

Initiating, Maintaining, and Ending Conversations Skill Card 25

[Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)

How To Greet Someone

1. Saying “Hi”
2. Saying “Hi” and using the person’s name
3. A nod, smile, or wave of the hand.

How To Initiate A Conversation

1. Ask open-ended questions about something you know you have in common with the person (e.g., a book you see them with, an activity or sport you know they are involved with, etc.). Get them talking and be a good listener. People like others who listen well and show an interest in them.
2. Ask an open-ended question about something happening in school, the community, or the world. If you are in a class with them, ask what they think about the teacher, the subject, or a recent project or class activity. Try to avoid “yes” or “no” questions. Continue to ask open-ended questions.
3. Compliment them on something and, if possible, follow up with questions (e.g., what they are wearing, their hair), a skill (e.g., you have a great voice and then how long have you been singing), their personality (e.g., you have a great sense of humor), personal features (you have a great smile), etc.
4. If you are at a total loss, you can use the worn-out but effective openers, such as talking about the weather, local sports teams, etc.
5. If it seems like they need help with something, volunteer to help. Or, if you need help, ask them if they could help you. People like to help.

How To Introduce Yourself To Someone You Don’t Know

1. Hi, my name is...
2. If they don’t go to the same school or live in the same town, ask them questions about what their school/town is like. Ask them about school and activities they are involved in, and share your information with them. Ask an open-ended question. Try to avoid “yes” or “no” questions. Continue to ask open-ended questions.

How To Keep A Conversation Going

1. Ask open-ended questions. Try to avoid “yes” or “no” questions.
2. Get them talking about themselves, especially about things they are interested in.
3. Express an interest in the other person’s expertise, activities, or unique ability.
4. Be enthusiastic and positive.
5. Be a good listener.
6. Tell them things about yourself. Determine what you want them to know about you and share that information.
7. Make silences work for you. People don’t like silence and may fill the void if you run out of things to say.

How To End A Conversation Comfortably

1. The ending should be as smooth and natural as possible.
2. Don't cut the other person off in the middle of a sentence—try to find a natural place to stop.
3. Nonverbal cues, such as breaking eye contact, moving toward the exit, smiling, etc., can indicate that you want to end the conversation.
4. Be sure to convey the following message: you are about to leave, you've enjoyed the conversation (being with the other person), and you hope to see them soon.
5. If you want to meet with the person soon, make a date (time and place) when you will meet (see below).
6. You can always say that you need to get going and enjoyed talking with them.

How To Organize An Activity With Another Person or Group

1. Have something definite in mind (don't ask if they would like to get together). Say: "Would you like to...."
2. Have an alternative in mind to allow the person or group some freedom of choice.
3. Don't sound negative, as if the other person will be doing you a favor or you expect them to say no. Avoid saying something like, "You wouldn't want to go out with me, would you?"
4. Before ending the conversation, try to determine a specific day and time.

Listening & Maintaining A Conversation

A key component of successfully maintaining a conversation is communicating that you are listening and interested in what they say. Below are some tips for being a good listener.

Basic Listening Tips

Pay attention and show concern.

1. Give the speaker your full attention.
2. Make direct eye contact if you feel comfortable with it.
3. Lean forward toward the speaker.
4. Be supportive; don't interrupt, judge, or criticize the speaker.

Use nonverbal skills and brief verbal responses to acknowledge the speaker.

1. Nod or shake your head as appropriate.
2. Change your facial expression as appropriate (for example, show concern or excitement).
3. Say things like "Yes," "I see," "Uh huh," "mm mm," or "Go on."

Ask clarifying questions such as

1. "So, what happened that got you so upset?" (or "got you so excited, "made you so sad," etc.? as appropriate).
2. "What do you think is going on?"
3. "What do you think about that?"
4. Ask how the speaker is feeling. ("How do you feel about that?")