

25 PHRASES FOR DAILY CONVERSATION

In this lesson, you will learn 25 fresh phrases you can add to your daily conversations to break out of the routine of sticking to the same few lines. These phrases are popular in the UK but used pretty universally.

PART 1

First, let's discuss the phrases we can use when we meet someone that we either do or do not know.

1. It's nice to bump into you.

You would use this phrase if you are at the very least **familiar** with a person, so maybe you know of them. To know of someone is to have heard about them, to know their name, but we normally say this when we do, at the very latest, know of someone.

If you have seen someone recently, you can say, *"it's nice to bump into you again"*. Now, the literal meaning of 'to bump into someone' is to **collide** with someone, for example, *"I bumped into someone at the supermarket and dropped my milk"* for example. However, in this context, the context of meeting someone, 'to bump into someone' means to meet someone unexpectedly.

Example:

I bumped into your mum at the swimming pool.

Meaning:

I unexpectedly met your mum.

2. It's great to finally meet you in person.

This a phrase that we use if we **don't know someone**. We haven't met them before, but we have maybe heard of them before or we have **communicated** with them **digitally**. Maybe we've been talking over email, or something like that. I say this so much after the pandemic. I met so many people online, over Zoom, and now I can finally meet them in real life.

Example:

Ah, it's so nice to finally meet you person!



3. Speak of the devil.

This phrase has a very specific usage. This is said when a person **appears** just **after being mentioned**.

Example:

If I'm talking to a colleague about someone's excellent presentation, and then that person appears, I could say—

"Speak of the devil; we were just talking about your excellent presentation."

This can be a great way to **make someone new feel included**, especially if you have been complimenting them behind their back.

4. I've heard so much about you.

Number four, another one to use if you **haven't met** someone before but you want to **pay them a nice compliment**. Obviously, only say this if you actually have heard good things said about this person.

Good responses to this:

"All good things, I hope."

"All positive, I hope."

5. I don't think we've crossed paths before.

And the last one, number five, is a nice way of saying, "*I don't know who you are, so please introduce yourself to me.*" It avoids an awkward situation.

To **cross paths** with someone is to **meet someone by chance**. And if we haven't crossed paths before, well, we've never met. But I think it's a little bit nicer than saying, "*Who are you? I don't know who you are.*"

PART 2

Okay, next section. Let's say for now that you have met someone that you do know; you're going to want to catch up with them. And to catch up with someone is to talk about everything that's happened since you last saw each other.



6. How is everything going?

If you can't specifically remember what they've been doing, "*How is everything going?*", is a great way to **let them lead the conversation**. It gives them room to open up. This might refer to their **family**, their **work**, their **personal life**, **romantic life**, who knows. But you can let them lead the conversation because they decide what 'everything' is.

7. What have you been up to?

This is a really friendly phrase. I've used this before. I've taught it before in my Stop Saying How Are You? video. If you are '*up to something*', it means that you are doing something **mischievous**. You're doing something **troublesome**. This phrase is very warm and friendly. It's saying '*what trouble have you been causing? What have you been doing?*' It's something that we use a lot with children or animals. We use it with friends as well. It's very casual, but it's not inappropriate for professional situations, but it is appropriate if you know the person quite well.

Example:

I often say to my dog—

"What have you been up to Diego?"

Good responses to this:

"Oh, not much."

"I've not been up too much."

8. What have I missed? Fill me in!

So if you haven't caught up with someone for a while, this is a good way to ask them what has happened since you last spoke. To fill someone in is **to give someone missing information** or **to inform someone more fully of a situation**. So if I'm saying, '*fill me in*', I'm saying, tell me all this missing information.

9. We've got so much to catch up on.

This means, "**we've got so much to talk about**". So much has happened since we last saw each other.



