

Conversation Structure and Questions

It can be hard to start a conversation with someone you just met. You may wonder how to get started, what topics to use, and even how to end the conversation. Though our initial lessons will focus on group conversation, the following strategies can be useful for getting started with group work and for maintaining a group chat.

Greeting and Icebreaker

Icebreakers use what's around you to set a topic for the start of a conversation.

Examples

At a Coffee Shop

- It smells great in here, doesn't it?
- **Isn't the coffee here wonderful?**

* Note: Greetings like "Hello" or "How's it going?" can start a conversation, too.

Exchange Names

Give your name instead of just asking for another person's.

Examples

My name's _____. What's your name?
I'm _____. It's nice to meet you.

Engage & Interact

Ask questions, give comments, and react as you talk.

Follow-up Questions

Ask questions that continue the same topic as a previous question.

Examples

Original	Follow-up
Do you like watching movies?	What kind of movies do you like?
	How often do you watch movies?

Return Questions

Ask a question to get someone to talk about the same topic you discussed

Examples

- How about you?
- What do you think?
- <Restate the topic>

Close and Leave

End gradually. An abrupt stop can be confusing.

Signal Desire to End Conversation

- Well, that's my order. It was nice talking to you.
- I'm sorry, but I have to run to class.

End the Conversation

- Bye.
- Talk to you later.

Sample Conversation at the SeoulTech Pond

This pond's really nice, isn't it?

Yeah, it is. It's a great place to relax.

Do you come here often?

I usually come when I have a long break between classes.

Oh, me too. I'm killing time before Chemistry. How about you?

I have Philosophy 2 hours later. It's so late. How's Chemistry?

It's complicated. There are lots of things to remember. How about Philosophy?

It's interesting. The professor is fun, but the topics are difficult. Have you taken it already?

No, I'll take it next semester. Well, I have to go to class. It was nice talking with you. By the way, I'm Jiwon.

I'm Minsoo. Nice talking with you too. Good luck with chemistry.

Thanks! Bye!

Conversation Structure and Questions

Questions can help you have great conversations. They can help you find common topics to talk about as well as explore those topics in depth. However, use questions carefully. Asking too many questions makes the conversation feel like an interview. Questions about many different topics can make the conversation tiring.

Yes/No Questions

Yes/No questions can help you test whether a general topic is something that you and your partner can discuss further. They usually get brief responses.

Yes/No Question with a Verb

Helping Verb	Subject	Main Verb	
Do	you	listen	to electronic music?
Does	he/she	watch	Netflix?
Do	they	major	in engineering?

* Notice that the main verb is basic, not "going," "goes," or "gone".

Yes/No Question with a Noun or Adjective

Main Verb	Subject	Noun/Adjective
Are	you	hungry?
Is	he/she	an art major?
Am	I	interested?

WH-Questions

WH-Questions can help you discuss about a specific point in a conversation in depth. These questions often elicit more detailed information.

WH-Questions with a Verb

Question Word	Helping Verb	Subject	Main Verb	
When	do	you	go	to karaoke?
What	does	he/she	like	most?
Which	do	they	prefer	to eat?

* Notice that the main verb is basic, not "going," "goes," or "gone".

WH-Questions with a Noun or Adjective

Question Word	Main Verb	Noun/Adjective
Who	is	the best singer?
Where	is	the cheapest?
How	are	your courses?

Practice Activity

Directions: Fix the following questions.

1. Where're he going this weekend?
2. What your favorite food?
3. When you having class today?

Conversation Tips

Questions are a useful way of making a conversation interactive. Only asking questions, though, will be more like an interview than a conversation. Use other strategies to break up your questions.

- Answer your questions before you ask them.

A: My favorite food is chicken. I really enjoy going to Thunder Chicken because of their menu. Do you know of any good chicken spots?

B: Thunder Chicken's good. I am partial to Yellow Chicken, though.

- Comment on what someone says instead of asking a new question.

A: Do you happen to have a pet?

B: Yes, I have a dog. His name is Woofie.

A: That's neat! I like dogs. I'm more of a cat-person, though. I have a cat named Langi.