Making Conversation

ACTIVITY ONE:

Useful Verbs:

What's the difference in meaning between these three phrasal verbs?

To chat up	To be very chatty
To chat to	To be sociable
To chat with	To be approachable
To make a bee line for	To be easy to talk to
To make conversation	

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,

Improving sentence intonation is one of the key elements in your English pronunciation. 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

If you are unfamiliar with intonation and stress here are a number of resources on the site to help you understand the basics:

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 **wai**ting
He's **wa**iting / for his **friend**
He's **wa**iting / 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.), 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	completely	especially
terribly	utterly	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** colour.
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.

By Kenneth Beare

ACTIVITY THREE

Circle the words, which you think best describe your personality:

Shy Confident Outgoing Quietly Confident Bossy Chatty Extrovert Discreet Reserved

Are you Chatty? Ask these questions to your partner and decide if they are chatty or not.

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?
- So what do you think about Bema?
- 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 Italy 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?
- What do you think about all the roadworks in town at the moment?
- Do you think there will be a war with Iran?
- Do you think Sarkozy 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?
6. Are they in harmony with each other?
7. What are they doing?
8. What are they compared to?
9. What is the atmosphere of the song?
10. What impression do you get of the peoples relationship?

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,
Youre 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 partner and see how long you can keep the conversation flowing. Pay attention to your intonation and stress!

- I think this winter has been particularly cold….
- I saw a great Rugby match at the weekend…
- I think that Michael Jackson is still alive…
- Have you seen Avatar?
- Where are you going for your holidays this summer?
- What are you having for dinner tonight?