge then Redirect	You can briefly acknowledge the breakup, but then discuss how you've been enjoying meeting new people and getting into dancing. Then you could start talking about how you have been learning to dance.
Someone starts criticizing the political view that you support.	Compliment their Knowledge on the Subject	Recognize their insights and ask about their background/what influenced their beliefs.
Someone begins gossiping about someone while you are at a meal with others.	Abrupt Change of Topic	You could discuss the food you are eating as a change of topic.
Someone brings up a tragic event that is sensitive to you	Be Direct	This would be an appropriate time to ask the person to talk about something else because it is affecting you negatively.

For more: <https://www.thespruce.com/uncomfortable-conversations-4154256>

Conversational Repair:

If someone isn't understanding what you are saying, you use the opportunity to rephrase what you said. Sometimes you are able to catch on that someone is not understanding you by their confused facial expressions, so you may change what you are saying mid-sentence.

Technique	Approach	Example
Repetition (Repeat at a slower rate; Repeat spoken more clearly; Repeat louder; Emphasize key words. Politely ask him to repeat what he said – more loudly, clearly, and/or slowly)	Use one or more of the words you heard and include it as you ask the person to repeat. o This shows you were paying attention and that you want to be a good conversational partner. This is the best choice of the repetition strategies if you heard enough to use it	I saw some students playing in Wright Park. → Students playing where ?
Revision (Different form, word order.)	*Break into two sentences; Different words, same meaning.	Could you please say that a different way?

<p>Addition</p> <p>(Add just a little information; Define terms; Add background context.)</p>	<p>Add a word or a bit of information along with what you originally said.</p> <p>This way you are not just 'parroting' and adding a word may make your message easier to understand.</p> <p>Define what you meant when you said part of your message. Maybe you were misunderstood because one word or concept was missed for some reason.</p> <p>Provide some background information to what you said to help explain your message.</p> <p>Maybe you were misunderstood because one word or concept was missed for some reason</p>	<p>*I saw some students playing in Wright Park. → I saw some students playing on the slide at Wright Park.</p> <p>*I saw some students playing in Wright Park. → Some kids were playing on the slide when I went past Wright Park today.</p> <p>*I saw some students playing in Wright Park. → You know Wright Park, in the North part of town? I saw some students playing there today.</p>
<p>Nonverbal</p> <p>(Add a bit of visual information along with what you originally said.)</p>	<p>* A visual may make your verbal message easier to understand. "I saw some students playing in Wright Park".</p> <p>* Nonverbally ask the person to say it again.</p> <p>*If you heard part of what was said, then include it in your request for more information.</p>	<p>*Point to map of Wright Park, mime going down a slide, sign, fingerspell or write key information</p> <p>*Raise your hands and shoulders; use a questioning expression; shake your head 'no.'</p> <p>*Do you mean Wright Park in the North part of town? Point that direction.</p> <p>*Were the students playing baseball or were they at the playground on the slide and swings? Mime or sign baseball, slide, swings.</p>

Opening/Closing Conversation:

Opening Conversation:	Examples:
Shared experience/Noticing Something Positive	"Don't you just love coming to this restaurant during lunch. They always have the most wonderful food and service."
Give a compliment	"You did an incredible job on your presentation. I loved the way you formatted the slides and clearly demonstrated the information."
Ask for someone's opinion	"What do you think about these presentation topics?" "Do you recommend any of the sessions you attended?"
Ask for help/offer help	"Do you know where the brochures are?" "I noticed you seemed to be unsure of which direction to go, would you like me to help point you in the right direction?"

Closing Conversation:	Examples:
Say thank you and then goodbye	"I've enjoyed talking with you. Thank you for your time and sharing your perspective. I hope you have a great evening!"
Positive Feedback and then give your reason to head out	"I've enjoyed catching up with you, but I need to get ready for class."
Give the other person an out, especially the bride/groom or host/hostess	"I know you have several other guests to attend to, so I will let you go. Thank you for hosting such a great event!"

<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/how-to-start-a-conversation/>

<https://www.inc.com/minda-zetlin/11-foolproof-ways-to-nicely-end-a-conversation.html>

<https://www.espressoenglish.net/how-to-end-a-conversation-in-english/>