



Jane Mullen Speech Therapy Ltd.

Starting a conversation:

1. If the individual you would like to talk to is already talking to someone else, especially if it is someone you do not know, it may be better to speak to them later when they are free.
2. Approach the individual, but stop when you are about an arm's length away and face them.
3. Saying 'Hello' is normally a good way to start a conversation. Try to think of some other good greetings as well (e.g., 'Hi' to a friend or 'Excuse me' if you wish to attract someone's attention). It is important to remember that the appropriate type of greeting changes depending on the situation and individual you are speaking to (e.g., you may say 'Hey' to a friend but 'Hello' to your boss).
4. Using the individual's name before or after your greeting will help them to know you are talking to them. In some families, individuals do not address elder relatives by their name, but call them Aunt, Uncle, Grandma as appropriate. Think about the names that you use when you speak to the individuals in your family.
5. If the individual you speak to answers 'Hello' (or something similar) it usually means that they want to talk.
6. It is a good idea to ask some general questions at the beginning of the conversation rather than starting on a certain topic. Some ideas of things to say here are:
 - Did you enjoy the film/concert/TV program?
 - How are you?
 - It's nice to see you.

Try writing down some other general questions and topics that you can use when you are talking to other individuals.

What to say during a conversation:

1. Remember to take it in turns when talking to someone. Let them answer your questions and give them a chance to ask you one in return if they want to.
2. Talk about things that you know the other individual likes as well as the things that you like. If you both like the same things, then you could talk about these. However, it is not appropriate to talk to some individuals about certain topics. It is probably a good idea to avoid talking about them if you do not know the individual well. Try to make a list of things that are - and are not - appropriate to talk about.
3. If you find it hard to understand that someone else may feel differently to you, you may not realize that not everyone is as interested in a certain topic or hobby as you are. You may want to talk about it a lot, but the other individual may not be as interested or knowledgeable about the topic as you are. If you are talking to someone about a topic and they begin to look like they want to end the conversation, you could say 'Would you like me to tell you more?' or 'Would you like to talk about something else?' However, sometimes the individual will want to end the conversation altogether for another reason. For example, they may need to get to work.
4. You may also find it difficult to tell how someone else is feeling because they are not actually saying how they feel and you find it difficult to read body language and facial expressions. What is appropriate

to say to them will sometimes be different depending on how they are feeling about the topic. If you are not sure how someone is feeling, you can ask them.

How to end a conversation:

Watch out for signals that someone wants to end a conversation with you. These may include:

- looking around the room
- not asking questions back
- saying they have something else to do
- yawning

Do not get upset if the individual does this. Sometimes it is better to end a conversation before you run out of things to say. If you want to end the conversation, say something like, "Well I'd better be going now" before saying "Goodbye" because it is politer than just saying "Goodbye" and walking away. Try to think of some other ways to end a conversation.

Making friends:

Making friends can be difficult, but once you have established them, they can be enjoyable. You will have someone to go out with, talk about things you enjoy, and discuss your problems with.

It can be difficult to tell if someone is not a real friend.. This is because the signs that someone is pretending to be your friend are often very difficult to detect, because they include body language and tone of voice. You may not find it easy to notice these. A true friend will always make you feel welcome and talk to you if they have the time. A true friend will treat you the same way that they treat all of their friends. Someone pretending to be a friend will sometimes make you feel welcome, but show signs that they do not want to talk almost immediately. Someone pretending to be a friend may treat you differently to their other friends.

Social skills:

Here are some additional ideas and things to remember to help you when dealing with social situations. This does not cover every possible situation you may find yourself in, but it does provide advice for some of the most common circumstances:

1. Even if you do not want to socialize with others and prefer to be on your own, it is a good idea to develop your social skills.
2. If you make a mistake and upset someone, it does NOT mean they don't like you. Usually, saying sorry helps. If you are not sure what you have done to upset someone, ask.
3. Rules change depending on the situation and individual you are speaking to. For example, it would be appropriate to say 'Hey' to a friend but 'Hello' to your boss. A good example of this is the story of a man who was told that it was polite to go up to people and smile and shake their hand when he met them. This was appropriate most of the time. However, when he attended a family member's funeral, people thought he was being insensitive because he was walking around with a big smile when they were feeling sad.
4. Saying 'please' and 'thank you' is appropriate in all situations. This shows other individuals that you are polite.
5. Sometimes it is ok not to tell the truth to make someone else happy (e.g., saying they do not look fat, even if they do). Some call these 'little white lies'. Try thinking of situations where this may be the case with a family member or co-worker.

How to develop and practice social skills:

You could also ask a family member or friend to help you practice social skills. You could do this using role play. Things that you could practice include approaching others, starting a conversation, taking turns and ending a conversation. You could ask the individuals who know you well which skills they think it would be a good idea for you to practice.

Watching soaps on TV might give you some ideas of how to act in different social situations. You could also record an episode and ask someone to press pause during the program and talk about what you would do next in that situation.