



Unit: Speaking
Skill 18: Holding Individual and Small Group Conversations

Activity A: One-on-One

Worksheet

Etiquette for the Professional Conversation

The G.L.A.D. Guide to Professional Conversation

Greet people with a proper handshake, respect their personal space, and don't refer to them by their first name. Always use an individual's title and/or family name. Also be aware that there is a right and wrong way to shake someone's hand. If you are not sure of the difference, look below!

Listen actively to what the other person is saying and try not to interrupt them when they are speaking. If you find yourself finishing the other person's sentences frequently, you may not be listening actively.

Avoid inappropriate, controversial or uncomfortable topics, such as religion, politics, money or sensitive personal information. Also try to avoid complaining and never gossip! Not sure what to talk about? Look at the list of appropriate topics below.

Demonstrate that you are interested in what the other person has to say by responding appropriately and using positive body language. Face the speaker, maintain eye contact, raise your eyebrows, nod and smile. You might make a point to murmur "mm-hmm," "uh-huh," or ask leading questions such as "really?" and "what happened next?"

Shaking someone's hand:

The proper handshake begins before you even reach out your hand in greeting. Be sure that your hands are clean and reasonably free of perspiration.

Always shake with your right hand even if you are left-handed, unless you are for some reason unable to use your right hand.

Face your colleague, and always use a firm but comfortable grip. Your grip should neither be loose and flimsy nor bone-crushingly tight!

Not sure what to talk about? Try some of these topics:

- Current events
- The event at hand
- Positive news
- A great new restaurant
- Sports events
- Topics in your line of work
- Books and publications
- Personal hobbies
- What you will do over vacation
- The entertainment world
- Interesting classes
- If all else fails, the weather

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If you are still unsure what you should or should not do, at least avoid these faux pas:

- Finding slick ways to avoid shaking the other person's hand (for instance, like faking them out and slicking your hair back!).
- Invading the other person's personal space.
- Interrupting the other person frequently.
- Constantly finishing their sentences.
- Bringing up sensitive personal information (i.e. "so, I heard that old granny of yours finally croaked").
- Gossiping about a mutual acquaintance.
- Looking disinterested.
- Answering a cell-phone call while the other person is talking.
- Avoiding eye contact.
- Paying more attention to the things going on around you than to your colleague.