

CHAPTER 1 · BREAKING THE ICE

FIRST *impressions*

The first ten seconds decide how the next ten minutes feel. You can plan them.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/1

PHRASE BOX SAY IT
FORMAL

Good morning.
How do you do?
Pleased to meet you.

NEUTRAL

Hello, nice to meet you.
Hi, how are you?
Lovely to meet you.

CASUAL

Hiya.
All right? (UK, mainly England)
Hey, how's it going? (US English, now common in the UK)

BUILD YOUR INTRODUCTION BUILD

A good introduction has three parts: a greeting, your name, and one detail the other person can ask about. That detail is the hook. It gives them their first question.

Your first name

Your hook (what you do, or why you're here)

Put it together and write your line

FORMAL, NEUTRAL OR CASUAL? SORT

British English has a wider range of greetings than most textbooks show. Sort each one. When in doubt in real life, choose neutral. Tick one column for each.

	Formal	Neutral	Casual
Good morning.			
Hiya.			
How do you do?			
Lovely to meet you.			
All right? (UK)			
Hello, nice to meet you.			
Pleased to meet you.			
Hey, how's it going? (US English, now common in the UK)			

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY? CHOOSE

Four real moments. Pick the best response, then read why. Circle your answer.

1. Your friend introduces you to her grandmother at a family lunch. What do you say?

a) Hiya, all right?

b) Hello, it's lovely to meet you. I'm Ana, a friend of Sophie's from university.

c) Hi.

2. At a barbecue, someone says "Hiya, I'm Jo." What fits best?

a) How do you do? My name is Ana.

b) Hi Jo, I'm Ana. How do you know Sam?

c) Ana.

3. Someone says their name, but you don't catch it. What do you say?

a) Just carry on and hope it comes up later.

b) Sorry, I didn't quite catch your name.

c) What?

4. A colleague says "All right?" as you pass in the corridor. What do they mean?

a) They think something is wrong with you.

b) It's a casual hello. "Yeah, good thanks, you?" is enough.

c) They want a long answer about your day.

THE NAME GAME PLAY

Forgetting a name in the first minute is very common. The fix is to hear it, use it, and link it to something. Meet three people, then see how many you remember. Read the cards, cover them, then answer.

SIOBHÁN

From Cork. Runs a café near the station.

TUNDE

Works at the hospital. Plays five-a-side football.

PRIYA

New to the area. Just back from Lisbon.

1. Who runs the café?

2. Who plays five-a-side football?

3. Who is just back from Lisbon?

SAY IT ALOUD SAY IT

Reading an introduction isn't the same as saying it. Listen to the model, say yours three times, then rate yourself. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
Hi, I'm Ana. I've just joined the finance team, so I'm still learning everyone's names.	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Pause for a moment after your name. It helps people remember it.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON **REFLECT**

Where will you use your introduction this week?

Which greeting level feels most natural to you, and why?

Whose name did you forget recently? What would have helped?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Greeting, name, hook: three parts every time.
- ☐ The hook gives the other person their first question.
- ☐ Neutral greetings work almost everywhere.
- ☐ Hear it, use it, link it: names stick.
- ☐ Practise your introduction aloud before you need it.

CHAPTER 2 · BREAKING THE ICE

SMALL TALK THAT *goes somewhere*

Small talk isn't empty. It's how strangers check that it's safe to keep talking.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/2

PHRASE BOX SAY IT

WEATHER

Lovely day, isn't it?
It's a bit nippy today.
Looks like it's brightening up.

WEEKEND

Did you do anything nice at the weekend?
Any plans for the weekend?
How was your weekend?

KEEPING IT GOING

Oh really? How come?
That sounds fun. Where did you go?
Me too, actually.

ANSWER PLUS ONE BUILD

Short answers end conversations. The fix is simple: answer, add one detail, then ask one back. Build your own for the questions you hear most.

Your short answer

One extra detail

A question back

Put it together and write your line

SAFE, CAREFUL OR AVOID? **SORT**

Some topics are easy openers in the UK. Others are best kept for people you know well. Sort these. Tick one column for each.

	Safe	Careful	Avoid
The weather			
Weekend plans			
How much they earn			
Holidays and travel			
Their religion			
Their weight or appearance			
Food and restaurants			
Politics			
Their age			
The local area			
House prices			
TV, films and sport			

WEATHER TALK, DECODED **MATCH**

The British talk about the weather a lot, and they have their own way of doing it. Match each phrase to its meaning. Write the letter in the middle column.

They say	Letter	They mean
1. It's a bit nippy today.		A. It's warm and humid.
2. It's chucking it down.		B. The sun is coming out.
3. It's close today.		C. It's raining heavily.
4. It's brightening up.		D. A joke: it always rains on our days off.
5. Typical bank holiday weather!		E. A friendly opener. Agree and add something.
6. Lovely day, isn't it?		F. It's quite cold.

KEEP IT GOING **PLAY**

You meet a neighbour at the bus stop. Choose your reply at each turn and see how far the conversation goes. Write what you would say at each turn.

Neighbour: "Morning! Chilly one today, isn't it?"

Neighbour: "Ha, you'll get used to it! I take it every day. I work at the library in town."

Neighbour: "That's the one. Are you new round here? I don't think I've seen you before."

SAY IT ALOUD **SAY IT**

Practise your answer plus one until it comes out without thinking. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
Good, thanks. Busy week, actually. How's yours been?	☐ ☐ ☐
Really nice, thanks. We went for a walk by the river. Did you do anything nice?	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Let your voice go up on the question at the end.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON **REFLECT**

Who do you see regularly but never really talk to?

