

Lesson 25: Agreeing & Disagreeing

Conversation #1 – Agreeing

Shannon and Cathy are discussing ways to improve the happiness of employees at their company. Listen to this conversation to learn some phrases for agreeing in English:

Shannon: I think we need some new policies or programs for motivating our staff.

Cathy: I couldn't agree more. We could really use a boost in morale; a lot of our co-workers seem pretty miserable.

Shannon: Exactly. It would be great if there was a system of bonuses based on performance.

Cathy: I suppose so... but there isn't much extra money in the budget for staff bonuses.

Shannon: You're right. Maybe we could allow staff to choose between a monetary bonus and extra vacation time.

Cathy: Hey, that's a great idea. I bet the staff members with families would really appreciate that option.

Shannon: There's no doubt about it. And I also think we should have more celebrations in the office - birthday parties, holiday parties, that sort of thing. This place is too serious most of the time.

Cathy: I feel the same way. Not only would it liven up the office, but it would also help form friendships among the staff members.

Shannon: I agree 100%. Let's write up some of our recommendations and present them to the vice president.

Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

Shannon and Cathy are definitely “on the same page” – that’s an expression meaning they agree or have similar ideas about almost everything. Here are some phrases for agreeing strongly with someone:

Strong Agreement

- **I totally agree with you.**
- **I couldn't agree more.**
- **I agree 100%.**
- **Exactly.**
- **You're absolutely right.**
- **There's no doubt about it.**
- **You can say that again!** (informal)
- **Tell me about it!** (informal)

All the phrases above can be used when you really want to emphasize how strongly you agree with the other person. Now practice these phrases for expressing ordinary agreement:

Regular Agreement

- **I agree.**
- **I share your opinion.**
- **I feel the same way.**
- **You're right.**
- **That's true.**
- **That's for sure.** (informal)

Be careful not to make the common mistake of saying **"I'm agree."** The correct way to say it is "I agree" or "I'm in agreement" – although this second phrase is much more formal.

In the conversation, there's a moment when Cathy agrees that bonuses would be great, but she is not completely convinced because of the problems with the budget. Here are some phrases for "reluctant agreement" – when you agree, but you still have some potential concerns:

Reluctant Agreement

- **I suppose so.**
- **I guess so.**
- **Well, you could be right.**

With these phrases, the way you say them and the context of the conversation makes a difference. Compare these two dialogues:

“Sarah’s not home. She must have already left for work.”

“I guess so!”

= You’re right; I agree with your idea

“I know you’re not happy about moving to a new city, but it will really be better for our family in the long run.”

“I guess so.”

= I agree reluctantly; I still have some concerns, but I’m not going to argue

Finally, we have some phrases for partial agreement – when you agree with one part of someone’s opinion, but you disagree with another part:

Partial Agreement

- **I agree up to a point, but...**
- **I agree in principle, but...**

(say this when you agree with an idea, but disagree with the way that idea is applied in practice)

Conversation #2 – Disagreeing

Shannon presents a proposal for an expanded "employee motivation program" to the vice president, Dan. Unfortunately, the conversation doesn't go very well...

Dan: I respect your opinion, but I see it differently. The staff should be doing their best work at all times; they shouldn't need a bunch of extra bonuses and parties.

Shannon: I agree up to a point - of course we should do our best - but making the office environment enjoyable and giving incentives for good performance will make everyone more likely to do great work.

Dan: I'm sorry, but I don't agree. If someone's not doing their job, they should be fired. That should be motivation enough for any sensible person.

Shannon: I understand what you're saying, but I think that we should also have some incentives for doing great work - not just punishments for poor performance.

Dan: I'm of a different opinion. The company exists to make a profit, not to keep the staff happy.

Shannon: Actually, I think we can do both. Happier workers are naturally more dedicated to their work - and that means more profits for the company.

Dan: Well... you could be right. But I'm not willing to make any changes to our policies at this time.

Shannon: OK, but how about a small change? We could start with just...

Dan: I'm sorry, Shannon, but that's my final answer.

Shannon: You can't be serious. I can't believe you don't even care about the well-being of your staff. This is a terrible place to work... I quit!

Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

Dan and Shannon don't agree on anything. This dialogue shows us a number of different ways to disagree politely – without disrespecting or offending the other person:

Phrases for Disagreeing Politely

- I'm afraid I disagree.
- I'm sorry, but I don't agree.
- I don't see it that way. / I see it differently.
- I'm of a different opinion.
- I'm not so sure about that.
- Yes, but...
- I understand what you're saying, but...
- I respect your opinion, but... / You have a right to your opinion, but...
- Well, I think...
- Actually, I think...

