

Ways of speaking

A Wedding speech

Whenever I make a speech I always try to get to the point as quickly as possible. I could tell a lot of stories about Jim, my best friend since childhood, but I don't want to embarrass him, so I won't. Also, before the wedding, I gave him my word that I wouldn't crack any jokes, as I'm really bad at telling jokes. So I'll do no more than wish Jim and Sandra luck and hope they have a long and happy life together.



B Business conversation

- Paula: David, I wonder if I could have a **brief chat** with you about our new secretary?
- David: Mm. Yes. I had a **quick word** with Lorna about it yesterday; she said there have been problems.
- Paula: Could we talk now? I know it's a **delicate subject** but I don't think we need to make it a **lengthy discussion** with everyone involved.
- David: Well, actually, I'm rather glad you **raised the subject**. Yes, let's talk.
- Paula: Well, **speaking off the record**¹, every time you give her instructions, she never seems to understand, and if you **challenge her directly** she just **pleads ignorance**². The other secretaries are **complaining bitterly** that they end up doing her work. One of them **dropped a hint** that she might resign if nothing is done about it. I could tell by the **tone of her voice** that she was serious.
- David: Oh dear. Oh well, I'll have a word with her and **make it clear** that she has to improve or we may have to ask her to leave.
- Paula: Thanks, David. Anyway, let's **change the subject**. How's the sales plan going?
- David: Oh, not bad, but I have to tell you the **truth**, I've been very busy with other things lately. In fact I was going to ask you a **favour** ...
- Paula: I know what you're about to say! Don't worry, I'll help you with it.

¹ saying something you do not want to be publicly reported

² says she does not know about something

C Problem page

Dear Aunt Cloda,
I find it difficult to **get into conversation** with new people, or to **join in a conversation** that's already started. And even if I do talk to someone, I feel as if I'm boring them. I like meeting people and I want to be able to get to know them and not just **make polite conversation**. What can I do?
Nora Peepoutova

Dear Aunt Cloda,
A friend of mine **made an interesting observation** the other day: she said I always **address** people too **politely** and I **apologise** too **profusely** if I do something wrong. Why am I like this? Why can't I relax and be informal?
Al Loof

Dear Aunt Cloda,
I was at a party recently and I heard my friend Margie **strike up**¹ a **conversation** with a handsome man sitting next to her. Then, after a while, during a **lull**² in the **conversation**, I heard her **whisper softly** to him that she was not married. She is. Why did she **tell a lie**? Should I have told him?
Gel Luss

¹ start

² quiet period



We **speak** a (foreign) language. We don't say 'I can ~~talk~~ Arabic/French/etc.'

Exercises

49.1 Replace the underlined words with a collocation from A.

- 1 I always get a bit nervous whenever I have to speak in public.
- 2 Julia promised me she would not leave the country without informing me.
- 3 I wish Fred would hurry up and get to the important part of what he's trying to say.
- 4 I hope that you will be successful in your new job.
- 5 After dinner everyone sat around sharing funny stories.

49.2 Correct the collocation errors in these sentences.

- 1 You can borrow my camera – I'll make you instructions about how to use it.
- 2 I could say you a lot of stories about what we used to do when we were kids.
- 3 That's enough about computers. I think it's time we moved the subject, don't you?
- 4 On the train I hit up a conversation with an interesting man from Japan.
- 5 I can't talk Japanese.
- 6 I'm afraid I really don't have time for a large discussion on the matter.
- 7 The US President George Washington is famous for confessing after saying a lie.
- 8 I don't like your note of voice – there's no need to be so aggressive.

49.3 Complete this e-mail.

Hi, Jim,

Any chance we could have a brief (1) before the meeting this afternoon? I'd like to have a (2) word with you about the third item on the agenda. I want to (3) you a favour. It's rather a (4) subject, so I won't put anything in writing just now. And when we do get together, I'll be speaking strictly off the (5), of course. I'll (6) everything clear when we meet – so look forward to (7) a word with you soon.

See you soon,

Bob

49.4 Complete each sentence with a word or phrase from the box.

bitterly conversation enough hints ignorance in the conversation observations
politely profusely softly the conversation the subject the truth

- 1 I hope you will always tell me
- 2 I wish you had never raised
- 3 I hope she'll get the point if I drop
- 4 You can usually rely on Jack to make some interesting
- 5 I don't believe George when he pleads
- 6 I was too shy to join in
- 7 When he arrived late he apologised
- 8 When I give my students a lot of homework, they always complain
- 9 It doesn't sound quite natural to address your fellow students so
- 10 'I love you,' he whispered to her
- 11 I'll try to attract his attention during a lull
- 12 It's not always easy making polite