

ENDING A CONVERSATION

PATTERNS

1. I'm afraid I must go now.
2. I hope you don't mind my leaving.
3. I must really be going.
4. I'm sorry, but I have a meeting at three o'clock.
5. I'm sorry, but I am expecting an important visitor now.
6. Excuse me. I have to catch a train.
7. It's been very nice talking to you, but I must leave now.
8. Goodbye/Bye/Bye-bye.
9. Good night.
10. See you (later/tomorrow/next week).

Note: Expressions 1 to 7 are used when you want to end a conversation i.e., when the person you are talking to wants to continue, but you want to end the conversation. The last three are expressions used for taking leave when the conversation has ended.

ASKING FOR INFORMATION

PATTERNS

1. Can you tell me....., please?
2. Could you tell me, please?
3. Do you know
4. Do you happen to know
5. Can you help me?
6. Could anyone tell me
7. I'd like to know
8. Do you have any idea
9. I wonder if you could tell me
10. I wonder if someone could tell me.....
11. I should be interested to know
12. I hope you don't mind my asking, but.....
13. Know
14. Any clue
15. Any idea

Note: Items 1 to 8 above are used in ordinary conversation among acquaintances, people you meet at a party, in the bus stand, railway station, etc. Items 9 to 12 are very polite expressions. They are used in more formal occasions. Items 13 to 15 are very informal. They are used only among very close friends.

PRACTICE

I. At the office

Officer : Good morning, Mr Rao.

Clerk : Good

C : Good night.

A : Good night.

IV. At a friend's house, after dinner.

A : That was a lovely dinner, Mrs Prasad.

Mrs P : Thank you. There was nothing much in that dinner though.

A : No. I mean it. I really enjoyed it.

Mr P : Come, sit down. There's a good movie on the TV at 9.50.

A : Sorry, Mr Prasad. I must go now. I've to get up at 4 o'clock to catch the Delhi flight.

Mr P : That's true. I won't delay you then. Good night.

A : Good night. Good night, Mrs Prasad.

Mrs P : Good night.

Note: Very often, people end their sentences with 'isn't it?' It has to be noted that the question tag (questions like 'isn't it?' added at the end of sentences) cannot always be 'isn't it?' It depends on the statement that comes before the question.

ASKING SOMEONE TO SAY SOMETHING AGAIN

PATTERNS

A. Asking someone to say something again

1. Pardon?
2. I'm sorry?
3. I'm sorry I didn't catch/hear....
4. I'm sorry, what was that word/his name, etc.?
5. I'm sorry, what did you say/what was that?
6. Would/Could you repeat what you said/that name/the last word, etc. please?
7. I'm sorry, I didn't/couldn't hear what you said.
8. Sorry?/Sorry, what did you say?/What?/Eh? Mmm?/I didn't get any of that/when?/where?/who?
9. I'm sorry, would you/mind repeating....., please?
10. I'm sorry, could you/could I ask you to repeat that word/sentence/explanation, please?
11. I beg your pardon?

Items 1 to 7 are usually used in conversations in one's office, among friends, colleagues, acquaintances, etc. The patterns listed under item No. 8 are used only with close friends and relatives. The last three items are very formal and polite. They are used while talking to superiors, seniors, elders and other respectable persons.

B. Saying something again

1. I said
2. I was

Officer : I haven't yet been able to read it fully, but I think there are some useful suggestions in it.

II. At the enquiry counter in a railway station

A : Excuse me. Could you tell me what time the Tamil Nadu Express arrives?

B : The scheduled time is 6.30. But I'm afraid it's late by one hour today.

A : So the train will arrive at 7.30 in the evening?

B : Yes. But please check around seven.

A : Okay, I'll do that. I also wanted to know the sleeper class fare from here to Chennai.

B : Just a minute, please. Yes, it is four hundred and ten rupees.

A : Thank you.

III. Between friends

ASKING IF SOMEONE IS ABLE TO DO SOMETHING

PATTERNS

A. Asking if someone is able to do something

1. Can you.....?
2. Do you think you/he/she can.....?
3. Do you know how to.....?
4. Do you know anything about.....?
5. Is he any good at.....?
6. Are you capable of.....?
7. Do you feel capable of.....?
8. Do you have any experience of.....
9. Would you say you were capable of.....?
10. Do you have the ability/qualification/experience necessary.....?

B. Saying you are able to do something

1. I can/I know/I know how to.....
2. I know something about.....
3. I might be able to.....
4. It's not too difficult to.....
5. He's/I am not too bad at.....
6. I think I can/could
7. Sure/Yes. No problem.
8. I'm pretty good at.....
9. I'm/I feel capable of.....
10. I think I have the experience/qualification.....

