

Conversation Tips

Start it

The biggest reason most conversations don't happen is that nobody starts it.

Ask Questions

While we're all tempted to view conversation as our opportunity to impress others, it's better to focus on learning about them. There's no need to turn a conversation into an interrogation, but casual questions are one of the easiest ways to show you care.

Listen Well

Most people reveal their passions and interests in subtle ways during casual conversation. Pick up on what your neighbors care about, and engage them on the things that matter to them.

Focus On Shared Interests

Nobody has everything in common, but almost any two people share a few interests. Whether it's sports and pop culture, or an interest in art or science, one of the easiest ways to build rapport is to connect over the things you both care about.

Be Genuinely Interested

No matter who you're talking to, you're interacting with a person with a rich well of stories, opinions, and experiences. Your conversation is an incredible opportunity to learn more about the world and connect with others.

Put The Phone Away

Nothing kills a conversation faster than digital distraction. Do your best to minimize anything that will take your focus off the person in front of you.

Make Eye Contact

While sustained eye contact may be a bit unnerving, most of us depend on brief moments of direct contact to gauge the honesty and intentions of other people. By making eye contact, we're signaling that we're all in on the conversation and interested in connection.

Read Body Language

Does this person seem distracted? Uncomfortable? It's not always the best time to talk, so be ready to wrap things up and give other people an "out." Healthy friendships are defined by boundaries.

Remember The Details

It's only natural to forget a name or story every now and then, but nothing undermines friendship like a continued disinterest in the details of other peoples' lives. Recall your conversations after you leave in order to remember names and make things easier the next time around.

Don't Try To Win

We've all been stuck in conversation with a one-upper or over-eager storyteller-- the kind of person who sees interaction as a way to tout their skills or experience. Resist the temptation to respond to stories or anecdotes with even bigger stories or anecdotes.

Follow Up

Social scientists describe a process called "active listening," which involves asking clarifying questions, or stating a person's premise back to them. The takeaway? We tend to feel more valued and understood when people care enough to clarify what we're saying. (Example: "We spent this summer caring for my mother. She's sick and we're having a tough time." "Wow. That sounds really difficult. Are you feeling exhausted?").