

Expressions for Starting, Continuing, and Ending a Conversation

Below are some useful expressions for conversation in a business setting. These expressions will help English language learners socialize with coworkers, colleagues, and other business contacts.

Greetings

Neutral:

Hi/Hey, (name). **How's it going?** (often reduced to "How's it goin'?")

Hi/Hey, (name). **How are you?** (often reduced to "How are ya?")

Good morning/afternoon/evening, (name). ("Good morning" is often reduced to "Morning." Also note that "Good morning/afternoon/evening" is more formal than the first two greetings.)

Casual:

Hey, (name). **What's up?**

Hey, (name). **What's going on?** (often reduced to "What's goin' on?")

Hi/Hey, (name). **Long time no see.** (if you haven't seen the person in a while)

Responses to Common Greetings

How's it going?/How are you?

Good, How are you?

Fine, and you?

Just fine, thanks. How about yourself?

Doing all right. And yourself? (often reduced to "Doin' all right.")

What's up?

Not much. What's up with you?

Not much. You?

Hi/Hey. How's it going?

Hi/Hey. How are you?

Notice that some people reply to "What's up" with another greeting. This often happens when you greet someone who is walking past you. It can be awkward to say "Not much. What's up with you?" to someone walking away from you.

Transitioning from a Greeting to Small Talk

Note that the word “so” is often followed by a pause.

What’s new?

So, how have you been?

What have you been up to?

Keeping busy?

How was your weekend?

Do you have any plans for the weekend?

So, how’s it going with (a project, initiative, etc.)...?

So, what do you think about (current event or something new at work)...?

So, did you hear that...?

So, I heard that you are/you’re...?

Transitioning from Small Talk to Something Work Related

Talking about something your conversation partner isn’t expecting:

Before I forget, I wanted to talk to you about...

By the way...

Since you’re here, let me ask you about...

I actually wanted to talk to you about... Do you have a few minutes?

While I have you on the line, let me ask you about... (if speaking on the phone)

Ending small talk and starting a meeting:

Well, let’s get started...

Shall we talk about (the topic of the meeting)...?

Anyway, let’s talk about (the topic of the meeting)...

Changing the Topic

Anyway... (followed by a pause — an all-purpose expression for changing the subject)

So, you mentioned earlier that...

Earlier you said that...

Getting back to... (returning to a previous topic)

Continuing on your Partner's Conversation Thread

That reminds me of...
Something similar happened to me...
I know exactly what you mean...

Getting your Conversation Partner to Elaborate

[This article](#) lists some strategies for encouraging a conversation partner to elaborate. We can repeat what the other person said, ask a follow up question, or quickly state how we feel about something.

Continuing a Conversation after an Interruption

Where were we?
Anyway, you were saying...
So as I was saying...

Ending a Conversation

Note that people often use the word "well" followed by a pause.

Ending a casual conversation:

Well, I'd better get back to (what you were working on)...
Well, I'll let you get back to (what the other person was working on)...
Well, I'll let you get back to work.
Well, I know you're busy. I won't take up any more of your time.
I should get going. It was nice talking to you.
Well, I have to run. It was nice talking to you.
Well, it was nice seeing you. Say hello to (name) for me.
Well, I have a meeting in a few minutes. I better get going.
I have to call one of my clients. I'll catch up with you later.

Ending a work-related conversation:

To end a work-related conversation, we often mention what the next steps are.

Okay, I'll talk with my team and I'll give you a call tomorrow morning.
So, we'll wait for Joanna's response and then go from there.

Okay, I'll work on the proposal and send it to you by the end of the week.

Note that we would also say "bye," "goodbye" or something similar after these expressions.