

The Social Times

HAVING A CONVERSATION

I Second That Emotion!
A Friend or Not a Friend ...

Coming to
Our Senses:
Bus Rides



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HAVING A CONVERSATION

You might have noticed that people are almost always talking to each other. They talk in the hallways, at lunch, and before and after school. Sometimes they even talk during class (even if they're not supposed to be talking!).

Some people are really good at talking to others; they always seem to know what to say. Many others are not so comfortable having conversations, and starting a conversation can be the hardest part.

When people start a conversation, they are actually following **rules**. The problem is that these "conversation rules" are not written anywhere! People kind of learn them by practicing and watching each other.

Here are some conversation tips that might make this whole thing easier for you.

1. Choose the right person to talk to.

Be sure to choose someone who looks friendly, or someone who at least does not totally ignore you or someone who is not rude to you. Think

of this as a game you need to practice. (It is always easier to practice with friends.)



2. Think about where you can start your conversation.

Choose a place where other people usually have conversations. At school, ideas include hallways, lunch, before and after school, or waiting for the bus. These are good because they are times when people are “hanging out” and not in a hurry to go somewhere else or think about something else.

3. Think about what you know about the other person.

Talk about things that are interesting to the person you want to talk to. An important rule is that you cannot **ONLY** talk about the things **YOU** like. It is easy to talk about things we like, but to be good at the conversation game, we also need to think about what our friends like.

Helpful Hints for Thinking of Conversation Starters

- Does your friend wear sport jerseys or clothes with TV or movie characters, cartoons, etc.? If so, chances are he likes whatever is on his shirt or backpack.
- Does your friend have an iPod or MP3 player or does she listen to music in any way? Chances are she has some favorite bands or songs.
- What are some things you already know about the person you want to talk to? Does he have a brother or sister at your school? Does he talk about his family’s cabin? Scouting? Videogames? Movies? Sports?

Knowing all of this stuff about someone is like having a computer file in your brain with their name on it. When you want to talk to a particular person, find

his file by thinking about all the things you know about him.

4. Think about what you will say.

Now that you have some information about the other person in your “friend’s file” (or your brain), choose one topic and think about how you can start a conversation. Think about what you are going to say and repeat it over and over to yourself. You can do this at home where it is easier to practice without other people seeing you.

5. Remember the team rule: All players in this game need to have a turn!

Remember, this is a team game. Don’t hog the conversation topic!

Start the conversation with a question and listen to the answer. Next, you can either ask the other person another question that goes with the answer or just make a comment that goes with the answer. You can keep taking turns like that until you run out of things to say. Then you can either change the topic and start all over, or you can end the conversation. A good way to end a conversation is to say, “O.K., gotta go!,” “See you later,” or “Sorry, I have to go now.”

A List to Remember

WHO will I talk to?

WHERE will we talk?

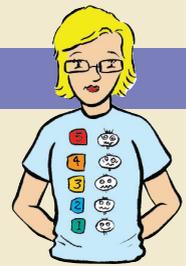
WHAT topic will we talk about?

HOW do I start (**WHAT** do I say first)?

LISTEN to the response

SAY something related

KEEP TAKING TURNS



A FRIEND OR NOT A FRIEND ...

Friendships can be confusing. We all know some people, and some of those people are friends and some are not. It is a good idea to be clear about who your friends are, because there are certain things you can talk about with a friend that you might not want to talk about with someone who just happens to sit next to you at school, for example.

Here is a scale to help you. Think of some people you know and then write their names in the different categories.



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Friendship Scale – Example

Rating		Who Is This Person?
5	This is your best friend Name: _____	This person is someone you have known for a long time. This person has shared personal thoughts and joys with you. You see or talk to this person outside of school. You usually do things with this person, like going to a movie or having sleepovers. Most people have one or two best friends at the most.
4	This is a pretty good friend Name: _____	This is someone you know pretty well. You probably talk to this person outside of school and go to activities with this person, maybe sleepovers. You share interests with this person.
3	This is a group friend Name: _____	This is someone you hang out with because he is a friend of your good friends. This person can become a good friend if you get to know him better. This person might have some of the same interests as you.
2	This is an acquaintance Name: _____	This is someone you have met and talked to but not really hung out with. This is a person you might only see in school. You probably don't know much about this person.
1	This is someone who shares space Name: _____	This is someone who goes to the same school as you do, but you never really talk to. This might be someone in your classroom or just in your school. You probably don't know much about this person.

