

# Making Conversation



EAE Learning objectives for this lesson



Learn about intonation and stress. Practice making conversation.

**ACTIVITY ONE:** Ask and answer with your teacher.

1. Are you a chatty person?
2. Are you sociable?
3. Do you like making small talk?
4. Do you find it easy to make small talk in English?
5. What subjects do you like to make conversation about?



**ACTIVITY TWO:**

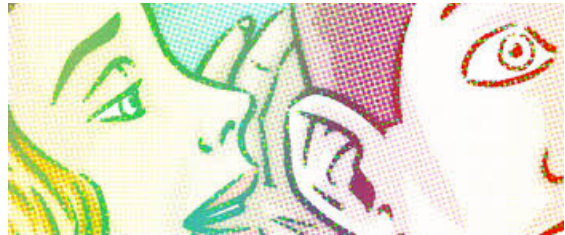
When being chatty with people in English you can make what you are saying more interesting and easier to follow by paying attention to your intonation and pronunciation. Let's read some information about stress first.



## Intonation - Stress Types

Let's discuss the four basic types of word stress that lead to proper intonation in English.

- \* Tonic stress
- \* Emphatic stress
- \* Contrastive stress
- \* New information stress



### **Tonic Stress**

Tonic stress refers to the syllable in a word which receives the most stress in an intonation unit. An intonation unit has one tonic stress. It's important to remember that a sentence can have more than one intonation unit, and therefore have more than one tonic stress. Here are some examples of intonation units with the tonic stress bolded.

He's waiting  
He's waiting / for his friend  
He's waiting / for his friend / at the station.

Generally, the final tonic stress in a sentence receives the most stress. In the above example, 'station' receives the strongest stress.

There are a number of instances in which the stress changes from this standard. Here are short explanations for each of the changes with example sentences to illustrate.

### **Emphatic Stress**

If you decide to emphasize something, you can change the stress from the principal noun to another content word such as an adjective (big, difficult, etc.),

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intensifier (very, extremely, etc.) This emphasis calls attention to the extraordinary nature of what you want to emphasize.

*For example:*

That was a difficult test. - Standard statement

That was a difficult test. - Emphasizes how difficult the test was



There are a number of adverbs and modifiers, which tend to be used to emphasize in sentences that receive emphatic stress.

extremely  
terribly

completely  
utterly

especially  
etc.

### Contrastive Stress

Contrastive stress is used to point out the difference between one object and another. Contrastive stress tends to be used with determiners such as 'this, that, these and those'.

For example:

I think I prefer this color.

Do you want these or those curtains?



Contrastive stress is also used to bring out a given word in a sentence, which will also slightly change the meaning.

- \* He came to the party yesterday. (It was he, not someone else.)
- \* He walked to the party yesterday. (He walked rather than drove.)
- \* He came to the party yesterday. (It was a party not a meeting or something else.)
- \* He came to the party yesterday. (It was yesterday not two weeks ago or some other time.)

### New Information Stress

When asked a question, the requested information is naturally stressed more strongly.

*For example:*

Where are you from? - I come from Seattle, in the USA.

What do you want to do? - I want to go bowling.

When does class begin? - The class begins at nine o'clock.



Use these various types of stress to help improve your pronunciation and understandability.

*Source: Kenneth Beare*

**ACTIVITY THREE** - Circle the words, which you think best describe your personality:

**Shy Confident Outgoing Quietly Confident Bossy Chatty Extrovert  
Discreet Reserved Over confident Painfully shy Fun Approachable**



**Are you Chatty?** Answer the questions...

1. Do people sometimes ask you to be quiet to give them space to think?
2. Are people always asking you what you think?
3. Do people think that you are shy?
4. Do people think you are too sure of yourself?
5. Do you have long conversations with strangers?
6. Do you like meeting new people at parties?
7. Do you feel awkward in social situations?
8. Do people often interrupt you?
9. Do your friends tell you a lot about their problems?
10. Do you talk a lot on the phone?

**ACTIVITY FOUR** Role Plays.

Simulate a chatty conversation with a colleague. Try to pay attention to your intonation. You have a choice of conversation starters:

Subjects of conversation:

- The weather
- Films
- Politics
- The city you are visiting
- Your background
- Families
- Holidays

Conversation starters:

- Hi, how are you? Isn't it a lovely day?
- I just saw the latest Bond film have you seen it?
- Isn't Rome a fascinating place? Do you know it well?
- I've been working in my current job for... before that I was, and you?
- I've just got off the phone with my daughter. Do you have a family?
- I've not travelled in England much have you? We usually go on holiday to somewhere hotter. What about you? Do you travel much?
- I am actually quite passionate about.... What do you do in your spare time?
- What kind of music do you listen to?
- Do you think Macron is honest?



**ACTIVITY FIVE:** Comprehension Test. Listen to the song and fill the gaps. (you tube). Simon and Garfunkel ~ The Dangling Conversation

1. We will listen to the song and fill the gaps.
2. Also think about how to answer the following questions about this song:
3. What is the song about?
4. Where are the people sitting?
5. How do they feel about each other?

It's a still life .....  
Of a now late afternoon,  
As the sun shines through the .....  
lace  
And ..... wash the room.  
And we sit and drink our coffee  
Couched in our .....,  
Like shells upon the .....  
You can hear the ..... roar  
In the dangling conversation  
And the superficial sighs,  
Are the ..... of our lives.

And you read your Emily Dickinson,  
And I my Robert frost,  
And we note our place with  
bookmarkers  
That ..... what we've lost.  
Like a poem poorly .....

We are verses out of rhythm,  
Couplets out of rhyme,  
In syncopated time  
Lost in the dangling conversation  
And the superficial .....,  
Are the borders of our lives.

Yes, we speak of things that .....,  
With words that must be said,  
Can analysis be .....?  
Is the theatre really dead?  
And how the room is softly .....  
And I only kiss your shadow,  
I cannot feel your hand,  
You're a stranger now unto me  
Lost in the dangling conversation.  
And the ..... sighs,  
In the borders of our lives.

**ACTIVITY SIX:** Conversation Starters.

Here are some friendly conversation starters.  
Use them to start a conversation with your teacher and see how long you can keep the conversation flowing. Pay attention to your intonation and stress!

1. I think this winter has been particularly warm....
2. These yellow jackets are driving me crazy!
3. Where are you going for your holidays this summer?
4. What are you having for dinner tonight?



How far have you got?

learning objectives

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Fill in the bars to show your progress