10. There's so much to say, but I can't go into it now.

This is one that you can use if you've seen or met someone that you know you need to spend a long time talking to, but it's not the right time. 'To go into something' is to **discuss** or **explain something in a careful and detailed way**. This implies that there are lots and lots of details, too many for now. Maybe it would be impolite to talk a lot; maybe there are some people around that shouldn't hear what you're talking about. It's a good one to use or to have up your sleeve—to have something ready for later.

PART 3

So we've discussed talking to people that we have met before; now, what should we do with people that we haven't met before? We should get to know them, shouldn't we? We should ask some good open-ended questions to get them talking.

11. How did you get into X?

Often we want to ask people, *"How did you get your job? How did you end up working here?"* That's not so polite. So this phrase is a really good alternative. 'To get into something' in this context is **to become involved with**. Then, they can tell you their life story.

Example:

How did you get into marketing?

Meaning:

How did you become involved with marketing?

12. What do you do for fun?

Another nice way of getting to know someone is to ask them what they do for fun. And in American English especially, this is a very common question. I would say it's not so common in the UK, but we do see it in movies, and TV shows a lot. I just noticed this question was asked a lot to me when I visited to US, and I thought it was really nice. It was **a really good way of making conversation that isn't about work**.

Example:

So, what do you do for fun?



13. What do you do outside of work? / What do you do when you're not working?

In British English, we might say something more like these two phrases. It's maybe **a bit nicer** than asking someone what they do for fun because I know when someone asks me what I do for fun, I think, *"Oh my word, I'm not that fun a person. I like running. Is running fun enough to answer this question? Do they think that running is fun enough?"* So these alternatives are pretty safe.

14. What makes you tick?

Another good thing to talk about is **motivation**, and we want to know what motivates people. But instead of just simply saying, *"what motivates you?"* You could say, *"what makes you tick?"* And this is sort of asking, *"what are you passionate about?"* or *"what keeps you going?"*

Example:

Helping my students gain confidence really makes me tick.

15. What gets you out of bed in the morning?

This is another similar one that basically asks, *"what do you get up for?"* Or a really fun and cheeky one is, *"what floats your boat?"* That means, *"what brings you joy?"* This comes from the phrase, *"whatever floats your boat."* Whatever you like. And this is something that we say when somebody says they like something that we think is a bit strange. So, for example, if someone says they like running marathons every weekend, I might say, *"whatever floats your boat; not my thing, but good for you."* The question, *"what floats your boat?"* is a variation of that.

PART 4

Now, when we meet people, and we have a really, really good conversation, the next step is to ensure further contact. But we don't just want to say, *"What's your number? I would like to talk again."* Although, I quite like the direct approach. There are some other ways of doing this—



16. I'd love to carry this on at a later date/time.

This is saying, "I would like to continue this conversation". So you're sort of stopping them there, saying pause, but let's continue this later on.

17. I feel like we've got so much more to talk about.

This is good one to use if you can see that a conversation is coming to an end, maybe it's like a break in a conference, and you know that the next lecture is starting, but you still want **to make sure you remain in contact with this person**. This is a really nice one because it's sort of passing the baton. It's passing the responsibility over to the other person. And it gives them the opportunity to say, "**well, let's stay in touch. Let's exchange contact details.**" It's good to use if you don't know if they want to stay in touch, if you're kind of testing the water. If they say yeah, let's stay in touch, brilliant. If they don't, well there we are. At least we know.

18. We should discuss this over lunch.

This one is used to suggest that something be discussed over a consumable, a food or a beverage. For example—

- We should discuss this over lunch.
- We should chat over coffee.
- We should talk over dinner.

If you think about it, using the word 'over' is quite appropriate because normally, two people having a meeting at dinner, we are speaking over the top of the food. The conversation flows over the food or drink.

19. We should do this again.

This is another very simple, very casual one which implies **we should see each other again**.



20. Here's my email/number. Drop me a line, and we'll sort something out.

This is a great one if you want to be very direct and give your contact details. 'To drop someone a line' is to **write a brief message**. We also say, 'drop me a text' or 'drop me a WhatsApp'. And 'to sort something' out is **to organise something**—we'll arrange another meeting.

