

Learn what to say and how to break the ice when meeting new people

In this activity for kids in elementary through middle school, students practice what to say and how to break the ice when beginning a new friendship. Asking friendly questions of others can be an effective way to start a conversation, because many people find it easy to talk about themselves. It's also a way to show interest in and care for others.

Activity

Preparation

1. Pair up students for this activity.
2. Copy the list of Conversation Steps below, one copy for each pair of students.
3. Copy the Making a Conversation skill-practice strips so you have one strip for each pair. Cut up the strips and distribute one to each pair of students.
4. Allow 4 minutes for students to work through the practice conversation. Have students switch parts after 2 minutes. Monitor the practice and coach as necessary.
5. Read the student instructions to the class before starting the activity.

Student Instructions

As partners, you're going to practice making conversation. Each of you will have a turn beginning and ending a conversation. I'll give each pair a strip of paper that describes a situation. For example, one strip says, "Begin and end a conversation with a student you don't know very well from another class."

First you'll read the situation together and decide who will begin and end the conversation. The other partner will pretend to be the student described in the situation.

When you're beginning the conversation:

- Decide on a question to ask your partner
- Follow Steps 2–6 on the Conversation Steps handout
- Listen to your partner's suggestions

If you're pretending to be the student in the situation:

- Answer in a friendly way
- Offer suggestions to help your partner follow the steps

After two minutes, you'll switch parts.

Wrap-Up

Ask for volunteer pairs to demonstrate their conversations to the class. Debrief students after each demonstration using these questions:

- How well were the Conversation Steps followed?
- What respectful behaviors were used?

Conversation Steps

1. Decide what you want to talk about.
2. Ask the other person friendly, respectful questions about the topic you've chosen.
3. Show that you're a good listener:
 - Look at the person who's speaking.
 - Nod your head or say something to show that you understand.
4. Say something to show that you're thinking about what's being said.
5. Ask another question if you're finished talking about the first one.
6. End the conversation politely.

Making a Conversation—Conversation Strips

Cut up the strips and distribute one to each pair of students.

- Begin and end a conversation with a student you don't know very well from another class.
- Begin and end a conversation with a student who waits with you at the bus stop every day.
- Begin and end a conversation with a person who's on the soccer team that you've joined recently.
- Begin and end a conversation with a student who's playing a new game at recess.
- Begin and end a conversation with a cousin who's visiting you for the first time in several years.
- Begin and end a conversation with a new neighbor who's playing alone.
- Begin and end a conversation with a new student sitting across from you at lunch.