

## Keeping on Conversation Topic



Keeping on topic is important when having a conversation, whether it is a face to face, text, or via a social network such as Facebook or Google Chat. It shows the person you are talking to that you are paying attention to them and taking

an interest in what they are saying. If you keep changing topics when you are talking, it can seem as though you are not interested in what your conversation partner is saying and it can be very difficult for people to follow your conversation if you flit from one topic to another.

If you are struggling to keep a conversation going, try asking some 'open' questions that are relevant to the topic. Open questions are those which do not have a 'yes' or 'no' answer, but encourage longer answers or ask for more information or detail. For example "Have you been on holiday?" is a 'closed' question as it simply requires your conversation partner to respond with "yes" or "no", whereas "How was your holiday?" is an 'open' question as it encourages your conversation partner to give you a longer answer with more information such as where they went, what they did and what the weather was like.

As well as asking questions, you can also add comments such as "that sounds nice" that show that you are interested in what your conversation partner is saying.

Brain- created by Samuiblue, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

Women talking – created by Serge Bertasius Photography, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

Interview - created by marcolm, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

Listening- created by Jeroen van Oostrom, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

Here is an example of a possible conversation using open questions and comments showing interest:

*Leanne knows that Susan has been away on holiday. This is the first time Leanne has seen Susan since she returned to the UK.*



L: Hello Susan, how was your holiday?

S: It was lovely thank you, the weather was great, really hot and sunny.

L: I'm glad the weather was good. Where did you go?

S: I went to Barbados.

L: My parents went to Barbados a few years ago and they loved it.

Whereabouts did you stay?

S: We stayed on the south of the island, in our own apartment.

L: That sounds really nice, I'm so glad you had a nice time.

S: Thank you. Well, it was lovely to see you.

L: You too, see you soon, take care.

S. Yes, see you soon, take care, bye.

L: Bye.

As you can see from the above, Leanne starts the conversation with an 'open' question. When Susan replies, Leanne first responds with a friendly comment, showing that she has heard and is responding to what Susan has said, where she says "I'm glad the weather was good". Leanne then follows this with another open question so that she can find

Brain- created by Samuiblue, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

Women talking – created by Serge Bertasius Photography, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

Interview - created by marcolm, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

Listening- created by Jeroen van Oostrom, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

out more about Susan's holiday. As you can see, the conversation continues like this until it ends.



When you ask 'open' questions, be aware that your conversation partner may need to pause briefly before answering as they may need to think about their response. Don't worry if there is a short pause and try to resist the temptation to fill the silence with another question as too many questions asked too quickly may make your conversation partner feel like they are being interviewed or interrogated.

Using 'active listening' can also help to keep a conversation going. Listening passively without any response or indication that you are understanding what your conversation partner is saying might make them feel as though you are not really interested in what they are saying, or are not following their words. Using eye contact and occasionally nodding gently, or saying 'Mm hmm' or 'yes' can help your conversation partner to know that you are listening to them and giving your full attention. It also encourages your conversation partner to continue, thus keeping the conversation going.



As well as the above, remember to do your best to maintain eye contact use 'open' body language, for example, keep your hands by your sides

Brain- created by Samuiblue, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

Women talking – created by Serge Bertasius Photography, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

Interview - created by marcolm, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

Listening- created by Jeroen van Oostrom, downloaded from freedigitalphotos.net

rather than folding your arms, or fold them loosely and low on your body, level with your abdomen. Try to listen carefully and don't allow yourself to get distracted by other sights and sounds. If you find your mind wandering, just refocus back on your conversation partner.

Brain- created by Samuiblue, downloaded from [freedigitalphotos.net](http://freedigitalphotos.net)

Women talking – created by Serge Bertasius Photography, downloaded from [freedigitalphotos.net](http://freedigitalphotos.net)

Interview - created by marcolm, downloaded from [freedigitalphotos.net](http://freedigitalphotos.net)

Listening- created by Jeroen van Oostrom, downloaded from [freedigitalphotos.net](http://freedigitalphotos.net)