You can see that the first two phrases are the most direct. The last two phrases are very indirect. All of these phrases are OK to use in a formal or professional context.

When you want to express strong disagreement, you can use these phrases:

Strong Disagreement

- **I totally disagree.**
- **I don't agree with that at all.**
- **No way!** (informal – can be rude)
- **You can't be serious! / You've got to be kidding!** (informal – can be rude)
- **You're totally/completely wrong.** (informal – can be rude)

With these phrases, only the first two are appropriate for formal or professional situations. The informal phrases should only be used among friends – and even then, using them might start an argument! By the end of the dialogue, Shannon loses her temper and says “You can't be serious!” – and then she quits her job.

Conversation #3 – Agreeing & Disagreeing – Short forms

Now Shannon is looking for a new job. Her sister Mary is also unemployed, and the two of them are browsing the online job listings and chatting about their preferences:

Shannon: I'm going to look for a job at a smaller company. I don't really enjoy working for big corporations.

Mary: Oh, I do. They offer you a lot of opportunities to advance in your career. I wouldn't want to work in a dead-end job.

Shannon: Neither would I - but it would be great to find a company that's still small, but growing fast. I think it would be exciting.

Mary: Me too. Hey, here's an interesting startup with a job opening - oh, but it's in New York. I'm not willing to move there.

Shannon: Well, I am. A change of scenery would be nice. And I absolutely love New York City.

Mary: So do I - but I'd rather visit than live there!

Shannon: If I get a job there, then you can visit me. Let's see... a couple of these organizations are hiring, but I don't really want to work for a non-profit.

Mary: Me neither. The salaries are far too low.

Shannon: Here are a couple administrative jobs at universities... I think working at a school would be boring, though.

Mary: Really? I don't. Maybe I'll apply for some of those positions.

Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

In this dialogue, we see a few examples of ways to agree and disagree using short phrases. You can use these phrases to agree:

- **Me too.**
- **Me neither.**
- **So/neither do I.**
- **So/neither am I.**
- **So/neither have I.**
- **So/neither would I.**

BOTH “Me too” and “Me neither” are used to agree! The difference is that “Me too” is used to **agree with a positive statement** and “Me neither” is used to **agree with a negative statement**.

- **“I like my job.”**
“Me too.” = I also like my job
- **“I don’t like my job.”**
“Me neither.” = I also don’t like my job

The same rule applies for “So/neither” – use “So” to agree with positive statements, and “neither” to agree with negative statements:

- **“I think this movie is great!”**
“So do I!”
- **“I don’t think this movie is so good.”**
“Neither do I.”
- **“I’m looking forward to the weekend.”**
“So am I.”
- **“I’m not looking forward to Monday morning.”**
“Neither am I.”
- **“I’ve always been shy.”**
“So have I.”

- “I’ve never enjoyed big parties.”
“**Neither have I.**”
- “I would love to live abroad.”
“**So would I.**”
- “I wouldn’t want to work for that company.”
“**Neither would I.**”

Notice how the word after so/neither matches the one in the original statement.

There are a few times in the conversation where Mary or Shannon disagree with each other’s statements:

- “I **don’t** really enjoy working for big corporations.”
“Oh, I **do.**”
- “I**m not** willing to move there.”
“Well, I **am.**”
- “I think working at a school would be boring.”
“Really? I **don’t.**” (I don’t think working at a school would be boring)

When disagreeing in this way, the verb in the response matches the verb in the original statement – except it reverses from positive to negative, or negative to positive.

You can see more examples of this short form – and practice using it in the quiz – by [clicking here](#).

Today’s speaking task is leave a message responding to controversial statements. Choose five of the ten statements to respond to. First, say if you agree, disagree or reluctantly/partially agree – then add one sentence explaining why.

Example Statement: “A woman’s place is in the home.”

Example Answer: “I strongly disagree. I believe that women have the right to choose whether they want to be housewives or work outside the home, and no one should force her to stay home if she doesn’t want to.”

Record your answers here: <http://www.speakpipe.com/espressoenglish>

1. A woman's place is in the home.
2. Stealing is ok if you can get away with it.

3. Boys and girls should have equal education.
4. Freedom is more important than safety.
5. All property should be owned by the government.
6. Murderers should be executed.
7. Soft drugs like marijuana should be legalized.
8. Riches are for spending.
9. Humans are all basically selfish.
10. Physically punishing a child never has any good effect