What is your “plus one” sentence for this week?

Which small talk topic feels most comfortable for you?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Answer, add one detail, ask one back.
- ☐ Weather, weekends and the local area are safe starters.
- ☐ Salary, weight, age and religion are best avoided with new people.
- ☐ A tag question (“isn't it?”) invites the other person to agree and add something.
- ☐ Small talk feels better afterwards than you expect.

CHAPTER 3 · BREAKING THE ICE

OPENERS FOR *every situation*

The hardest sentence is the first one. Have a few ready, and the rest gets easier.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/3

PHRASE BOX SAY IT
NOTICE SOMETHING

This is a great venue, isn't it?
The food looks amazing.
Busy tonight, isn't it?

ASK ABOUT THE SITUATION

How do you know the hosts?
Is this your first time here?
What brings you here today?

ASK FOR HELP

Do you know where the coats go?
Any idea what time it starts?
Is this seat taken?

PICK YOUR OPENER BUILD

Different places need different first lines. Choose a situation and add something you can see around you.

Your first name

Something you can both see

Put it together and write your line

CLOSED OR INVITING? SORT

A closed opener can be answered with one word. An inviting one asks for more. Both have a place, but you need the inviting kind to keep going. Tick one column for each.

	Closed	Inviting
Do you like it here?		
What brings you here today?		
Nice party.		
How do you know the hosts?		
Are you a student?		
What's the best thing you've eaten here?		
Busy, isn't it?		
How did you get into running?		

WHICH OPENER FITS? CHOOSE

Four places, four first lines. Choose the one that would work best. Circle your answer.

1. You're at a friend's birthday drinks and know nobody else. Someone is standing alone by the snacks.

a) Can you move, please?

b) Hi, I'm Carlos. How do you know Laura?

c) Do you like crisps?

2. It's your first evening class. The person next to you is reading the course handout.

a) Is this your first week too?

b) What's your salary?

c) Nice handout.

3. You're in a long queue at the post office.

a) You're in my way.

b) This is taking ages, isn't it?

c) Where do you live?

4. A new person joins your five-a-side football team.

a) Hi, I'm Tunde. Have you played here before?

b) Are you any good?

c) Hello.

THE TEN-SECOND CHALLENGE PLAY

You'll get a situation and ten seconds to say an opener out loud. Don't plan it perfectly. Just start. Time yourself: 10 seconds each.

- ☐ You're at a wedding reception, standing next to someone at the bar.
- ☐ You're waiting for a bus that's late. Someone else is waiting too.
- ☐ You're at a work training day. Someone sits down next to you.
- ☐ Your neighbour is in their front garden planting flowers.
- ☐ You're at a language exchange evening and someone smiles at you.
- ☐ You're at the gym and don't know how a machine works.

SAY IT ALOUD SAY IT

Say your opener and its follow-up together, so the second line comes automatically. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
Hi, I don't think we've met. I'm Carlos. How do you know everyone here?	☐ ☐ ☐
This is taking a while, isn't it?	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Smile before you speak. People hear it in your voice.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON REFLECT

Which situation do you find hardest to start a conversation in?

Write the opener you'll use there next time.

Think of someone who started a conversation with you well. What did they say?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Notice something you can both see, and comment on it.
- ☐ Ask about the situation: how they know the host, why they're here.
- ☐ Asking for small help is a natural opener.
- ☐ Follow a closed opener with an open question.
- ☐ A simple opener works better than a clever one.

CHAPTER 4 · KEEPING IT FLOWING

LISTENING *people notice*

Good listeners aren't silent. They show they're listening, out loud.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/4

PHRASE BOX SAY IT

KEEP GOING

Mm-hmm.
Right.
I see.

SHOW INTEREST

Really?
Oh, wow.
That's brilliant!

CHECK UNDERSTANDING

So you mean...?
Sorry, did you say Tuesday?
Let me check I've got this right...

LISTENING SIGNALS SORT

English speakers use small words to show they're listening. Each one does a different job. Sort them. Tick one column for each.

	Keep going	Interest	Check
Mm-hmm.			
Really?			
So you mean...?			
Right.			
Oh, wow.			
Sorry, did you say Tuesday?			
I see.			
No way! (<i>casual</i>)			
Let me check I've got this right...			

SPOT THE GOOD LISTENER CHOOSE

Four people tell you something. Which reply shows you're really listening? Circle your answer.

1. "I've been so busy this week. My daughter's been ill and work's been crazy."

☐ a) OK.

☐ b) Oh no, that sounds exhausting. Is she feeling better now?

☐ c) I'm busy too.

2. "We finally booked our holiday. We're going to Crete in June!"

☐ a) Crete? Lovely! Have you been before?

☐ b) I don't like hot places.

☐ c) Mm.

3. "The meeting's moved, it's at half two on Thursday now, in room four."

☐ a) Fine.

☐ b) Sorry, so that's half past two on Thursday, room four?

☐ c) Why?

4. "I've just started learning to play the guitar. It's harder than I thought."

☐ a) I can play the piano.

☐ b) Guitar is easy.

☐ c) Ah, I bet. What made you want to learn?

SAY IT BACK **BUILD**

Paraphrasing means saying back the main idea in your own words. Add the feeling, and people feel heard.

The main idea, in your words

How they feel

Put it together and write your line

LISTEN AND WRITE **PLAY**

Ask a friend to read these to you, or use the online lesson for British audio. Write what you hear.

SAY IT ALOUD **SAY IT**

Practise your paraphrase and a few signals until they feel natural. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
So the builders next door start at seven every morning? That sounds exhausting.	☐ ☐ ☐
Mm-hmm. Really? Oh no!	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Sound genuinely interested. Your tone matters more than your words.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON **REFLECT**

In your first language, how do people show they're listening?

