

READING

Learning to talk to anyone

LEVEL

Upper-Intermediate
(B2)

NUMBER

EN_B2_1024R

LANGUAGE

English



Learning outcomes

- I can read an article on being able to talk to anyone and explain its key points.
- I can practise starting a conversation with someone and keep it going.





Warm-up

**How do you feel when
you walk into a room
full of strangers?**

**Is it easy for you to start a
conversation with someone
you don't know?**



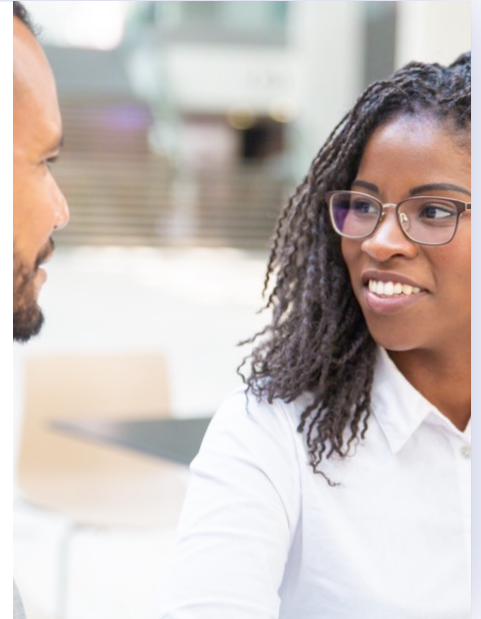


How to talk to anyone

Read the beginning of the text. **Answer the questions** below.

Communication is a vital skill in the business world. Whether you're **networking**, conducting a job interview or simply **chatting** to colleagues, knowing how to communicate effectively can help you build relationships and ultimately achieve your goals.

So, what can we do to be able to talk to anyone? Well, let's start with something **fundamental**: our body language. Did you know that up to 60% of communication is **non-verbal**? Meaning that even without opening our mouths we're saying something!



1. According to the text, why is communication so important in business?
2. What does the 60% in the text refer to?



Discuss

Share ideas as a class. **Use** the pictures to help.

What are some examples of non-verbal communication?



What kind of body language can help us seem *able to talk to anyone?*

How to talk to anyone

Read the text. **Answer** the questions below.

So, **greet** the person with a *hello* and a **firm** handshake, maintain eye contact with them while they're speaking and even **lean** slightly towards them.

If in doubt, a good tip can be to pay attention to the other person and **mirror** their body language. This is especially useful when you're in an unfamiliar setting!

And, although customs do **vary** from place to place, showing interest in the other person with your body can set you up for a successful conversation.



3. Give three examples of good body language from the text.
4. If you are in a new place, what does the author recommend doing?



Match with the correct definition

1 to **lean** towards another person

2 to **greet** someone with a hello

3 to **mirror** another person's body language

4 to **vary** from place to place.

5 to offer someone a **firm** handshake

a welcome someone with particular words or a particular action

b be very similar to

c bend or move from a straight position to a sloping position

d strong and steady

e change or be different according to the situation



What about where you live?

Discuss the questions in pairs.

- 1 What is the most appropriate way to **greet** someone you don't know?
- 2 Is it better to **lean** closer to someone while they're speaking or to keep a distance?
- 3 Do any social customs **vary** from region to region where you live?



How to talk to anyone

Read the text. **Answer** the questions below.

Now on to the *talking* itself! Usually, the most difficult part of a conversation is the first ten seconds of it. If you've spoken to a **stranger** recently, you'll probably remember that **awkward** silence after saying *hello*.

One solution: get introduced to someone. If you're at an event, ask the **host** to introduce you to a person you'd like to talk to. Or, ask the organisers for a few details about the **attendees** beforehand and use this information to **break the ice** when you're there.



5. What problem does getting introduced to someone solve?
6. Before an event, what can we do to make talking to people there easier?

How to talk to anyone

Read the text. **Answer** the questions below.

Once you've made the introduction, aim to make the other person feel comfortable! One way to do this is to find **common ground** with them. Using 'we' or 'us' sentences, such as 'I'm really looking forward to this talk we've got this afternoon!' can also create a sense of **togetherness**.

We usually feel more comfortable when talking about ourselves, so ask people about themselves and show a **genuine** interest in what they're saying. There's no secret to this: ask, listen carefully, then ask (again!).



7. What should we do after being introduced to someone?
8. According to the text, why is listening so important to conversation?



What about you?

How do you break the ice with a person you've just met?



How can we find common ground with a stranger?