G. Reading
11. I feel
12. I do

C. Saying

1. I can
2. No
3. I do
4. I'm
5. I
6. I
7. I
8. I
9. I
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.

PRAC

I. At

A

B

A

9

V. At the office

A : Did you send a reply to this letter?

B : Which letter?

A : The one we received from Kohima.

B : From where?

A : Kohima.

B : No, but what's it about?

A : About those missing copies of books in the parcel we sent.

B : Sorry, I didn't quite get that.

A : You know, we had sent a parcel of 100 copies of the Dictionary to Kohima last month. They've written to say that they received only 50 copies.

B : How many did they receive, you said?

A : 50 copies.

B : Well, I don't think I ever knew anything about this. You know, last month I was away in Goa.

A : Where?

B : Goa.

A : Oh, yes. All right, I'll send a reply myself tomorrow.

Over telephone

double six one?

I : I think we can provide you with typing assistance. All right. We'll let you know soon.

C : Thank you.

V. Between friends

James : Hello, George, come in. How about a game of chess? You'll enjoy it.

George : I haven't the faintest idea of how to play chess. It has never interested me.

James : How sad! Do you play bridge?

George : Not either. I haven't tried any of these indoor games.

James : You know anything about tennis?

George : Sure, I'm pretty good at it. Let's have a game.

VI. At the office

A : The superintendent wants to go on a week's leave next week. As you know, two of our clerks are already on leave. Do you think you can manage the show for a week without these three?

B : I'm afraid I won't be able to. We've the interviews next week. Also the pay day falls next week. I am afraid I can't cope with so heavy a load of work all alone.

11. I feel able to.....
 12. I don't think that'd be too difficult.....
- C. Saying you are not able to do something
1. I can't.....
 2. No, I don't know how to.....
 3. I don't know anything about.....
 4. I'm not sure I can/know how to.....
 5. I don't think I know how to.....
 6. I've no idea how to.....
 7. I haven't the faintest idea how.....
 8. I'm no good at.....
 9. I don't think I can manage
 10. I'm afraid I won't be able to.....
 11. I'm afraid might be beyond me.
 12. I'm afraid might be beyond my capabilities/abilities
 13. I have no experience of.....
 14. I don't think I have the experience/qualifications/abilities
 15. I'm afraid I can't cope with.....

PRACTICE

I. At the club

A : I don't know what happened to my TV set. Last night when we were watching a movie, the picture sudden

1

GREETING

PATTERNS

1. Hi, Raj. How are you?
2. Hello, Tom. Nice to see you again.
3. Good to see you again.
4. How/very nice to see you again.
5. Good morning/afternoon/evening.
6. Hi, everybody.
7. Good morning, everybody.
8. How are things with you?
9. How is life?
10. How is life/the world treating you?
11. What's new?
12. What's the latest?
13. I trust you're keeping well.
14. I hope all goes well with you.

Note: Expressions like 'Hi' (pronounced 'hai') are used only with friends. 'Hello' can be used with friends, colleagues and other persons. The last two are very formal and can be used with persons senior in age, position, etc. The use of different expressions depends on the degree of intimacy with the person you are talking to.

PRACTICE

I. Between friends

Raj : Hi, Das.

Das : Hello, Raj. Haven't seen you for ages. How are you?

1. Asking for Advice

PATTERNS

A. Asking for advice

1. Do you think I should
2. Should I
3. What would you advise (me to do)?
4. What would your advice be?
5. Would you advise me to
6. Could/can you advise me on/about.....?
7. What would you do if you were me / in my position?
8. Can/could you help me sort.....out?
9. I would appreciate your advice.
10. Could I ask for your advice on/about.....?
11. What (course of action) would you recommend?
12. I was wondering/I'd like to know what your reaction(s) would be?
13. Could I ask what your reaction would be to.....?

B. Advising someone to do something

1. I think you should.....
2. If I were you, I'd
3. You'd better.....
4. Why don't you.....?
5. It may not be a bad idea.....

- 6. The way I see it, you should.....
- 7. My advice would be to.....
- 8. I'd advise you to
- 9. I'd recommend.....
- 10. If I were in your position, I'd.....

C. Advising someone not to do something

- 1. I don't think you should/ought to
- 2. If I were you, I wouldn't.....
- 3. You'd better not
- 4. Take my advice and
- 5. I'd think twice aboutIf I were you.
- 6. It's upto you, but I wouldn't.....
- 7. Why don't you.....?
- 8. The way I see it, you shouldn't.....
- 9. I wouldn't recommend.....
- 10. I would advise against.....
- 11. I wouldn't advise.....
- 12. If I were in your position, I wouldn't.....

INTRODUCING

PATTERNS

A. Introducing oneself

Good morning. I am...

