



O-CITY PROJECT

MODULE IV.1 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



Erasmus+

Project funded by: **Erasmus+ / Key Action 2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, Knowledge Alliances.**

1. Lesson Document

Lesson 2 Topic 5 Conversation

Starting a conversation

Introduction

Conversations are key for the exchange of thoughts and ideas. They include the expression and the listening of others, while paying attention to the verbal and nonverbal elements of languages.

Whether you are trying to settle a new professional contact, a partnership for your audiovisual project, or simply starting a new relationship with someone, for work or privately, the ability to start a conversation is a skill that will help you in relationships building and social relations. It will increase your capacity of networking (see topic 8), but also your power of influence and bringing people to your side (topics 7 and 9). Therefore starting a conversation can be considered a basic form of communication.

Once this lesson is completed and approved, learners will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of a good start for an efficient communication process.
2. Get prepared for a conversation.

In this lesson, we will learn how to start a conversation that will profile a future high communication quality.

1. **Why is the beginning of the conversation crucial?**

The ability to start a conversation is not a superficial skill. Indeed, it will help you in developing contacts with others, entangling new relationships and establishing trust and respect, getting people to help you achieve your objectives. This will contribute to the enlargement of your network of friends, peers, and other relevant contacts which will provide you with more knowledge and experiences that will benefit your self-development. It will also increase the number of your opportunities, as you will look more approachable if you are yourself comfortable approaching others.



<https://www.canva.com/photos/MAED3v4mtpQ-diverse-people-listening-to-speaker-in-modern-studio/>

In addition, psychologists have established that it takes only a few seconds for someone to evaluate you when you meet for the first time. Then, this first impression will be extremely hard to reverse. So, giving a positive version of yourself will support positive perceptions to your interlocutor and serve you in the communication. To get deeper about the first impression, you might refer to lesson 1, topic 9 for more information about the first impression.

2. Ice breakers

Apart from a boat, an ice breaker is a question, game or activity that is usually used to introduce people to each other. It can consist of simple “getting to know you” questions about your interlocutor background or current activities. It can also introduce more originality and induce funny or incongruous aspects that might force the audience outside of the comfort zone. The objective of using an Ice breaker start is to make people share some funny experience and by doing so, having a more relaxed atmosphere and better disposition for the ongoing conversation. People will feel in higher confidence to share their through feelings and opinions, and will be more likely to participate in the dialogue to be engaged.

This practice is particularly used for training activities but might also apply to meetings or pitch, by starting with a question that will challenge your audience and feel more concerned about what will come.

Here are some examples of ice breaking questions. You should set up your own depending on the objective of your presentation:

- What is your favorite film / audiovisual content?
- Do you like video games?
- What is your favorite monument?
- If you could choose the city where you live, which one would you choose? Why?
- If you had had 25 hours per day, how would you dedicate your extra hour?

3. Common tips to start a conversation.

Beside the ice breakers, aimed at making people feel at ease in the conversation, other elements will help you bringing people to your side from the beginning:

- Start with a positive statement. Even if the rest of the conversation is expected to be tense, starting with something positive will show that you intend to find constructive solutions.
- Create an atmosphere of solidarity among the members of the conversation. You are all in this together, so again, you expect that all together will be able to achieve positive outcomes.
- Be sincere, ask questions that reflect your interest for other people, for instance about a situation for which you will care. Remember elements from previous conversations that you might have.
- Treat others as equals, and give the same attention to everyone, avoiding placing yourself above the rest of the interlocutors. Look for the common ground above your personal interests and offer help.
- Compliment the people that are engaged in the conversation with you.
- Involve others, make them feel as part of the conversation and concerned by your subject. Ask for help and information.
- Make sure that your body language is friendly and open, and that your tone of voice is appropriate.

If your conversation is a follow-up conversation arising from previous communication, it is also a good practice to start with remembering where you left off last time, and previous achievements / conclusions reached.

Conclusion

Starting a conversation is a fundamental part of communicating with others, as it will establish the nature of the relationship among the different interlocutors engaged in the process and the quality of exchanges. This is the reason why the first sentences of a conversation should be carefully chosen to maximise the positive endings.