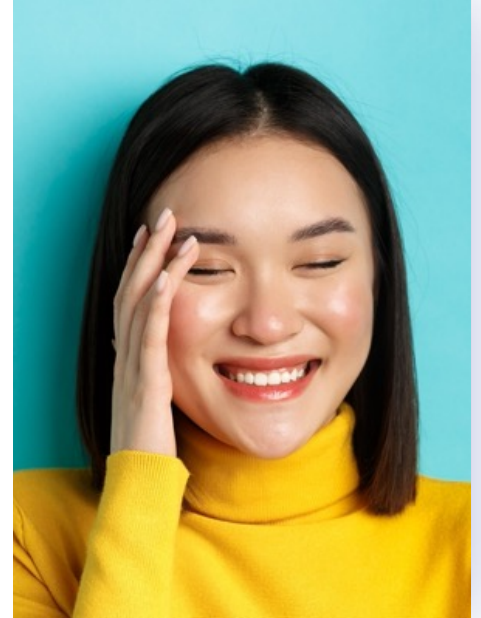


How to talk to anyone

Read the text. **Answer** the questions below.

Finally, be careful about your choice of questions. An **overused** question like 'What do you do?', can often end up **limiting** a conversation! Instead ask someone, 'How do you spend most of your time?'.

Take care when offering **compliments**, as they need to be specific in order to be effective. With a stranger, it may be better to offer a small compliment at the end of a conversation, not at the beginning. A simple, 'It was really nice talking to you,' can politely end a conversation and show you're moving on to the next.



9. Why is asking 'What do you do?' not a good idea according to the author?
10. What advice does the author give about compliments?



Be careful with **overused** questions such as, 'What do you do?'



Overused means *used too much* and carries a negative meaning.

What's an example of an **overused** adjective from a CV or resumé?



Read the quotations

Answer the questions below.

1



Compliments need to be specific in order to be effective.

2



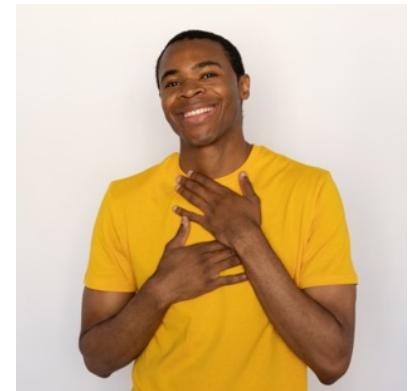
It may be better to offer a small compliment at the end, not the beginning, of a conversation.

Do you agree or disagree with the author's advice?

Why?

Is it common to give compliments to strangers in your country?

When was the last time you received a compliment?





Let's practise!

1. **Pair up** with another student and **go into breakout rooms**.
2. **Start a conversation** and keep it going **using the strategies** from the text.
3. **Share with the class** how it went and what you learned about your partner.



Pay attention to your body language

Find common ground with the person

Ask the person about themselves

Listen carefully and ask follow-up questions

End of the lesson

Idiom

the gift of the gab

Meaning: ability to speak easily and to persuade others (informal)

Example: Peter really has the gift of the gab. He can talk to anyone!



Additional practice



Fill in the gaps

- 1 _____ ever so slightly towards someone while they're speaking is a way of signalling interest in what they're saying.
- 2 In some countries, it's customary to _____ someone we know well with a kiss on the cheek.
- 3 Conversation etiquette _____ from region to region depending on the cultural norms of a given place.
- 4 If we _____ another person's body language, we imitate their facial expressions, gestures or even their tone of voice.
- 5 It's important for a handshake to be _____. If not, the other person may consider us to be less professional or trustworthy.

greet
leaning
varies
mirror
firm



Read the quotation

“

**We usually feel more comfortable
when talking about ourselves.**

Do you agree or
disagree with this
statement?

How comfortable
are you with talking
about yourself?

What's a topic you're
really comfortable
talking about?





Discuss

Ask and **answer** with a partner.

**Have you ever
misunderstood the
customs of a different
country?**



**How did you realise
you'd made a mistake?**



Answer key

- P. 4:** 1. It helps us build relationships and achieve our goals.
2. 60% is the amount of communication that is non-verbal (not with words).
- P. 6:** 3. Offering a firm handshake, maintaining eye contact and leaning towards someone.
4. To mirror the body language of the person you're talking to.
- P. 7:** 1. c, 2. a, 3. b, 4. e, 5. d
- P. 9:** 5. The awkward silence after saying hello (i.e. not knowing what to say).
6. We can ask the organisers for information about the people attending.
- P. 10:** 7. Try and find some common ground with them.
8. It allows us to show a genuine interest in what someone is saying.
- P. 12:** 9. It can limit a conversation.
10. Make them specific; consider offering them at the end, not the beginning of a conversation.
- P. 19:** 1. leaning, 2. greet, 3. varies, 4. mirror, 5. firm



Vocabulary

to lean

to greet

to mirror

to vary

firm

to break the ice

to find common ground

to show a genuine interest

compliment



Summary

Adopting good body language

- **Greet** the person with a hello; Offer them a **firm** handshake; **Lean** towards them while they're speaking.
- **Mirror** the other person's body language if you're in doubt.

Other strategies to be able to talk to anyone

- Get introduced to a person; Find common ground; Use 'we' or 'us' sentences.
- Ask the other person about themselves; Show a genuine interest; Listen carefully to the other person
- Avoid overused questions, such as 'What do you do?'; Take care when offering compliments.