Which listening signals will you try this week?

Think of a time someone really listened to you. What did they do?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Silence can sound like boredom in English. Make small noises.
- ☐ Use “Mm-hmm” and “Right” to keep people talking.
- ☐ Paraphrase: say back the main idea in your own words.
- ☐ Name the feeling: “That sounds stressful.”
- ☐ Checking isn't rude. It shows you care about getting it right.

CHAPTER 5 · KEEPING IT FLOWING

QUESTIONS THAT *open people up*

The right question turns a reply into a conversation.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/5

PHRASE BOX SAY IT

OPEN STARTERS

What do you enjoy about...?
How did you get into...?
What's it like...?

FOLLOW-UPS

What happened next?
How come?
What was that like?

SOFTER STARTERS

Can I ask...?
I've always wondered...
Tell me about...

OPEN OR CLOSED? SORT

Closed questions can be answered with yes, no or one word. Open questions invite more. Sort these. Tick one column for each.

	Closed	Open
Do you like your job?		
What do you enjoy about your job?		
Have you got any brothers or sisters?		
How did you two meet?		
Is the food good there?		
What's the best thing on the menu?		
Tell me about your trip.		
Did you have a nice weekend?		

UPGRADE YOUR QUESTIONS BUILD

Choose a topic and an open starter. The tool writes the question for you.

The topic

Put it together and write your line

BUILD A FOLLOW-UP CHAIN ORDER

Here is a short conversation, but it's in the wrong order. Put it back together. Notice how each question grows from the last answer. Number the lines 1 to 6.

No.	Line
	B: A very wonky bowl!
	A: What did you get up to at the weekend?
	B: I went to a pottery class, actually.
	A: Pottery? How come?
	A: That's a lovely present. What did you make?
	B: My sister bought me a voucher for my birthday.

THREE FOLLOW-UPS IN TWENTY SECONDS PLAY

You'll hear something someone said. Ask three follow-up questions out loud before the timer ends. Time yourself: 20 seconds each.

- ☐ "I've just come back from a week in Scotland."
- ☐ "I've started learning to cook Thai food."
- ☐ "We're moving house next month."
- ☐ "I ran my first 10K on Sunday."
- ☐ "My cat has just had kittens."

SAY IT ALOUD SAY IT

Practise your best question with a curious, friendly tone. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
What do you enjoy most about your new job?	☐ ☐ ☐
How come?	☐ ☐ ☐
What was that like?	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Wh- questions usually fall at the end in British English. Listen to the model.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON REFLECT

Which closed questions do you ask most often? Rewrite one.

Who will you ask a follow-up question this week?

What question do you love being asked?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Closed questions get one word. Open questions get a story.
- ☐ Start with What, How, or Tell me about.
- ☐ Follow-up questions build on their last answer.
- ☐ One good follow-up beats five new questions.
- ☐ “How come?” is a short, friendly way to ask why.

CHAPTER 6 · KEEPING IT FLOWING

FINDING *common ground*

People relax when they find something you share. It's usually there if you listen for it.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/6

PHRASE BOX SAY IT

ME TOO

Oh, me too!
Same here.
Really? So do I.

CLOSE, BUT DIFFERENT

I've never been, but I'd love to.
I'm more of a cat person, but...
Not quite, but my sister does.

FIND OUT MORE

Whereabouts?
How long have you been doing that?
What got you into it?

SPOT THE CLUE SPOT

People drop clues about themselves all the time. Pick the best clue to follow. Circle your answer.

- "Sorry I'm late, the traffic from Bristol was terrible this morning." Which clue gives you the most to talk about?
a) The traffic b) Bristol c) Being late
- Your colleague has a mug that says "World's okayest runner".
a) Ask about the mug's colour b) Ask if they run c) Say nothing
- "I can't stay late tonight, it's my daughter's swimming gala."
a) Ask about swimming or her daughter b) Ask why they can't stay c) Talk about your evening
- At a party someone says, "I only moved here in March."
a) Ask where they moved from b) Ask what month it is c) Tell them about your flat

"ME TOO" REPLIES MATCH

Match each comment with a natural reply that builds common ground. Write the letter in the middle column.

They say	Letter	You reply
1. I'm from the north of England.		A. Same here. Have you done any walks in the Lake District?
2. I'm learning Spanish at the moment.		B. Me neither, but it's top of my list.
3. I love hiking at the weekend.		C. So am I. Have you tried the new place on the high street?
4. I've never been to Italy.		D. Oh, whereabouts? I've got friends in Leeds.
5. I'm a big coffee person.		E. Me too! How long have you been learning?

FIND THE CONNECTION PLAY

You're at a friend's barbecue talking to someone new. Find something you share. Write what you would say at each turn.

Sam: "Hi, I'm Sam. I work with Laura at the hospital. Sorry, I'm a bit tired, I was up early for a run."

Sam: "Most mornings, yes. I'm training for a half marathon in Cardiff."

Sam: "That's brilliant! Five K is a great start. Have you found any good routes round here?"

YOUR COMMON-GROUND LINE WRITE

Think of a hobby, place or interest you'd love to share with someone. Write a "me too" line you can use.

Something about you that others could share (a hobby, place or interest)

A clue that might come up in conversation

Your "me too" line (agree, add a detail, ask a question)

SAY IT ALOUD SAY IT

Practise your common-ground line so it comes out naturally when the moment arrives. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
Oh, me too! I've just started running. Have you got any tips?	☐ ☐ ☐
Whereabouts? I've got friends in Leeds.	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Sound pleased. Finding something in common is a happy moment.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON REFLECT

What clues about you could other people notice (a bag, a mug, an accent)?

