

## ETIQUETTES OF CONVERSATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Communication is the act of transferring information from one person to another. Communication can be verbal, non-verbal or visual. Communication skills involve listening, speaking, observing and empathising. The capability to render information correctly, clearly, and as intended is a vital life skill and should not be ignored. It involves the exchange of messages precisely and concisely in a way that connects with the people. Listening carefully, speaking clearly and putting others at ease are precious attributes to possess for anyone. We are involved in communication all the time, and therefore, the act of communication is taken for granted or just as a habitual process. Since communication is an ongoing activity, it is necessary to make sure that concepts, thoughts, ideas, messages, and data are put in such a way that everyone can easily comprehend them. Therefore, it is always advisable to work on communication skills, and by doing so, we may well improve our quality of communicability. Good communication skills can enhance our relationships with others, whereas poor communication skills can sour our relationships from business to personal and make life problematic.*

**Keywords:** *Communication, Conversation, Cordial, Esteem, Etiquettes.*

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### Introduction

This paper aims to focus on the etiquettes of conversation or, say, communication. The word conversation is commonly used for informal talk, whereas communication is used for formal discourse. However, both words are pretty often used arbitrarily. Therefore, before discussing the etiquettes of conversation, a prologue on good communication skills seems suitable here.

Food is essential for physical growth, and communication is vital for the mental development of human beings, even all living beings. Communication is the food of society because it sustains our intellectual existence. Likewise, communication is the lifeline of business organisations. An organisation cannot run smoothly without good communication. Therefore, the first requirement that employers look for in their employees is to have good communication skills to express themselves positively and clearly, both while speaking and writing. Communication is the ladder for corporate success; therefore, we should all make deliberate efforts to improve communication. Good communication is about giving and taking instructions, understanding the subtle differences of basic concepts and notions like advice, suggestion, request, orders, instructions etc., making requests, placing orders, responding to letters, negotiating and confidently dealing with customers, asking questions and relaying information with ease and accuracy. If a person can convey information to others plainly and unambiguously, we say that he/she possesses good communication skills.

The word etiquettes refers to the conventions and norms of social behaviour. They are accepted codes of conduct for communication. Good manners and etiquettes exhibit our upbringing and our culture. They are essential to everyday interactions and maintain a healthy and positive environment at a social gathering and workplace. There are many types of etiquettes, like business, social, table, phone, e-mail etc., however, here we shall talk about only social etiquettes of conversation. They are:

- It is necessary for good communication that we should be calm and keep a smile on our face. It is correctly said that a smile is a curve that sets everything straight and that a whole-hearted smile is the common language of kindness. A perfect and natural smile makes you look attractive and quickly connects you with the listeners. However, a smile should be genuine and not fake.

- We should look into the listener's eyes as we talk with him. When we do so, it shows our confidence and our purity of heart. Our eyes reflect our sincerity, integrity and ease. There is a maxim, "eyes are a reflection of our inner self." And "they say it all". Our eyes speak volumes about us and how we communicate. Eye contact is a kind of body language which plays a very vital role during communication. Our body language says more than words, which logically accounts for a more significant percentage of our communication skills.
- The listener should feel that he is given respect and importance. We must address the listener with respect. If we do so, then he would listen to us with interest. Treat others the way you should be treated. Even if we deliver a lecture for 20 minutes straight, there are ways to make this type of communication feel like a conversation, not a lecture. We need to show our audience that we respect them, their time, needs, and challenges. We need to demonstrate that we know and value our audience.
- Do not laugh unnecessarily during a conversation. The listener should not feel that he is being ridiculed or looked down upon. If we do so, the listener might lose respect for us. Moreover, laughing at other people's misfortunes is considered rude, and a gentle person would never do that. Remember, even our close friend who experiences misfortune would not find that funny.
- 'Think before you speak' is an old maxim but always holds in every situation. By thinking before speaking, we may avoid unnecessary trouble in our life, whether in our relationships, career or elsewhere.
- We should talk softly and sweetly. Rudeness in accent ruins the import of utterances, and the intended meaning is also lost. We should avoid negative expressions and gestures, such as swearing or an angry tone. Instead, let's make "please", "sorry", and "thank you" part of our daily conversation.
- We should not use uncommon and verbose vocabulary in our conversation because it makes the talk uninteresting and pedantic. Being verbose does not impress our listeners; we should convey our message in the proper sense and in the right manner. The point is to avoid unnecessarily big words when smaller words may convey the intended message better and easily. Therefore, grandiloquence is to be avoided.
- Do not use slang and colloquial words in a formal talk, and even local dialect words should be avoided. We should avoid slang or idiomatic expressions in formal business meetings or academic writings. Slang and colloquial expressions make our speech sound informal and less sincere. The use of slang or local dialect can also make it challenging for non-native speakers to understand the real import of our words. Therefore, only standard and sublime vocabulary be used in a formal conversation. Although it might be acceptable in friendly e-mails and chats, excessive colloquialism is a significant drawback that degrades formal speech and written text quality.
- We should not talk very rapidly, making it difficult for the listener to understand the utterance clearly. We should speak the English language with a proper accent and intonation. Some people talk very fast and indistinctly so that the words are difficult to understand.
- We should not try to dominate the listener by talking loud. To make our point clear, we should base our statement on logic and cite proper facts. Still, if the listener does not accept it, it is advisable to keep quiet instead of giving a bad turn to the conversation.
- We should crack jokes keeping in mind the mood of the listener. We should also keep the bond with the listener in mind since we have different bonds with different people. A well-timed joke can undoubtedly ease a tense situation and help us resolve disagreements, but an ill-timed can be disastrous. Thus, a speaker should crack a joke only when he is sure that the listener is in a cheerful mood.
- We should not go on talking even if we are good conversationalists. We should also allow others to put forth their point of view. We should avoid telling long stories or sharing too many details. Ernest Agyemang Yeboah's quote seems suitable here. He says: "I choose to choose few words each day. Yes! Few words that count. Few words that can make an impact. Few words that talk much. Few words that can make people ponder to wonder. Few words that are indelible. Few words that can leave distinctive footprints on minds. Though we may fail to mind our words, we shall never fail to mind the works of our words." (<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/think-before-you-speak>)