PART 5

And now on to the last set of phrases. And for me, the hardest part of any conversation is leaving the conversation. I'm terrible at parties. I end up talking to one person intensely for the whole event, and then it comes to the end, and I think, "Ugh, I have not met many people here." It's just so awkward, isn't it?

21. Oh, I'm a bit pressed for time.

This is a great one if you don't have much time. This is **a nice way of saying, "I don't have any time; I need to go."**

22. Right, I need to make a move.

In the UK, we always sort of clap our hands or if we're sitting down, we slap our thighs and say, "Right, I've got to be going." 'To make a move' is **to begin to leave or just to leave**. I'm going to make a move—I'm going to leave. It's just a nicer way of saying it because we're beating around the bush; we're avoiding the topic. I don't wanna say I'm leaving, so I'm going to say I'm making a move.

23. I'm going to have to get going. / I need to get going.

This is a very similar one to number 22. Again, **this is to begin to leave**. But by saying 'I have to', it's implying that you don't want to; I just have to. I'm obliged to leave. It's not my choice; I need to.

24. I don't want to hog you, so I'm going to go over here.

Now this is a really nice one; it's interesting, but ever so slightly manipulative but I learnt it from someone that I really respect, an older woman in my village. I always really enjoy talking to her at parties in our village. But, I probably enjoy speaking to her more than she enjoys speaking with me. And once, she said this wonderful phrase when she wanted to leave our conversation, but she did it in such a nice way.

'To hog something' is **to take or use something good all for yourself** so that other people can't have it. And she was saying, I don't want to keep you all to myself, so I'm going to make sure other people can talk to you too. And it's implying that whoever you're talking to is so great that they need to talk to lots of people; lots of people can benefit from talking to them. It wouldn't be right to deny others the chance of talking to this person. I thought it was really interesting, kind of like reverse psychology.

25. I've already taken so much of your time.

This is a lovely way of saying, *"you know, I don't want to leave, but I've wasted your time, so I'm going to go because it's fair on you."*

QUIZ!

Choose the correct phrase from below that best complete each missing part of the story.

Jenna stepped into the expat bar, her weary traveller's eyes scanning the crowd for familiar faces. Just as she was about to grab a seat, she spotted a group of people she had met during her time in Indonesia. With a smile, she approached them, but there were a few new faces among them. "No way! It's so wild (1) _____," she exclaimed.

One of her friends quickly turned round and gave her a big hug. (2) "_____"; we were just talking about you," he said warmly. Jenna blushed, feeling a mix of excitement and curiosity. She looked at the group of people, extending her hand for introductions. (3) "_____."

As they settled into a booth, Jenna couldn't believe how small the world truly was. (4) "_____," she asked, eager to catch up. (5) "_____ since Indonesia?" Her friends eagerly shared their stories, describing their adventures across Southeast Asia.

Ana Luisa, another of Jenna's friends, showed up a bit later in the evening. She hurriedly sat down next to Jenna. "What have I missed? (6) _____," she said, her voice brimming with anticipation. They laughed, realising how much they had to catch her up on. They chatted into the late hours of the night until Jenna remembered she had a completely full day of tourist activities the next day. (7) "Right, _____," she blurted out, slapping her thighs. The group stood up and exchanged well wishes, and went their separate ways. As she was walking back to her hostel, she felt a tap on her shoulder. It was her friend Pierre. He handed her a piece of paper. (8) "_____ if you are ever in France; I'd love to see you again," he said shyly. Jenna took the piece of paper and flashed a nervous smile. "Of course; see you soon!" she said sincerely.

Phrase Bank

a. Fill me in	b. What have you been up to	c. Speak of the devil	d. I'm going to have to get going
e. Drop me a line	f. How is everything going?	g. to bump into you all again	h. I don't think we've crossed paths

The End!

1) g 2) c 3) h 4) f 5) b 6) a 7) d 8) e

