

Consider the differences between these two dialogs:

Dialog 1

- A. Did you go on any school trips when you were in high school?
B. Yes.
A. Where did you go?
B. *Okinawa*.
A. How long did you stay there?
B. *Five days*.

The overall impression of Dialog 1 is that these two people do not like each other and do not want to share their thoughts.

Dialog 2

A. Did you go on any school trips when you were in high school?

B. *Yes, we went to Okinawa for five days.*

B adds information to the answer

A. Wow! That sounds like a great trip.

A responds with a positive comment

B. *Yes, it was. I learned a lot about history there.*

B adds information to the answer

A. Really? What exactly did you learn about?

A makes his next question about what B said

B. *Mostly we learned about what happened there during WWII. It was pretty horrible, actually, but it was interesting to learn about.*

B makes interesting comments.

He doesn't force A to ask a question about every single piece of information

The overall impression of Dialog 2 is that these two people want to talk to each other and share their thoughts.

A reacts with empathy and develops topics by asking questions about what B says.

B does not only answer the question with a short answer. He adds information that was not asked for.

This skill has nothing to do with learning English. It is basic communication skill that you already have, or don't have, that can be used in your native language or any language.

Developing Conversation Skills

In order to maintain a conversation, you have to know how to ask questions, make the other person feel comfortable, and show interest and empathy. This is a matter of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, but it is also a matter of skillful use of this knowledge.

A. GETTING STARTED

1. Introducing

Introduce the topic of the interview and explain what you would like to talk about.

2. Probing

Asking various questions until you obtain some information that you want to know more about.

3. Ask for more details

When the person gives an interesting answer, follow it with more questions about the topic.

B. MAKING THE OTHER PERSON COMFORTABLE

4. Empathizing

React to the person's answers in a way that let's her know that you are interested and you understand her feelings.

5. Encouraging

Give signals to the person that he should continue talking or expand on what he has just said.

6. Agreeing

Agreeing is like empathizing. It gives the person confidence to continue speaking.

7. Avoiding

Don't ask about things that the interviewee probably won't want to talk about. Your judgment on this problem will depend on the situation.

C. MAKING THE CONVERSATION MORE INTERESTING

8. Disagreeing

Disagree in a way that doesn't take away the person's confidence. Be polite.

9. Shifting focus

Move the conversation to a different topic.

10. Prying

Sometimes you want to get information that the person probably does not want to give.

11. Maintaining Control

Don't let the person digress onto topics that are of little interest, and don't let her stop talking. Remember how to shift the focus back onto what you want to talk about.

On the back of the paper, write some expressions or phrases an interviewer can use to in these interviewing techniques.

What do people do in conversations?

<p style="text-align: center;">1. Introduce</p> <p><i>I'd like to ask you about...</i> <i>Could I ask you about...</i> <i>I'd like to talk about...</i> <i>Could you tell me about...</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2. Ask for more details</p> <p><i>Could you tell me more about that...</i> <i>I'd like to know more about that...</i></p> <p>Ask <i>who, what, where, when, why</i> and <i>how</i> about the topic</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">3. Empathize</p> <p><i>Oh, really?</i> <i>Oh, that's + ADJECTIVE</i> <i>I know what you mean.</i> <i>I know exactly what that's like.</i> <i>You must have felt/been + ADJECTIVE</i> <i>You must feel/be + ADJECTIVE</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4. Encourage</p> <p><i>Uh-huh.</i> <i>Mm.</i> <i>Yes.</i> <i>Yeah.</i> <i>I see.</i> <i>Go on.</i> <i>Continue.</i> <i>That's interesting.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">5. Agree</p> <p><i>That's right.</i> <i>That's true.</i> <i>I couldn't agree with you more.</i> <i>Absolutely.</i> <i>I understand.</i> <i>That's exactly what I think.</i> <i>I think so too.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">6. Disagree</p> <p><i>Yes, but what about...?</i> <i>Yes, but what if...?</i> <i>That may be true, but...</i> <i>Yes, but other people believe...</i> <i>I'm sorry, but I don't think so.</i> <i>I'm afraid I don't agree with that.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">7. Shift Focus</p> <p><i>Right, but now I'd like to ask you about...</i> <i>OK, fine. Now let's talk about...</i> <i>Well, what about...?</i> <i>Now there's one more thing I'd like to ask you about...</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">8. Pry</p> <p><i>Perhaps you don't want to answer this question, but I wonder if I could ask you about...</i> <i>Could I ask you personal question?</i> <i>If you don't want to answer this question, please don't, but...</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">9. Judge</p> <p>Why did you do that? You should/shouldn't have + VERB past participle You should + VERB present participle Are you sure that was a good idea?</p>	