BUS RIDES

Riding the bus is difficult for some people. The noise, smells, and tight spaces can all cause anxiety.

If you have to ride the bus to school every day, this can make every morning and afternoon difficult for you. A good idea is to wear headphones and listen to your favorite music to cancel out some of the noise. This won't solve all of the problems, but it will make the ride a little more bearable.

Another idea is to read a good book. Sometimes when we read a book we really like, we can shut out distractions. This is relaxing.

One other idea is to do some exercises before you get on the bus. Exercise can help your body and brain to relax and be better able to handle unpleasant sounds and smells.



**A woodpecker
can peck
20 times a
second.**

TRY IT!

Think of someone in your class. Now write down two things you know about them, like their favorite music group or TV show. Now ask them something about it.



Dear Roger,

The other day when I coughed in class, I remembered to cover my mouth and everything. But my teacher told me to try coughing into my arm! Now I am really confused. Why did she say that?

– Totally Confused in Cleveland

Dear Totally Confused,

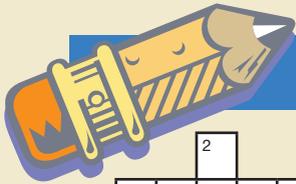
Your confusion is understandable, since most of us have been told our entire lives to cover our mouth when we cough and now the rules seem to be changing. When we started hearing about dangerous flu bugs, we also started hearing about better ways to prevent spreading disease.

One of those new and good ideas was to cough into our arm instead of in our hand. While it is true that when we cough into our hand, we might prevent the spread of our cold immediately, we get the germs all over our hand. Then when we use our hands to touch things, we may spread the germs after all. Since it is really hard to wash our hands *constantly*, coughing into our arm is a better way to keep our germs to ourselves.

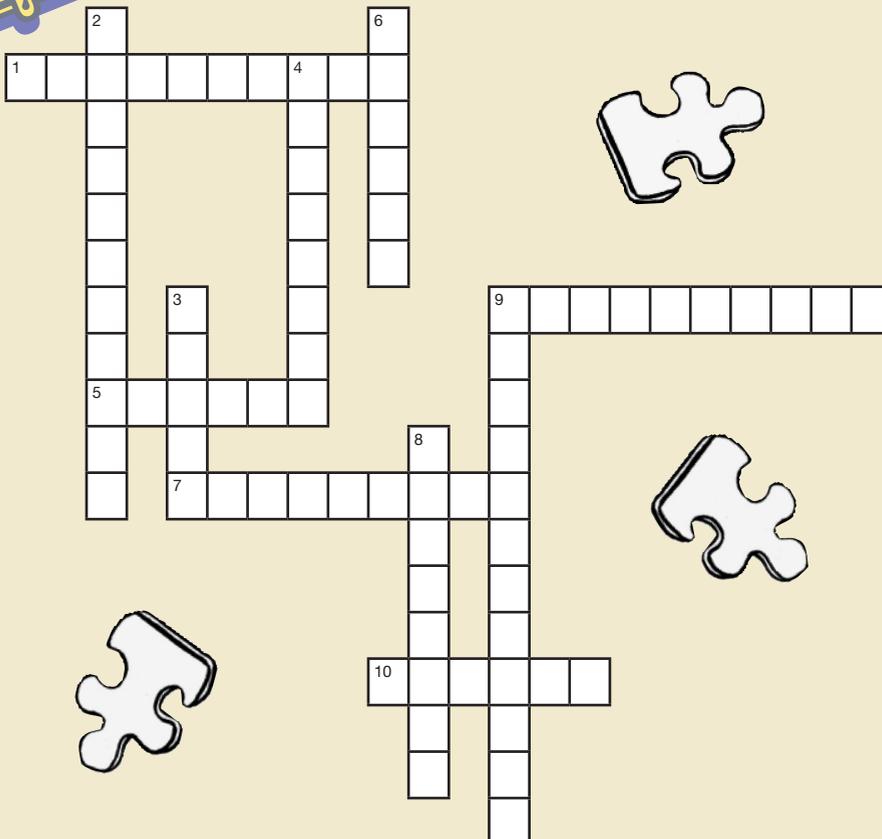
– Roger Gets-It!



A single little brown bat can catch 1,200 mosquito-sized insects in one hour!



