

# Conversations: Using Courtesy Expressions

Courtesy expressions are phrases that are commonly used in daily interactions. They are used in a variety of social situations to greet people and respond to greetings, to signal the end of conversations, to say goodbye, and to sympathize, apologize, and express and respond to thanks.



**Audio 3.3:** Listen to the conversation between two friends at a community centre. As you listen, fill in the blanks with the courtesy expressions you hear. Practise the dialogue with a partner.

Lynn: Hi, Julie. \_\_\_\_\_?

Julie: \_\_\_\_\_. How about you?

Lynn: \_\_\_\_\_.

Julie: Listen, \_\_\_\_\_ referring me to Lorraine Holt. I met with her yesterday and she was very impressed with my resumé!

Lynn: It was my \_\_\_\_\_. I was \_\_\_\_\_.

Julie: She's going to pass my resumé on to someone else she knows who is hiring right now.

Lynn: \_\_\_\_\_, Julie!

Julie: I'll let you know what happens.

Lynn: Great. I hope you get the job. By the way, how is your cat doing?

Julie: Oh, poor Tiger. He got to the point where he wasn't eating or drinking so we had to put him to sleep.

Lynn: Oh, Julie, \_\_\_\_\_. Tiger was a wonderful cat.

Julie: Yes, he was. I miss him so much. \_\_\_\_\_, I \_\_\_\_\_  
Mark is picking me up and he's probably in the parking lot. \_\_\_\_\_ for your help.

Lynn: \_\_\_\_\_.

Julie: \_\_\_\_\_.

Lynn: \_\_\_\_\_.

Julie: Bye.

Lynn: Bye.

## 2

**Write other expressions that you are familiar with for the purposes below.**

- |                                       |                           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Greetings & Responding to Greetings | • Responding to Good News |
| • Responding to Bad News              | • Expressing Thanks       |
| • Signaling the End of a Conversation | • Saying Goodbye          |

# Conversation Strategies

Keeping a conversation going can be a difficult thing to do, especially if you are shy or in the company of people you do not know very well. Here are some techniques you can use to encourage another person to speak:

- Ask questions. You can initiate a conversation by asking another person about something you think you might have in common or something you think they might be interested in talking about. For example, *How long have you lived in this neighbourhood? How do you know Gina? How do you like the school?*
- Answer questions with longer answers, adding specific/interesting information. For example, *Do you like living here? – Yes, there are so many interesting places to visit. Last week we went to ...*
- Answer a question, then redirect it using these expressions: *And you? What about you?*
- Respond to the other person’s comment/answer with a follow-up question. For example, *I live in Toronto. – Oh, really, which part of Toronto? How long have you lived there? How do you like it there?*
- Comment on what the other person is saying to encourage more details or to show interest: *That’s really interesting; I had no idea!; I lived in Montreal. – Really? I love Montreal! What a great city.*
- Use a short response or vocal filler to show that you are listening. For example, *Oh, yeah; Really?; Uh-huh; Mmmmm; Yes; I see; Wow.*
- Signal a change of topic when you feel you are “running on empty.” For example, *Oh, by the way ...; So, ah, ....; Now, what about ...;*



**Audio 3.4:** Listen to three dialogues. Complete the chart by writing the topics in each conversation. Record who the speakers might be and where each conversation might be taking place. Write down the words and expressions used by the speakers to keep the conversation going.

	Topics	Speakers	Location
1.			
2.			
3.			



**Search the Internet for tips on having a good conversation or being a good conversationalist. Present your findings to the class.**

Possible search terms: *how to have a great conversation; good conversationalist; conversation strategies*

- 3** Choose one of the statements below. Create questions (as many as you can) that can be used to keep a conversation going. Exchange your questions with a classmate for peer evaluation. Then role-play the conversation using your questions and other strategies to keep the conversation going.

1. I've just returned from Vancouver.
2. I am starting college after this course.
3. We are moving next month.

- 4** Work in pairs. Take turns responding to the questions below to keep the conversation going. Give answers with some details to keep the conversation going. When your partner is speaking, use short responses and vocal fillers to show that you are listening.

1. How long have you lived in Canada?
2. Where did you learn English? You speak so well.
3. Do you live around here?
4. Have you ever been to the Planetarium?
5. Do you still go to the yoga classes at the Y?

- 5** Body language is an important element of a conversation and can convey different messages. In small groups, discuss and demonstrate how you could convey each of the messages below through body language.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. It's interesting what you're saying.   | 6. I'm in a hurry and don't have time to talk. |
| 2. Oh, no!                                | 7. Wait a moment!                              |
| 3. I can't believe it!                    | 8. I don't agree.                              |
| 4. I would like to end this conversation. | 9. You're right.                               |
| 5. I'm all ears.                          | 10. Really? It sounds quite unbelievable.      |

- 6** Work in groups of four. With a partner, role-play a conversation starting with one of the statements below. Use a variety of conversation strategies and add details to keep the conversation going. Your partners will observe your role-play and give you feedback on the strategies you used.

1. I thought I would never make it to class this morning!
2. We had a great weekend!
3. You will never guess who I just met in the lobby!