

Communication Strategies for International Graduate Students

Prepared by Core Programs in the Graduate School

Maintaining Conversations

I. Warming up the conversation.

- Course work: How many courses are you taking this quarter? Have you ever worked with Professor X?
- Research: Are you planning to attend any conferences this year? I heard that you collaborated with Dr. XX on her research project, what was the research project about?
- News: Have you been following the news about the environmental issues? Do you listen to any good podcasts about current events?
- Previous contact: If I remember correctly, you were planning to defend your thesis this month. How is it going?
- Other topics: the city, the weather, what you do for fun or to relax, movies, TV shows, restaurants, books...

Exiting Conversations

II. Say something positive about the conversation.

- It was really nice talking to you! I appreciated hearing your perspective on X.
- I'd love to continue this conversation...

III. Indicate what you need to do or where you need to go.

- If you will excuse me, I need to...
- I have a class at 1:00 p.m., so please excuse me for rushing.
- Some colleagues are expecting me, so I can't talk right now...

IV. Add one final positive comment and leave.

- It's really nice to see you again.
- We should get together to chat more about... Let's stay in touch/I will be in touch.

Making Appointments, Seeking Advice, and Expressing Gratitude

V. To make an appointment:

- I am calling to make an appointment with you to discuss my research project. I will need about 30 minutes of your time to go through questions I have.
- I know that you have a busy schedule this month. Would you be able to find 20 minutes to see me? I'd like to discuss my upcoming job interview with you.
- When would you be available to talk to me about...? Would 1:00 p.m. work for you?

VI. To request advice:

- I would like to seek your guidance on...Would you advise me how I should go about...?
- I thought that I would share some of the preliminary findings and my thoughts with you to see if I am on the right track before I go much further.

Note: The content in this handout is adapted from Huang, L. (2011). *Academic Communication Skills: Conversation Strategies for International Graduate Students*. And [Le Gros, N. \(2011\). *Communication strategies for international graduate students: Surviving and thriving in American academia*](#). and workshops led by Associate Dean Dr. Kelly Edwards in the Graduate School.

- I understand that you are the expert in this area/in the area of X. I was hoping that you might explain/help me to understand...

VII. To express gratitude (NOTE: It is always good to send a brief email of thanks after a meeting):

- I very much/really/greatly appreciate the time you have taken to ...
- Thank you once again for taking the time to speak/meet with me the other day.

Academic/Research group meeting/discussion

VIII. Asking for repetition

- Would you mind saying/repeating that again? I didn't (quite) catch what you said.
- Excuse me, would you mind speaking a little more slowly, please?

IX. Seeking clarification or elaboration

- Could you explain what you mean by...?
- Could you expand a little bit on what you said about...? Could you elaborate on the point you made...?
- You mentioned (earlier) that... Do you mean...?
- You might have already said this, but I wasn't sure what you meant when you said...

X. To express disagreement

- I am not sure that I entirely agree with you. Here is what I was thinking...
- I understand your point, and yet there is evidence that suggests that...
- Perhaps there is another way of looking at this issue – for instance...
- Interesting. I wonder if...

Professional Conferences

XI. Conference presentation strategies

- Getting started: Today, we are going to talk about...
- Give instructions about questions: If you have questions, please feel free to stop me. (Or please hold your questions until the end, unless you need me to clarify something, then please stop me).
- Signal transitions: So far, we have discussed... Next, I want to focus on...
- Emphasize points: This is the most crucial step in the process... ; More important than this is...
- When don't know the answer: That's a great question! I have been curious about that myself. (or) People have been looking into that issue, but I have not followed it myself closely. (or) I have that detail in my other file, I can get back to you with the exact answer after we are done here today.

XII. Networking: Questions to ask.

- How did you get started in...?
- What do you love/enjoy most about what you do?
- What has surprised you about this line of work...?
- Where do you see the field/industry going next?
- What advice would you have for me if I wanted to...?
- What do you enjoy doing on your own time?

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