- Some people develop the habit of using pet phrases like, "Oh my God, don't tell me, seriously, you won't believe. If we have such a habit, we should try to give it up at the earliest because it sounds funny and stupid to the listener. Besides, avoid using hesitation or filler words like, "Um, like, Ok, Well, Do you know what I mean?, You know? so, er..." they are all words that have moved into everyday vocabulary. There may be several reasons we use them - to fill a silence, out of habit, or think they have meaning for what we are saying.
- We should give our point of view only when the other person has stopped talking. We should not interfere while one is talking as it is disruptive and considered rude. And if it makes it very necessary to intervene, we should first seek the speaker's permission with a due apology. Then, we should interrupt politely and humbly and begin with phrases like: "Excuse me," "Hope you would not mind if I intrude?" "I have a point that pertains to what you just said," "I would like to add something to that," or "Would you please allow me to say something here," "I beg your pardon, but I need to say something."
- We should not indulge in self-aggrandisement or self-praise since it ruins the conversation and our respect. William Shakespeare wrote about it in one of his Sonnets:
 

*"Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye  
And all my soul, and all my every part;  
And for this sin, there is no remedy,  
It is so grounded inward in my heart".*
- We should avoid low talks and should avoid using disgraceful phrases and proverbs in our conversation. Let us avoid being too curt and candid in a formal relationship. For instance:
 

"You look drained/exhausted." (It suggests that the person is not looking good).

"You look great for your age." (It suggests that the person is quite aged, which is rude to say so).

"Fat as you are, you should not wear skin-tight jeans". (It suggests that the person is obese).

"Hey, you have such a big hair loss."(It is rude to say so).

"It is high time you bought a new car".(It suggests that the person owns a very old and unlikable car).
- Our body gestures should be absolutely in correspondence with our utterances. We should not move our hands here and there unnecessarily.
- While talking over a cell phone at a public place, we should keep our voice down so that others do not get disturbed and irritated. It is coarse and inconsiderate.
- We should avoid little chat, as it wastes time and diminishes our grace and esteem in the listener's eyes.
- Last, however, there is no end to good etiquettes; we should deliver small public speeches and make them interesting by citing nice anecdotes.

### Conclusion

Good etiquette and manners not only save us from embarrassment but they even leave a good impression on our friends and relatives. Moreover, they make us empathetic and develop a positive feeling to treat everyone with kindness and respect. We should always avoid political or religious discussions in a get-together or the company of ladies. Such arguments often lead to unpleasant situations. If we are dragged into such arguments, let us avoid being impolite even if we disagree with the opinion of the person or group of persons. Let us not lose temper howsoever hard a person might provoke us to become ugly and stoop to his level. Let us remember that a real gentleman does not lose his temper even in ugly situations. In such unpredictable conditions, we should maintain our calm, turn the discussion to some pleasant topic, or simply move away from there giving some pretext.

We are what our words are, and our words affect others. We certainly want to be a positive influence on other people, not a negative one. Thus, we will not regret it later on if we make sure that we choose our words wisely. The speaker should have a clear idea of what to say, how to say, and what words to say—all these things should be paid attention to. Besides, talking continuously without considering the listener's point of view makes a talk boring and the listener uninterested. We can be good listeners if we nod our heads, make eye contact, and keep commenting on what the other person has said.

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