Puzzle Time



ACROSS

- 1) studying; trying something over and over to get good at it
- 5) doing something over again
- 7) working with another person while respecting their ideas
- 9) something you say to make someone else feel good
- 10) when we stop talking and attend to what the other person is saying

DOWN

- 2) two words: sharing time in a conversation
- 3) a category of something to talk about
- 4) something you might like to talk about
- 6) to pretend someone isn't there
- 8) as in "that is my _____ band"
- 9) a talk with another person



Puzzle Time

Z Z V E W C U E Y S Q I V W K T J S U A I K V O T H L J B S
 S A Y Q G K U Q N Y W R C N Q Z P D H J A L X J J L U J J X
 Q L R G C G U E L B A T R O F M O C L A U W P Z O G J R M Y
 R T N U I H Q C J O S N T I A J L L A I G X K Q M I G Y V D
 V P B P D K G R Z G O V R T I Y N C Y Y G R O U I H T Z H I
 P T Y H Z E J E X F A M K U T F S F V D L N L C B L P X L U
 X E R U G P N C I P O T Q A S H Q Y D J P E H L M R C D Q Y
 E N L T W U A Q X Z E C I T C A R P A L A Q S K G L J G X I
 Z B L H T S L C C A V E Z X S Z O U M P E V X G P O W M G Z
 D P T J A I G D Y G W D U S T A R T E R S O K P N T N I M G
 Z X C K T M P K L C G A Q P U S M A S U M A R N G C R G A N
 K P Z O B W Y S X I C J N N T M R Y Z H I L X K Z I F N E E
 W A O F W W T W V S F A O S E I V O M B B A N M O L Q O T X
 T D N G U Z J G F U O N X H Y L D N E I R F C R Q I T R J B
 T A Y N Y X A W K M I B Y I H F M F U M Q A C B G T K E H X
 K I P W B P W J F A Y J N U T M K H F V G C Q Y Z H M U Q P
 T N A N I H T C A I K P Z A E M G S V G M G R S R D Y C R C
 J F Y B M U I N A O L P C B N O I T A S R E V N O C R U W H
 M G F H W T S J D T U R Q C X K Y S J Y H S A Q K G Z U M K
 T T T K R H Z C E H F Y Q T P A I V L Z R C Y S P I V C I O

Word Bank: COMFORTABLE, CONVERSATION, FRIENDLY, IGNORE, MOVIES, MUSIC, PRACTICE, RUDE, STARTERS, TEAM, TIPS, TOPIC



TRY IT!

Pick someone in your class you don't know very well. When the time is right, ask them if they like any of the new TV shows. Are any of their favorites the same as yours? If so, you now have something to talk about that you can both enjoy!

WEATHER FACTOID

Saratoga Springs, New York,
greatest snowfall:
58 inches
(1888, March 11-14)

Last year my friend Joyce got her hair cut. She got it cut really short, and when I saw her afterwards, the first thing I thought was that her hair had looked better long.

Sure enough, she came right up to me at school and asked me if I liked her hair. Before I could think it through, I said, "Not so much. I liked it better long." Joyce got tears in her eyes, so I knew right away that I must have hurt her feelings. To make it even worse, she ran away from me before I could say I was sorry.

When I got home that night, I told my sister what happened. She explained that I should never say things like that to a friend. This really confused me. Weren't friends supposed to be honest with each other? Wasn't it wrong to tell a lie?

I asked my sister about these things, and she told me that there is such a thing as a "white lie," which is a lie that is not really bad because you tell it to prevent someone's feelings from getting hurt. She said that when someone gets her hair cut, you should say it looks nice even if you don't really think it does. She went on to explain that since there wasn't anything Joyce could do about her hair now that it was cut, why say something that would make her feel bad about herself?

I thought about this for a long time. A "white lie" was really like a compliment that you tell someone just to make them feel good. I was wishing I had heard about these "white lies" a little earlier! It reminded me of when my mother told me not to tell our neighbor she was gaining a lot of weight, even though it was obvious that she was.

The next day at school I looked for Joyce right away. I told her that I was sorry that I had hurt her feelings and that I really did like her hair. I added that maybe I just needed to get used to it. This worked really well because Joyce knows that I have a hard time with changes.

I have told a couple of other "white lies" since then, and I think they make it easier to get along with people. You just have to be really careful not to confuse a "white lie" with a real lie. I think it might have something to do with the motive. If the lie is just a little bit of an untruth, told for the sole purpose of not hurting someone's feelings, it is probably a white one.



Lou Wisniewski

"And this new doctor gave me an ointment, which burns but seems to be working, although ..."