Who do you need to find common ground with this week?

What's an unusual thing you've had in common with someone?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Listen for clues: places, hobbies, family, food.
- ☐ Notice what people wear, carry or keep on their desk.
- ☐ “Me too” plus a detail plus a question.
- ☐ Close is good enough: “I've never been, but I'd love to.”
- ☐ Small shared things build real connections.

CHAPTER 7 · KEEPING IT FLOWING

STORIES *people remember*

A short story says more about you than a list of facts, and people remember it.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/7

PHRASE BOX SAY IT
START

You'll never guess what happened...
The funniest thing happened on Saturday.
So, last week...

BUILD

And then...
The thing is...
Anyway, to cut a long story short...

FINISH

So that's why I never...
Lesson learned!
Anyway, what about you? Has that ever happened to you?

PUT THE STORY IN ORDER ORDER

Good short stories have a shape. Put this one in order. Number the lines 1 to 6.

No.	Line
	She made me a cup of tea and we called a locksmith together.
	You'll never guess what happened on Saturday.
	Now we have coffee every Sunday. Best mistake I ever made!
	So I knocked on my neighbour's door for the first time ever.
	I went out to get the post, wearing my slippers, and the door shut behind me.
	My keys, my phone and my coat were all inside.

BUILD YOUR 60-SECOND STORY BUILD

Fill in each part with a few words. The tool joins them into a story you can tell in about a minute.

The hook (the surprising bit)

The problem

What you did

How it ended

A question to hand it back

Put it together and write your line

WHICH OPENING LINE? CHOOSE

The first line decides whether people want to hear the rest. Pick the better opening. Circle your answer.

1. A story about meeting a famous actor on a train.

a) So I got on the train at 8.15 and sat down.

b) You'll never guess who I sat next to on the train.

c) Trains are often busy.

2. A story about a cooking disaster.

a) I set off the fire alarm making toast yesterday.

b) Yesterday I decided to make some food.

c) I like cooking.

3. A story about getting lost abroad.

a) I went on holiday to Portugal.

b) Portugal is a nice country.

c) I once got completely lost in Lisbon with no phone and no Portuguese.

4. A story about a job interview.

a) I had an interview last week.

b) I called my interviewer by the wrong name for the whole interview.

c) Interviews make me nervous.

TELL IT IN A MINUTE PLAY

You'll get a story topic and sixty seconds. Tell a true story about it, out loud. Use the shape: hook, problem, action, ending. Time yourself: 60 seconds each.

- ☐ A time you got lost.
- ☐ The worst meal you've ever eaten.
- ☐ A time something went wrong on holiday.
- ☐ Your first day at a new job or school.
- ☐ A time a stranger helped you.

SAY IT ALOUD SAY IT

Tell your 60-second story three times. It gets shorter and better each time. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
I got locked out of my flat on Saturday, and my keys and phone were inside. I knocked on my neighbour's door for the first time. In the end, we ended up having tea together. Has that ever happened to you?	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Pause just before the ending. It makes people lean in.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON **REFLECT**

What is one funny or surprising thing that happened to you this year?

Where could your 60-second story fit into a conversation?

Who tells stories well in your life? What do they do?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Start with the surprising bit.
- ☐ Scene, problem, what you did, ending, point.
- ☐ Keep it to about a minute.
- ☐ “To cut a long story short” helps you skip details.
- ☐ End by handing the conversation back: “Has that ever happened to you?”

CHAPTER 8 · KEEPING IT FLOWING

WHEN YOU *don't know the topic*

You don't need to know the subject. You need a few phrases that keep you in the conversation.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/8

PHRASE BOX SAY IT
I DIDN'T HEAR

Sorry, I didn't catch that.
Could you say that again?
Sorry, it's a bit noisy in here.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND

What do you mean by ...?
Sorry, what's a ...?
How does that work?

I DON'T KNOW THE TOPIC

I don't know much about ..., but...
I've always wanted to understand
...
So what got you into it?

RESCUE PHRASES MATCH

Each rescue phrase has a job. Match each one to the moment you'd use it. Write the letter in the middle column.

Phrase	Letter	When you'd use it
1. Sorry, I didn't catch that.		A. They're speaking too fast.
2. What do you mean by 'gutted'?		B. You don't know one word.
3. Could you say that a bit more slowly?		C. You didn't hear clearly.
4. I don't know much about cricket, but how does it work?		D. You think you understood, but want to check.
5. So you mean the match was cancelled?		E. You don't know the topic at all.

ASK, DON'T HIDE CHOOSE

Four moments where you're lost. Choose the best way to stay in the conversation. Circle your answer.

- A colleague says, "We need to touch base about the Q3 numbers." You don't know "touch base".
☐ a) Nod and say "Sure." ☐ b) Sorry, "touch base"? What does that mean exactly? ☐ c) Change the subject.
- Your friend's partner talks quickly about his job in cyber security.
☐ a) Could you slow down a bit? I'm really interested, but I'm not an expert. ☐ b) That's boring. ☐ c) Stay silent.
- At a party, everyone is talking about a TV show you've never seen.
☐ a) I haven't seen it yet. What's it about? ☐ b) I don't watch TV. ☐ c) Leave the group.
- Someone says, "I was absolutely gutted." You aren't sure what "gutted" means.
☐ a) Laugh. ☐ b) Gutted? As in really disappointed? ☐ c) Say "Great!"

