



# Global Etiquette Enjoyable Conversations

By Maralyn D. Hill

**W**hat's acceptable conversation around the globe varies somewhat, but the common courtesies seem to remain. I'll try to include as many as possible.

Many of us know those who appear to be the life of the party, but are they really? Or do they seem to be taking center stage and becoming bores? Others have a tremendous fear of speaking up because they don't think they have something interesting to say. Hopefully, we will have some hints that will help both categories.

A good conversation consists of

an equal amount of give and take from the parties involved, allowing for opinions from a number of participants. None of us enjoy the individual who monopolizes the room.

For those who want to capture the conversation, develop your listening skills. That is one of the most useful talents you can acquire. Being quiet and listening gives you the opportunity to ask intelligent questions.

The speaker will be impressed because you were listening, but so will everyone else. Something that isn't appreciated is to pretend that you are listening while daydreaming or otherwise allowing your mind to float

away. That can appear to those around you. However a good listener, one who looks the speaker in the eyes, will make a positive impression.

If it is difficult for you to speak up, you'll notice that those who are not listening well are apt to ask foolish questions or make remarks that are not pertinent. Good listeners do not make these types of errors. To get started, you might say: "Could you tell us a little more about..."

If you fear getting into conversations, do it slowly, like walking, one step at a time. We need to think before we speak. You don't want to talk about work to someone who has no interest in what you do.

However, showing interest in a mix of people can advance your conversational skills.

If you find yourself next to a stranger at a party or event, introduce yourself immediately. In addition to being good manners, it helps your host or hostess, and more than that, it helps you overcome your own fear of meeting people if you are shy.

Start by extending your hand and saying, "Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_, I'm a friend of John's." If they don't respond, you might want to add, "Could you share your name?"

Dinner conversation is another situation. Personally, I find it easier when the number of guests is limited. Years ago, there was a practice that was called "turning of the table". When the hostess would turn from the man on her right to the man on the left, the rest of the women at the table would follow. Fortunately, this is no longer a standard ritual. During your dinner, you may talk to those on both sides and possibly across the table, conversing with all of those near you. If you notice someone who seems to be alone and no one is talking with them, make a point to speak with that person for a while. Listen to what those who are near you are talking about and take care not to talk too much about yourself.

If you are wondering what you are going to talk about, there are always the food and wine. Start with those and now you have found yourself talking with strangers.

Avoid talking about very personal topics, religion or politics, unless those around you are with like-minded individuals. Even then, I don't recommend it.

People think it is easy for me to go to a party and meet everyone, as I appear to be an extrovert. Nothing could be further from the truth. If I am doing it for a business client, my head goes into business mode and I make myself do it as part of my job and it becomes easy. If I'm by myself where I don't know anyone, it is much more of a challenge and I start out with baby steps every time. It does get better as the night goes on. Knowing these techniques has helped me and I hope they can help you.

I'm always happy to hear any thoughts and suggestions you might have. Email me at [luxebatmag@gmail.com](mailto:luxebatmag@gmail.com).