

# 10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation

Celeste Headlee in TED © 2015 offered ten tips to help you to have productive dialogue and become a better conversationalist:

1. “Don’t multitask ” – When talking with someone, give them your undivided attention. Be present in the moment.
2. “Don’t pontificate ” – A conversation is give-and-take; it’s not a lecture or a “promotional opportunity.” Be open to new viewpoints and opinions.
3. “Use open-ended questions ” – This interviewing technique encourages your conversational partners to consider and elaborate on their thoughts and feelings.
4. “Go with the flow ” – Follow the conversation and respond organically instead of focusing on being clever or thinking about what to say next.
5. “If you don’t know, say that you don’t know ” – Be wary of expounding on a topic as though you are an expert if you aren’t.
6. “Don’t equate your experience with theirs ” – Don’t use other people’s grief or misfortune as opportunities to unburden yourself or brag about your resilience. Empathize rather than trying to commandeer the moment.
7. “Try not to repeat yourself ” – Rehashing your ideas is boring and patronizing.
8. “Stay out of the weeds ” – Details you find interesting or necessary may simply bog down the conversation and bore the listener.
9. “Listen ” – If you’re not listening, you’re not engaging in a conversation. “You’re just two people shouting out barely related sentences in the same place.”
10. “Be brief ” – When you talk for too long or monopolize the conversation, you lose other people’s attention.