THE DINNER-PARTY CHALLENGE PLAY

You're at a dinner and the topic is something you know nothing about. Stay in the conversation. Write what you would say at each turn.

Greg: "...so I finally upgraded to carbon wheels, and on the climbs it's a different bike."

Greg: "They're much lighter, so you go uphill faster. Last month I did the Fred Whitton, which is about 180 kilometres."

Greg: "Ha, the Fred Whitton! It's a famous ride in the Lake District. Very hilly. Have you ever been up there?"

YOUR RESCUE CARD WRITE

Choose the rescue phrase you most need and write it in your own words. It goes into your Conversation Kit.

The situation where you usually go quiet

Your rescue phrase

SAY IT ALOUD SAY IT

Rescue phrases only help if they come out quickly. Practise until they're automatic. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
Sorry, I didn't quite catch that. Could you say it again?	☐ ☐ ☐
I don't know much about it, but how does it work?	☐ ☐ ☐
Sorry, what does that mean exactly?	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Say it calmly, not apologetically. It's a normal thing to ask.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON REFLECT

What topic do you usually go quiet about?

Which rescue phrase will you use this week?

How do you feel when someone asks you to explain your favourite subject?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Not knowing is fine. Silence isn't.
- ☐ “Sorry, I didn't catch that” is completely normal.
- ☐ Ask them to explain: people love talking about what they know.
- ☐ Repeat the word you didn't understand: “Sorry, a maiden over?”
- ☐ Steer to the person: “What got you into it?”

CHAPTER 9 · LEADING THE CONVERSATION

STEERING *the conversation*

You can change the subject without anyone noticing. You just need a bridge.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/9

PHRASE BOX SAY IT

LINK

That reminds me...
Speaking of ...
That's a bit like...

CHANGE GENTLY

By the way...
On a different note...
Can I ask you something completely different?

BRING IT BACK

Anyway, as I was saying...
Going back to what you said about...
Sorry, where was I?

LINK, CHANGE OR RETURN? SORT

Transition phrases do three jobs. Sort them. Tick one column for each.

	Link	Change	Return
That reminds me...			
By the way...			
Going back to what you said about...			
Speaking of holidays...			
On a different note...			
Anyway, as I was saying...			
That's a bit like...			
Can I ask you something completely different?			

BUILD A BRIDGE BUILD

Choose a bridge, then fill in what they're talking about, your link, and a question that takes everyone to the new topic.

What they're talking about

Your link

Your question

Put it together and write your line

STEER THE CONVERSATION **PLAY**

Your colleague is complaining about work. Your goal: get to weekend plans in three moves, without being rude. Write what you would say at each turn.

Chris: “This week's been a nightmare. Three deadlines and the printer's broken again.”

Chris: “Definitely. I just want to sleep.”

Chris: “The Friday one. But once that's done, I'm free!”

SMOOTH OR ABRUPT? **CHOOSE**

Choose the smoothest way to move the conversation on. Circle your answer.

1. Your friend is talking about her new kitchen. You want to talk about a cooking class you've joined.

- a) Speaking of kitchens, I've just joined a cooking class!
- b) Stop. I want to talk about my class.
- c) Kitchens are boring.

2. You've been talking about the weather for too long at a work event.

- a) By the way, which team are you in?
- b) Let's talk about something else, this is boring.
- c) Say nothing until they leave.

3. Someone interrupted your story and the topic changed. You want to finish it.

- a) Excuse me, I was talking!
- b) Anyway, as I was saying about the trip...
- c) Forget it.

4. Your neighbour mentions his new dog. You want to ask about the local park.

- a) Do you walk him in the park by the river? I've been meaning to explore it.
- b) I don't like dogs. Where's the park?
- c) What's your dog's star sign?

SAY IT ALOUD **SAY IT**

Practise your bridge so it sounds natural, not planned. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
That reminds me of the trip we're planning to Seville. Have you ever been to Spain?	☐ ☐ ☐
Anyway, as I was saying...	☐ ☐ ☐
By the way, can I ask you something completely different?	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Keep your voice light and quick on “That reminds me”.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON **REFLECT**

Which topic do you often get stuck in?

What would you like to talk about more?

Write a bridge from one to the other.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Find a word in what they said and link from it.
- ☐ “That reminds me...” is the easiest bridge.
- ☐ “By the way...” is for a gentle change.
- ☐ “Going back to...” brings a lost topic back.
- ☐ End your bridge with a question, so they follow you.

CHAPTER 10 · LEADING THE CONVERSATION

READING *the room*

Groups send signals before anyone speaks. Learn to read them, and joining in gets easier.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/10

PHRASE BOX SAY IT

JOINING

Mind if I join you?
Sorry to interrupt, are you talking about...?
Can I steal a seat?

ADDING IN

That's so true.
I had exactly the same thing...
Can I just add something?

BRINGING OTHERS IN

What do you think, Tom?
You've been there, haven't you?
Sorry, you were saying?

OPEN OR CLOSED? SORT

Before you join a group, read the signals. Sort these. Tick one column for each.

	Open	Closed
Standing in a horseshoe with a gap		
Two people face to face, talking quietly		
Laughing and looking around the room		
Serious faces and low voices		
Someone catches your eye and smiles		
Shoulders turned in, backs to the room		
Talking about the event or the food		
One person is clearly upset		

WHEN TO JOIN CHOOSE

Timing matters. Choose the best moment to speak. Circle your answer.

1. You've just joined a group. Someone is in the middle of a funny story.

a) Introduce yourself straight away.

b) Listen, laugh at the ending, then add a comment.

c) Ask what they're talking about.

2. The group goes quiet for a moment after a story.

a) Say: That reminds me of something similar...

b) Leave.

c) Look at your phone.

