

Social Skills

CONVERSATION SKILLS

Listening to Others

Starting a Conversation with a New or Unfamiliar Person

Maintaining Conversations by Asking Questions

Maintaining Conversations by Giving Factual Information

Maintaining Conversations by Expressing Feelings

Ending Conversations

Entering into an Ongoing Conversation

Staying on the Topic Set by Another Person

What to Do When Someone Goes Off the Topic

Getting Your Point Across

What to Do When You Do Not Understand What a Person is Saying

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Listening to Others

- Step 1.** Maintain eye contact.
- Step 2.** Nod your head.
- Step 3.** Say “uh-huh” or “ok”
- Step 4.** Repeat what the person said.

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Starting a Conversation with a New or Unfamiliar Person

- Step 1.** Choose the right time and place.
- Step 2.** If you do not know the person, introduce yourself. If you know the person, say “Hi.”
- Step 3.** Choose a topic that you would like to talk about OR ask a question.
- Step 4.** Judge whether the other person is listening and wants to talk.

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Maintaining a Conversation by Asking Questions

- Step 1.** Greet the person.
- Step 2.** Ask a question about something you would like to know about.
- Step 3.** Judge whether the person is listening and is interested in pursuing the conversation.

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Maintaining a Conversation by Giving Factual Information

- Step 1.** Greet the person.
- Step 2.** Share some information about a topic you would like to discuss.
- Step 3.** Judge whether the other person is listening and is interested in pursuing the conversation.

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Maintaining a Conversation by Expressing Feelings or Opinions

- Step 1.** Greet the person.
- Step 2.** Make a brief statement about how something makes you feel.
- Step 3.** Judge if the person is listening and is interested in continuing the conversation.

Examples of “feeling” words:

Glad	Worried
Relieved	Disappointed
Happy	Angry
Excited	Sad

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Ending Conversations

- Step 1.** Wait until the other person has finished talking.
- Step 2.** Use a non-verbal gesture such as glancing away or looking at your watch.
- Step 3.** Make a closing comment, such as “well, I really need to go now.”
- Step 4.** Say good-bye.

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Entering into an Ongoing Conversation

- Step 1.** Wait for a break in the flow of the conversation.
- Step 2.** Say something like “May I join you?”
- Step 3.** Decide whether the people engaged in the conversation are OK with your joining in.
- Step 4.** Say things related to the subject of the conversation.

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Staying on the Topic Set by Another Person

- Step 1.** Decide what the topic is by listening to the person who is speaking.
- Step 2.** If you do not understand what the topic is after listening, ask the person.
- Step 3.** Say things related to the topic.

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What to Do When Someone Goes Off the Topic

- Step 1.** Say something like “That’s interesting; can we talk about that after we finish this discussion?”
- Step 2.** If the person has forgotten what the topic is, politely remind him or her.
- Step 3.** Judge whether the other person is still interested in the original topic.
- Step 4.** If the other person is interested, continue the discussion. If he or she is not interested, politely end the conversation or talk about something new.

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Getting Your Point Across

- Step 1.** Decide on the main point you want to get across.
- Step 2.** Speak in short sentences and stay on the topic.
- Step 3.** Pause to let the other person speak or ask questions.
- Step 4.** Answer any questions.

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What to Do When You Do Not Understand What a Person is Saying

- Step 1.** Tell the person that you are confused or that you did not understand what was said.
- Step 2.** Ask the person to repeat or explain what was just said.
- Step 3.** Ask further questions if you still do not understand.