Excuse me. My name is...

B. Introducing others

1. This is Mr/Ms...

2. Do you know...?

3. Have you met....?

4. Please meet Mr/Ms...

5. Please meet my friend/brother/sister.

6. I'm sure you'd like to meet.....

7. Let me introduce.....

8. May I introduce.....?

Note: The first five of these are more or less informal. The last three are more formal. Ms is pronounced 'miz'.

PRACTICE

I. Girl talking to her brother's teacher

A : Good morning, sir.

B : Good morning.

A : I am your student Ravi's sister.

B : Oh, I see. What brings you here?

A : Ravi is not well. I've brought his leave letter.

B : What's happened to Ravi?

2. Thanks a lot
3. Many thanks for
4. Thank you
5. Thank you very much
6. That is/was very nice/kind of you
7. I'm really grateful to you for
8. I'm really obliged to you for
9. I really can't thank you enough for
10. I should like to express my gratitude/appreciation for

Note: Items 1 to 3 above are used among friends and relatives. Items 4 and 5 are slightly more formal, but still can be used among friends. The last five items are more formal. Items 9 and 10 are usually used only in formal speeches or in written communication.

B. Responding to thanks

1. Not at all
2. It was a pleasure
3. My pleasure
4. Please don't mention it
5. That's all right
6. Thank you
7. Glad to be of some help
8. Delighted I was able to help
9. You're(most)welcome

2. Expressing Gratitude

PATTERNS

A. Expressing Gratitude

1. Thanks
2. Thanks a lot
3. Many thanks for
4. Thank you
5. Thank you very much
6. That is/was very nice/kind of you
7. I'm really grateful to you for
8. I'm really obliged to you for.....
9. I really can't thank you enough for
10. I should like to express my gratitude/appreciation for

Note: Items 1 to 3 above are used among friends and relatives. Items 4 and 5 are slightly more formal, but still can be used among friends. The last five items are more formal. Items 9 and 10 are usually used only in formal speeches or in written communication.

SOME COMMON ERRORS

A. Unnecessary Use of Prepositions

There is a wide tendency among the users of English in India to add prepositions after verbs where their use is considered erroneous or at least unnecessary. In the sentences below, the italicised prepositions are unnecessary. Try to avoid them in your speech and writing.

1. The management admires *for* our watchman's bravery.
2. The gatekeeper admitted him *in*.
3. We hope you would answer *to* our request soon.
4. He approached *to* me for help.
5. The manager asked *to* the typist why she was late.
6. The union leaders attacked *on* the chairman's views.
7. The inspector was awarded *with* a cash prize for his alertness.
8. The company could not bear *up* the burden of heavy taxes.
9. Computers have greatly benefited *to* the communication network in the country.
10. The management refused to bow *down* to the workers' demands.
11. We propose to build *up* a small power plant for ourselves.
12. Whenever I see the model of our factory what comes *up* to my mind is the face of the man who started it.
13. The technical cell comprises *of* three smaller units.
14. The bank has conceived *about* the customer's welfare.
15. This part of the machine contains *of* a micro computer.
16. The two salesmen find it difficult to cope *up* with the work during peak hours.
17. The workers criticised *on* the management.
18. They demanded *for* higher rate of bonus.
19. He described *about* the unpleasant experiences he had in the jail.

4. Complaining

PATTERNS

1. I'm sorry to bring this up, but.....
2. I'm sorry to say/to have to say this, but.....
3. I've got a bit of a problem here, you see.....
4. I'm afraid I've got a complaint about/to make....
5. I wish you would/wouldn't
6. Would you mind not.....?
7. Can you do anything about.....?
8. I'm afraid I've got something to tell.....
9. I'm nit at all satisfied with.....
10. I really must object to.....

PRACTICE

1. At a hotel/restau

20. There is a proposal from the chairman to discontinue *with* the practice of giving subsidised meals.
21. Many customers were discussing *about* the problem.
22. Many members emphasised *on* the need to take a more lenient attitude to the striking employees.
23. Some of these problems seem to have escaped *of* his attention.
24. The stock exchange value of our company's share is falling *down*.
25. We should fill *up* the posts soon.
26. Do you think we can find *out* another typist so soon?
27. He joined *in* our office as an ordinary clerk.
27. He is respected by everyone because he always keeps *up* his promises.
29. This television set lacks *of* clarity of picture.
30. She is still looking *up* for help.
31. They are waiting for an opportunity to make him *as* the chief co-ordinator of the project.
32. Could you mark *out* the books you need?
33. She married *with* her cousin.
34. We've ordered *for* a more sophisticated machine.
35. Do you think we should invite all the candidates who have passed *out* the entrance examination?
36. I'm afraid he might lose his job because of his tendency to pick *up* quarrels with everyone.
37. They have pinned *down* all their hopes on their leader.
38. We cannot but pity *on* him.
39. He seems to be not inclined to pursue *for* his studies.
40. The police reached *to* the site of the accident.
41. We regret *for* the delay in sending the parcel to you.
42. They've requested *for* immediate medical attention.
43. I have to return *back* the same day.
44. He resembles *to* his father.

