

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.