

23 Tried and True Conversation Starters That Always Work

We've all been there at a networking event where we end up standing next to someone and want to have a conversation, but don't know what to say.



<http://gph.is/18hXrPU>

Having a few ideas ready of what to say when you're in this situation will make you more confident, which means you'll be ready to dazzle anyone new you meet.

Not to mention, [studies show](#) that small talk with strangers makes you happier. The study used subjects who regularly commuted on trains and busses and broke them up into three groups: group one was asked to connect with a stranger near them, group two was to remain disconnected from anyone, and group three had to commute as normal. Participants of the study reported a more positive, and no less productive, experience when they connected than when they did not connect.

So go ahead, make the first move and chat with that person next to you, you'll be happier that you did. Here are some great places to start:

Pick their mind:

- What are the best opportunities that you see ahead of you this year?
- What challenges can you see your business facing?
- What's the best/worst business advice anyone has ever given you?
- How do you stay organized?

Learn about them:

- What do you do for your company?
- What industry do you work in/how did you get into your industry?
- Are you from the area?

Get their opinion:

- Why did you join this organization?
- What do you do to get rid of stress?
- Are you enjoying the event?
- What do you recommend?

Compliment them:

- That thing you said was really smart
- Your last article/blog/white paper/social media post was really interesting
- That thing you're wearing is really lovely

Compliment... something:

- This is a great room, isn't it?
- The food tasted delicious... do you know who catered?

Be casual:

- What do you do in your free time?
- How's your day going?
- What's your story?

Be funny:

- I'm just here for the delicious cheese – what brings you here today?
- The only person I know here is the bartender, and I just met him a minute ago – mind if I introduce myself?

When all else fails:

- What (great, terrible, unseasonable) weather we're having!
- Did you catch that * sportsball * game last night?

Now that you have your list of conversation starters, you're ready to have a great conversation. So what happens after the first move? It's time to listen. When in doubt, follow these four fool-proof steps for a great, engaging, and successful conversation:

1. Ask an appropriate question about them or the situation you are in.
2. Actively listen to what they have to say and show interest in their answer.
3. Share a quick reflection or comment on what they said.
4. Rinse and repeat.

Now you're ready to chat with anyone! Just remember, the most important thing about starting a conversation is to be natural, confident, and curious. Just be you and you'll do great.

Not a social butterfly and still nervous about putting yourself out there at events? Check out our [Proven Networking Tips from an Introverted Engineer](#).