C. Declining an invitation

1. Thank you very much, but.....
2. Thank you for asking me, but.....
3. I'm terribly sorry. I don't think I can.
4. I'd like to, but.....
5. I wish I could, but.....
6. I'm afraid I've already promised to.....
7. Sorry, I can't. No, thank you.
8. I'm afraid I won't be able to.
9. That's very kind of you, but.....
10. Unfortunately, However, thank you.
11. What a pity. I shan't be able to.....
12. I regret that I shall not be able to accept.....

PRACTICE

I. Between friends

A : A few of us are planning to go to the Ajanta Caves.
Why don't you join us?

B : Thank you. I'd like to very much.

II. A : My younger son Ajay will be 12 on this Saturday.
I'd like you to join us with your family at our residence
at 6 in the evening.

B : I'd love to, but I'm afraid I can't. You know my father's
left eye is to be operated upon on Saturday. I shall try
to send my son Anoop to your place. Anyway, thanks.

III. A : We're going on a trekking expedition this Sunday. How
about joining us?

B : That sounds a nice idea.

A : How about you, C?

INVITING SOMEONE

PATTERNS

A. Inviting someone

1. Would you like to.....?
2. I'd like you to.....
3. I'd like to invite you to.....
4. How/What about.....?
5. Why don't you.....?
6. Please.....?
7. Care for like to.....?
8. Would you be interested in.....?
9. Perhaps you'd care to.....
10. We should be very pleased/delighted if you could.....

B. Accepting an invitation

1. Thank you. I'd like to very much.
2. That'd be nice.
3. Yes, please.
4. That sounds a nice idea.
5. With pleasure.
6. OK./All right.
7. I won't say no.
8. We'd very much like to.....
9. We'd be delighted to.....
10. What a splendid idea! Thank you.
11. That'd give us the greatest pleasure.
12. That's really most kind of you.

4 MAKING REQUESTS

PATTERNS

1. Can/Could you....., please?
2. Can/Could I....., please?
3. Would you mind....., please?
4. Do you think you could....., please?
5. Do you mind....., please?
6. I'd be (very) grateful if you could.....
7. I wonder whether you could.....
8. Please do me a favour by.....
9. Do you think it would be possible.....?
10. Would you be so kind as to.....?
11. I am sorry to trouble you, but.....
12. I hope you don't mind my asking, but.....

Note: Of these the first five are quite informal. Items 6 to 12 are more formal and very polite. They are arranged in increasing order of politeness. The first two are usually used while talking to friends. The last four are very formal.

PRACTICE

I. At the Post office/Railway booking office, etc.

A : Excuse me. Could you give me your pen for a moment, please?

B : I'm really sorry. It doesn't write well.

A : That's all right.

A : (to another person) : Could I have your pen for a moment, please?

C : Certainly. Here you are.

A : Thank you.

SEEKING PERMISSION

PATTERNS

A. Seeking permission

1. Could I, please?
2. Can I, please?
3. May I, please?
4. Is it all right if
5. Do / would you mind mying?
6. Do / would you mind if?
7. Would it be possible to?
8. If you don't mind, I'd like to.....
9. Have you any objection to mying?
10. I wonder if I could.....

B. Giving permission

1. Yes, of course.
2. Certainly.
3. By all means.
4. Go ahead.
5. You can/may if you want/like.
6. You have my permission.
7. It is quite/perfectly all right.
8. I can't see any objection.

C. Refusing permission

1. Sorry, it's not possible.
2. I'm afraid it is not possible.

PERSUADING

PATTERNS

1. Please let me
2. Won't you let me
3. Why don't you
4. Just this once, please.
5. Are you sure you can't/won't
6. I think you'd do well to
7. But the most sensible thing to do would be to
8. But the best course of action would be to
9. I think it'd be a pity if we don't
10. Are you sure that you won't reconsider.....?
11. Have you considered everything?
12. Are you sure you've taken everything into account?

Note: The patterns given above are the usual ones used for persuading. The earlier ones are more informal and the later ones more formal. Between close friends, you can use other expressions like 'Oh, come on' or 'Please' 'Don't be like that'.

PRACTICE

I. Between friends

A : Hi, Usha. What are you doing this afternoon? How about a movie?

B : Which one?

A : There's a good English movie at Chanakya.

B : You know I don't like English movies.