

CONVERSATION PREPLANNING CHECK-LISTS

Exploring the dynamics of meaningful conversation requires us to do some preplanning homework, to understand particular steps and guidelines, as well as to grasp a number of worthwhile courtesies to consider. Choreographing effective conversation establishes an order of importance to what people discuss: meaningful questions to ask and comments to make.

The more difficult level of conversational skill can be compared to the difference in what we must understand for playing chess rather than simple checkers. We can easily learn random conversation, while the complexities of meaningful conversation requires better understanding and training.

Our efforts to improve performance depend on whether we want to converse similar to playing a simple game of checkers or opting for the more difficult challenge of a chess game. To improve conversation skills and reduce rambling, discuss the steps involved and meaningful criteria noted below:

Review particular factors beforehand.

- Preplan your greeting to assure its effectiveness.
- Try to preselect meaningful questions to ask about significant issues and the events in the other person's life from your last conversation.
- Make it a priority to remember the highlights, so you can reference in future conversations.
- Think about family members and others common acquaintances to kindly inquire.
- Show interest in unfamiliar people by asking inquisitive questions about their lives.
- Define and memorize interesting information to share in the conversation about your life, such as current events, interesting things you learned, received, or worth sharing from books, the Internet, movies, and TV, as well as travels.
- Review and consider other ways to show your interest and that you appreciate and care about others (e.g., complimenting, congratulating, honoring, respecting, thanking them).
- Consider sharing any articles, cartoons, jokes, and e-mails that you think would be helpful or entertaining.
- Try to remember when and where you last saw the person, so that you are able to ask or comment about how long ago it was and/or about that event. Also try to remember and not repeat the same stories you told during your last conversation.
- Perhaps ask the person to bring pictures of loved ones or recent travels.
- Take your camera for a few friendly photos.
- Exchange cell phone numbers when scheduling a visit, and keep the person's number handy should you realize the need to arrive late or postpone the visit.

Conversation courtesies worth considering.

- Prepare to arrive punctually. Realize that arriving late or speeding on the highway to arrive at your destination on time may reflect a self-centered bent.
- Be prepared to direct your thoughts meaningfully.
- Try to review and help anyone catch up who arrives later stages of a topic of conversation.
- Remember to listen well, identifying and noting meaningful points about which to comment later in the conversation, for closing, or for review prior to your next visit or communication.
- Remember to be supportive while listening to others' life situations.
- Remind yourself to listen for major topics. Points being brought up in the flow of conversation remind us of particular subject-matter to discuss. Often, with less preparation, these associations become the driving force of conversation.
- Be sure to heed the direction of the conversation, while being cautious and courteous.
- Remember, above all, to take turns and not to monopolize the conversation. Asking others questions and allowing their input should diminish this problem.
- If there are three or more people, be sure to include everyone in the conversation as well, even if this means asking questions of those in the group who are quietly listening.
- When others in the group are not studying meaningful conversation, be careful not to be critical of their conversation ineptitudes.
- As in business, there are important particulars which people need to know, while conversely, and there are other details that should not to shared, such as that which is confidential, abrasive, or extremely controversial. Thus, gossip, politics, and religion may be best avoided.