3. Two people in your group keep talking over each other and one person hasn't spoken.

a) Talk louder.

b) Turn to the quiet person: What do you think, Tom?

c) Wait until the end.

4. You want to join a group at a conference coffee break.

a) Mind if I join you? I'm Ana, I'm with the Bristol team.

b) Stand behind them silently.

c) Interrupt with your opinion on the talk.

JOIN THE GROUP PLAY

You're at a friend's party. Three people are chatting by the kitchen. Join them. Write what you would say at each turn.

Group: "(They're laughing.) ...and then the dog ate the whole birthday cake!"

Group: "Mine, unfortunately! I'm Jess. Do you have a dog?"

Group: "No way! Was it OK?"

YOUR JOINING-IN LINE BUILD

Build a line for joining a group. It goes into your Conversation Kit.

Your name

Someone you know there, or the topic

Put it together and write your line

SAY IT ALOUD SAY IT

Practise your joining-in line with a smile. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
Hi, mind if I join you? I'm Ana.	☐ ☐ ☐
What do you think, Tom?	☐ ☐ ☐
Sorry, you were saying?	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Say it while stepping into the gap, not from a distance.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON REFLECT

Where do you most often need to join a group?

What signals do you notice in groups now?

Who could you bring into a conversation next time?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Look for a gap: a horseshoe is an open door.
- ☐ Two people face to face, talking quietly, is usually closed.
- ☐ Listen first, then add to the topic.
- ☐ “Mind if I join you?” works almost anywhere.
- ☐ Bring others in: it makes you the person people want around.

CHAPTER 11 · LEADING THE CONVERSATION

BODY LANGUAGE THAT *builds trust*

People believe what they see before what they hear. Make both say the same thing.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/11

PHRASE BOX SAY IT
OPEN SIGNALS

Steady eye contact while listening
Facing the person
Nodding and smiling

CLOSED SIGNALS

Arms tightly crossed
Checking your phone
Feet pointing towards the door

CULTURE NOTE

In the UK, a firm handshake is common at first meetings.
Most British people keep about an arm's length of space.
Hugs and kisses are usually for friends, not first meetings.

BODY LANGUAGE SELF-CHECK CHECK

Be honest. How often do you do each of these in conversation?

	Not yet	Sometimes	Usually
I make eye contact when I say my name.			
I face the person I'm talking to.			
I keep my phone out of sight.			
I nod or smile to show I'm listening.			
My arms are relaxed, not crossed.			
I keep a comfortable distance (about an arm's length).			

GESTURES AROUND THE WORLD QUIZ

A gesture that's friendly in one country can be rude in another. Test yourself. Circle your answer.

1. In the UK, what does a V sign with your palm facing you mean?

- ☐ a) Victory
 ☐ b) Peace
 ☐ c) It's rude, like a swear word

2. In Bulgaria, what does nodding your head up and down traditionally mean?

- ☐ a) Yes
 ☐ b) No
 ☐ c) Hello

3. In the UK, how do people usually greet someone at a first work meeting?

- ☐ a) A bow
 ☐ b) A handshake
 ☐ c) Two kisses on the cheek

4. In the UK, what does a thumbs up usually mean?

- ☐ a) OK, good, well done
 ☐ b) Go away
 ☐ c) Two

OPEN OR CLOSED? SORT

Picture each one. Does it say "I'm interested" or "I'd rather not"? Tick one column for each.

	Open	Closed
Leaning in slightly		
Arms tightly crossed		
Smiling with your eyes		
Feet pointing towards the exit		
Nodding while they speak		
Looking at your phone		
Hands visible and relaxed		
Looking over their shoulder		

ONE-WEEK HABIT TRACKER TRACK

Habits beat knowledge. Tick each habit on the days you practise it this week.

Habit	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Eye contact when saying my name							
Phone away during conversations							
Arms uncrossed							
Smile when greeting someone							

YOUR BODY LANGUAGE REMINDER WRITE

Write one short reminder for yourself. It goes into your Conversation Kit.

My body language reminder

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON REFLECT

What does your body do when you're nervous?

Which habit from the tracker matters most for you?

Is body language different in your culture? How?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ In the UK, steady eye contact shows interest and honesty.
- ☐ Face the person and keep your hands visible.
- ☐ Put your phone away when someone is talking.
- ☐ Gestures mean different things in different countries.
- ☐ Body language supports your words. It doesn't replace them.

CHAPTER 12 · LEADING THE CONVERSATION

ENDING WELL, AND *how far you've come*

A good ending makes people want to talk to you again. And it's time to see your progress.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/12

PHRASE BOX SAY IT

SIGNAL THE END

Anyway, I'd better let you go.
Right, I should get going.
I'll let you get back to it.

SAY SOMETHING WARM

It's been really lovely talking to you.
I'm so glad we met.
Thanks, that was really interesting.

PLAN THE NEXT TIME

Let's get that coffee.
See you at the next class!
I'll send you that link.

BUILD YOUR EXIT LINE BUILD

A good exit has three parts: a signal, something warm, and a next step. Build yours.

Your reason to go

The next step

Put it together and write your line

THE FOLLOW-UP MESSAGE MESSAGE

A short message the next day turns a good conversation into a connection. Build one.

Their name

Where you met

Something you talked about

The next step

Put it together and write your line

YOUR BEFORE-AND-AFTER CHECK **CHECK**

Take the Conversation Check again online at attenglish.com/talk and compare it with your first result.

Area	Week 1	Week 12
Starting		
Keeping it going		
Leading		
Everyday life		

YOUR FINISHED CONVERSATION KIT **KIT**

Copy your best line from each lesson.

