

# How to Be a World-Class Conversationalist

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# How to Be a World-Class Conversationalist

By [Melanie Hope](#)

Have you ever been in a social situation where you didn't know anyone? Did you find small talk awkward and conversations downright painful? Did you wish there were some easy formula you could use to get started and be remembered?

There is. And, the best part about the formula is that it only has three components – none of which require you to study Shakespeare, lose weight, memorize jokes, or even be particularly charming or witty. Yes, you can become a world-class conversationalist just by doing these three simple things:

## **Listen**

It may seem counterintuitive, but listening is really the best way to ensure others find you to be the most intelligent, articulate and interesting conversationalist alive. People love to talk about their favorite topic: themselves. Allowing someone (who may be just as nervous as you are) to do this while you simply stay interested really leaves an impression. Even if you barely get a word in edgewise, the other person will feel that they just participated in the best conversation ever – simply because you were attentive to what they had to say.

Don't just nod like a bobblehead, though. Really do listen. What you learn will lead you to the next phase, and this is where you go from simple introductions to true networking.

## **Remember and ask**

Do your best to remember little tidbits of information that your new friends told you, and then ask them about it the next time you meet. All you need are one or two important things, like their children's or pet's names or their latest project, and you have a good place to start. You can do this even if you do not have a fabulous memory. If you remember even the littlest things, such as where you met or that they are married, it will still impress them. It means you paid attention and cared enough to remember. If you have something in common, say you have a passion for photography or drive the same make of car, then you always have that to ask about, too.

If you can only remember one thing, remember the person's name. We all love to hear our own name, and being so distinctly recalled after only one meeting is truly impressive.

## **Tell a story**

When it's your turn to talk, don't rattle on and on about the technical aspects of your business. For all that's holy, avoid politics, religion, and your personal health or financial issues. All you really need is a story.

You live an interesting life – even if you can't see it right now – your experience is completely different than anyone else's. Think of a funny, engaging, or even weird thing that has happened to you recently – and tell it as a story. If it's related to your business, even better. One of my friends, who until recently was known as "The Silent Plumber," broke out of his silence shell by regaling us with his exploits on the job. Where before it was awkward trying to get him to say a word, now we all look forward to speaking with him to find out if he's had run-ins with dead bodies in crawl spaces (that turned out to be half-buried mannequins), or what strange

things he's had to fish out of toilets (he once recovered a wallet – money, credit cards, and all). He isn't the world's best speaker, but his stories make him memorable. It's also made him a very busy plumber.

### **That's it!**

Practice this everywhere you go. If your social skills are less than stellar, you will find them improving along with your confidence. If your memory is wavering, you will find it gets stronger when you actively invoke it. When you start telling stories, you will find more and more creative ways to share your little corner of the world. Soon, you will be known as the most interesting person in the room – and all you had to do was listen, remember and ask, and tell a story.

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