



Conversation Skills

Elaboration

Available in the format below:



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Conversational Elaboration

Helpful to individuals on the autism spectrum and to anyone who wants to improve their conversational skills, this handout explains the importance of elaborating when answering a question and how elaborated answers keep a conversation flowing. Following a written discussion, several answers are provided to the same question and are rated in terms of their elaboration. This handout also serves as a good jumping off point for conversational practice.

Name _____

Date _____

Conversational Elaboration

Your listener needs information.

Your listener wants to fully understand and to hear interesting details.

In conversation, most people want to engage; they want to hear your ideas and understand what you are telling them. They want to know what your opinions are. They want to get to know you. They want the conversation to flow easily. They want to hear your stories, understand your explanations, and consider your point of view.

Elaborate!

Below are ratings on elaboration on a scale from 1–10 (10 is best).

You and your friend are hanging out during lunch and he asks:

“Tell me how your sister’s wedding was”

- 1 — “fine”
- 2 — “fine thanks”
- 3 — “it was pretty good”
- 4 — “it was alright I guess, I liked it”
- 5 — “it was alright, but some parts were boring”
- 6 — “it was alright, but the ceremony was really boring”
- 7 — “the ceremony was boring, but they played good music at the reception”
- 8 — “Oh my god, I practically fell asleep during the ceremony, but I liked the music they played at the reception”
- 9 — “Oh my god, I practically fell asleep during the ceremony, but I liked the music they played at the reception so I had fun dancing. We stayed until almost 2 in the morning!”
- 10 — “I practically fell asleep during the ceremony, it was so long and boring. They played a lot of current songs at the reception, so it was fun dancing and we stayed until almost 2 in the morning! The best part, though, was the food: I ate a 2 pound lobster that was dripping in butter and the wedding cake was my favorite.”

Take a look at which responses above are conversation blockers, and which are conversation extenders by leading easily to questions or comments. For example, in response to the comments in #9, a listener might ask what made the ceremony so boring or what kind of music they played at the reception, or might comment on how late you stayed.