My introduction	
My answer plus one	
My go-to opener	
My listening line	
My favourite follow-up question	
My common-ground line	
My 60-second story	
My rescue phrase	
My change-the-subject bridge	
How I join a group	
My body language reminder	
My exit line	

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON **REFLECT**

What has changed in your conversations since you started?

Which lesson made the biggest difference?

What will you keep practising?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Signal, warm words, next step: the three-part exit.
- ☐ Leaving politely is a kindness, not a rejection.
- ☐ Send a short follow-up message within a day.
- ☐ Use your Conversation Kit before important events.
- ☐ Conversation is a skill. You've been practising it for twelve weeks.

PRACTICE ROOM 13 · GOING FURTHER

SPEAKING UP *in meetings*

Get your point in, disagree politely, and ask the question everyone else is thinking.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/13

PHRASE BOX SAY IT
GETTING IN

Sorry, can I just come in here?
Could I add something?
Just to build on what Sam said...

AGREEING

I completely agree.
That's a good point.
I think you're right about...

DISAGREEING POLITELY

I see what you mean, but...
I'm not sure I agree.
Could we look at it another way?

POLITE INTERRUPTION BUILDER BUILD

In British meetings, people often soften their interruptions. Build yours.

Who spoke last

Your point

Put it together and write your line

AGREE, PARTLY AGREE OR DISAGREE? SORT

British English often hides disagreement inside polite words. Sort these. Tick one column for each.

	Agree	Partly agree	Disagree
I completely agree.			
That's a good point, but...			
I'm not sure that would work.			
Absolutely.			
I see what you mean, however...			
With respect, I don't think...			
You might have a point there.			
Exactly.			

MEETING MOMENTS CHOOSE

Choose the best thing to say. Circle your answer.

1. Two colleagues keep talking and you haven't spoken for twenty minutes.

a) Wait until the end.

b) Sorry, could I just add something here?

c) Talk loudly over them.

2. Your manager suggests a plan you think is too expensive.

a) That's a terrible idea.

b) I like the idea. I'm just a bit worried about the cost.

c) Say nothing.

3. You didn't understand a decision at the end of the meeting.

a) Sorry, just to check, so we're going ahead in March?

b) Pretend you understood.

c) Email everyone later.

4. Someone says, "With respect, I don't think that's quite right."

a) They respect your idea.

b) They strongly disagree.

c) They agree.

PRACTICE ROOM 14 · GOING FURTHER

PHONE AND *video calls*

No faces, bad lines and fast speakers. Here's how to stay in control.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/14

PHRASE BOX SAY IT
OPENING

Hello, it's Ana calling from...
Hi, is that Mark?
I'm calling about...

PROBLEMS

Sorry, you're breaking up.
You're on mute!
Could you say that again? The line's bad.

SPELLING AND NUMBERS

That's A for apple, N for November...
Double seven, five, oh...
Can I read that back to you?

YOUR CALL OPENING BUILD

The first ten seconds of a call should say who you are and why you're calling. Build yours.

Your name

Why you're calling

Put it together and write your line

NUMBERS AND SPELLING LISTEN

Ask a friend to read these to you, or use the online lesson for British audio. Write what you hear.

BAD LINE RESCUE CHOOSE

Calls go wrong. Choose the best rescue. Circle your answer.

1. The other person's voice keeps cutting out.

a) Sorry, you're breaking up. Could you say that again?

b) Hang up.

c) Pretend you heard.

2. On a video call, someone is talking but you can't hear them.

a) Sorry, I think you're on mute!

b) Leave the call.

c) Talk over them.

3. They give you a long reference number very fast.

a) Say OK.

b) Sorry, could you read that a bit more slowly? I'll write it down.

c) Ask them to email it, then hang up.

4. You need to spell your surname, Nowak.

a) Nowak. Easy.

b) N for November, O for Oscar, W for Whisky, A for Alpha, K for Kilo.

c) Like the word "now".

PRACTICE ROOM 15 · GOING FURTHER

EMAILS AND MESSAGES THAT *keep relationships warm*

The right tone in writing keeps doors open. The wrong one closes them quietly.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/15

PHRASE BOX SAY IT
FORMAL

Dear Mr Patel,
I am writing to...
Kind regards,

NEUTRAL

Hi Sarah,
Just a quick note to...
Best wishes,

FRIENDLY

Hiya!
Hope you're well!
Speak soon, x (close friends only)

TONE SLIDER BUILD

The same message can be formal, neutral or friendly. Choose the tone and see the email change.

Their name

What you're asking

Put it together and write your line

SIGN-OFF MATCH MATCH

Match each sign-off to the situation it fits best. Write the letter in the middle column.

Sign-off	Letter	Best for
1. Yours sincerely,		A. Friendly work emails.
2. Kind regards,		B. A quick email asking for something.
3. Best wishes,		C. Close friends and family only.
4. Thanks,		D. A formal letter to someone you named, like "Dear Mr Patel".
5. Speak soon, x		E. Most professional emails.

WHICH MESSAGE? CHOOSE

Choose the message that keeps the relationship warm. Circle your answer.

1. You met someone at a course and want to stay in touch.

a) Hi Ben, great to meet you on Saturday. Fancy a coffee before next week's session?

b) Ben. Coffee?

c) Dear Sir, I request a meeting.

2. You need to remind a colleague about a report they're late with.

a) Where is the report??

b) Hi Jo, just checking in on the report. Any idea when it might be ready?

c) Say nothing.

3. You have to say no to a friend's invitation.

a) No.

b) Oh, I'd love to, but I'm away that weekend. Can we do something the week after?

c) I don't want to come.

