

Lesson 1: Basic Social English

Welcome to Lesson 1 of the Speak Fluently course! Today we begin the **Social English** section.

Many students are afraid of making a mistake or “saying the wrong thing” when talking with a native English speaker. These social English lessons will teach you phrases you can use with confidence in various social situations. Let’s start with some basic expressions.

Situation #1 – Saying hello and goodbye

There are many different ways to say “hello” in English, and some of them require a different answer.

If the other person says...

- **“Hello”**
- **“Hi”**
- **“Hi there”**
- **“Hey”**
- **“Hiya”**
- **“Howdy”**

You can say...

- **“Hi”**
- **“Hey”**

In these phrases, “hello” is the most formal, and “hey,” “hiya,” and “howdy” are the least formal.

Instead of “hello,” the other person might also say...

- **“How ya doin’?”**

- **“How are ya?”**
- **“How’s it goin’?”**
- **“How are things?”**
- **“How’s life?”**

If everything is **good**, you can say...

- **“Great! Thanks for asking.”**
- **“Good – how about you?”**
- **“All right.”**

If everything is **not good**, you can say...

- **“Not so good.”**
- **“Could be better.”**

If you give one of the “not good” responses, be prepared to say **why** you are feeling bad, because the other person will probably say something like this:

- **“Oh, what’s wrong?”**
- **“Oh, what’s the matter?”**

Now let’s learn the greetings beginning with “what...” If the other person says...

- **“What’s up?”**
- **“What’s new?”**
- **“What’s happenin’?”**
- **“What’s goin’ on?”**

You can respond...

- **“Not much.”**
- **“Not much. How about you?”**
- **“Not much.”** [then add a sentence about something you are doing, something you did recently, or something you're planning to do.]
 - **“Not much. I just got back from a business trip.”**
 - **“Not much. I’ve been studying a lot lately.”**
 - **“Not much. I’m looking forward to the dance festival this weekend.”**

There are also a number of ways to say **goodbye** in English:

Formal or informal:

- “Bye / Bye-bye”
- “See you soon / later!”
(only say this if you will definitely see the other person later)
- “Take care”
- “Have a good one!”
- “So long”

Informal only:

- “Take it easy.”
- “Catch ya later.”
- “Later!”
- “I’m off / I’m out.”
- “Peace / Peace out.”

Situation #2 – Talking about your country and job

It’s common for people you meet to ask about your country and job.

If someone asks, “Where are you from?” you can respond:

- **“I’m from Russia.”**
- **“I’m originally from Russia, but now I live in Italy.”**
- **“I was born in Russia, but I grew up in France.”**

To ask about your profession, native English speakers don’t usually ask “What is your job?” Instead, we say:

- **“What do you do?”**
- **“What do you do for a living?”**

The correct way to answer this question is to say **“I’m...”** and then your profession, for example:

- I’m an engineer.
- I’m a nurse.
- I’m a student.
- I’m a teacher.
- I’m a freelance writer.
- I’m between jobs at the moment. (*this means “I’m unemployed.”*)

[Click here](#) for more ways to answer questions about where you work.

Situation #3 – Not Understanding

There will probably be a few moments in your English conversations when you don’t understand what the other person said. Don’t worry – it’s OK!

If you didn’t hear what the other person said, you can say...

- **“Pardon?”**
- **“Sorry?”**
- **“Could you repeat that?”**
- **“Sorry – I didn’t hear what you said.”**
- **“Could you speak a little slower, please?”**

If you understood the basics, but you want to get more information or details, you can say...

- **“What do you mean?”** (*this asks the other person to re-state their idea in different words, or in more detail*)

If you want to check if the other person understood YOU, then you can say...

- **“Do you know what I mean?”**

- “Does that make sense?”

Situation #4 – Showing Interest in the Conversation

When the other person is talking for a long time or telling a story, it's good to show that you are interested in what they are saying. You can say...

- “Really?”
- “That’s interesting.”
- “Uh-huh.”
- “Right.”
- “Gotcha.”
- “Sure.”

We'll learn more of these small responses to conversations in a later lesson.

Finally, here are two tips to keep a conversation going:

1. Try to ask questions that start with **Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How**. Try to avoid yes/no questions.
2. In each of your answers, **give one or two details** that will help continue the conversation. You don't need to talk for a long time.

For example, if someone asks you,

- “What did you think of the New York City bus tour? Did you like it?”
...don't just say “Yes.”

Instead, you can say,

- “Yes – my favorite part was visiting the Empire State Building.”

That encourages the other person to make a comment about the tour, or ask you another question – and the conversation continues.

Situation #5 – Ending a Conversation

It's a good idea to say "**Anyway, it was nice talking to you...**" or "**Anyway, it was nice chatting with you...**" This signals to the other person that you want to bring the conversation to a close. Then, complete the sentence with one of these options:

- Anyway, it was nice talking to you, **but I should get going.**
- Anyway, it was nice chatting with you, **but I've gotta head out.**
- Anyway, it was nice talking to you, **but I've gotta run.**

All of these options mean that **you need to leave.**

You've finished Lesson 1! Now you know typical expressions for handling social conversations in English. There's no homework today, you just need to study what we've just learned . Next lesson, you'll learn different ways to talk about likes, dislikes, and preferences.