4. You got a short reply: "Fine." with no greeting.

a) They hate you.

b) It might just be a busy person. Reply normally and see.

c) Reply "Fine."

PRACTICE ROOM 16 · GOING FURTHER

TALKING *across cultures*

Direct or indirect, close or distant: different cultures play conversation by different rules.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/16

PHRASE BOX SAY IT

BRITISH INDIRECT

That's an interesting idea.
I'll bear it in mind.
Not bad at all.

CHECKING

Just so I understand, do you mean...?
In my country we usually... Is it the same here?
I hope that didn't come across wrong.

REPAIRING

Sorry, I didn't mean it like that.
Let me put that another way.
That came out wrong!

DIRECT OR INDIRECT? SORT

British English is often indirect: people soften what they mean. Sort these phrases. Tick one column for each.

	Direct	Indirect
No, that's wrong.		
I'm not sure that's quite right.		
Send me the file today.		
Would you mind sending the file today?		
I don't like it.		
It's not really my cup of tea.		
You're late.		
Did you have trouble finding us?		

CULTURE SCENARIOS CHOOSE

What's really going on? Choose the best reading. Circle your answer.

1. Your British colleague says, "That's an interesting idea." in a flat voice and moves on.

- a) They love it. b) They probably aren't convinced. c) They didn't hear you.

2. A Dutch colleague says your presentation was "too long and confusing in the middle".

- a) They're being rude. b) They're being direct and helpful, as is common in Dutch working culture.
c) They're angry.

3. You invited a British friend round and they said, "I'll try to make it."

- a) They will definitely come. b) They may not come. c) They're coming early.

4. Someone keeps standing very close to you while talking.

- a) Take a small step back and keep smiling. b) Tell them they're rude. c) Leave.

REPAIR A MISUNDERSTANDING **PLAY**

A comment of yours came out wrong. Repair it. Write what you would say at each turn.

Olivia: “So what do you think of my new haircut?”

Olivia: “Oh. Different good, or different bad?”

PRACTICE ROOM 17 · GOING FURTHER

Difficult CONVERSATIONS: DISAGREEING, COMPLAINING, SAYING NO

Disagreeing, complaining and saying no, without damaging the relationship.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/17

PHRASE BOX SAY IT
SOFTENERS

I'm afraid...
I'm not sure...
Would it be possible to...?

SAYING NO

I'd love to, but...
I'm going to have to say no this time.
Can I let you know?

COMPLAINING

Sorry to be a pain, but...
I think there might be a mistake.
Would you mind having a look?

THE SOFTENER LADDER ORDER

Put these from most direct (top) to softest (bottom). Number the lines 1 to 5.

No.	Line
	Sorry to be a pain, but would you mind turning the music down a little?
	Turn the music down.
	Would you mind turning the music down a bit?
	Can you turn the music down?
	Could you turn the music down, please?

THE SAY-NO BUILDER BUILD

A kind no has three parts: something positive, the no with a short reason, and an alternative.

Your short reason

Your alternative

Put it together and write your line

COMPLAINING IN A RESTAURANT **PLAY**

Your meal arrives cold. Complain politely and get it sorted. Write what you would say at each turn.

Waiter: “Is everything all right with your meal?”

Waiter: “Oh, I'm so sorry about that. I'll get the kitchen to make you a fresh one.”

PRACTICE ROOM 18 · GOING FURTHER

WHAT THE BRITISH *really mean*

Politeness, understatement and everyday idioms: the hidden layer of British English.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/18

PHRASE BOX SAY IT
UNDERSTATEMENT

Not bad (= very good)
A bit annoying (= very annoying)
Quite good (= could be anything!)

POLITENESS

I'll bear it in mind (= probably not)
With respect... (= I disagree)
You must come round some time
(= friendly, but not an invitation yet)

IDIOMS

It's not my cup of tea.
I'm knackered.
It's a piece of cake.

WHAT THEY SAY, WHAT THEY MEAN MATCH

Match each British phrase to what it usually means. Write the letter in the middle column.

They say	Letter	They usually mean
1. I'll bear it in mind.		A. Often: it was your fault, but let's be polite.
2. Not bad at all.		B. I disagree, and I don't want to discuss it.
3. I hear what you say.		C. That's really good.
4. Quite interesting.		D. I probably won't do anything about it.
5. Sorry, my fault.		E. Friendly, but not a real invitation yet.
6. You must come round for dinner some time.		F. Not very interesting.

EVERYDAY IDIOMS MATCH

Match each idiom to its meaning. Write the letter in the middle column.

Idiom	Letter	Meaning
1. I'm knackered.		A. It's very easy.
2. It's not my cup of tea.		B. I'm very disappointed.
3. It's a piece of cake.		C. It was very expensive.
4. I'm gutted.		D. I'm very tired.
5. Let's call it a day.		E. Let's stop working now.
6. It cost an arm and a leg.		F. I don't really like it.

UNDERSTATEMENT QUIZ QUIZ

The British often say less than they mean. What do these speakers really mean? Circle your answer.

1. After running a marathon: "My legs are a bit tired."

a) Slightly tired

b) Extremely tired

c) Not tired

2. Looking at a flooded kitchen: "Well, that's not ideal."

a) It's a disaster.

b) It's nearly perfect.

c) It's fine.

3. Your friend tastes your cake and says, "Ooh, that's not bad at all."

a) It's terrible.

b) It's really good.

c) It's just OK.

4. Your colleague says, "The meeting was a bit lively."

a) There was a big argument.

b) It was fun.

c) Nobody spoke.