

Prepare for a Conversation Before It Happens

More practice. Same idea, applied.

THE CORE IDEA

If you know a conversation is coming, spend two minutes preparing one opening sentence and one question. That is enough to start moving, and once you start, the conversation carries you.

A2 — Building Confidence

At this level, preparation means one sentence. Not a script. Just the first thing you will say. Say it out loud before you go in. That is the whole habit.

Questions to think about

1. Think of one conversation coming up today or this week. What is your opening sentence? Say it out loud now.
2. Is there something you are nervous about saying? Say it out loud to yourself first. What do you notice?
3. What is one question you could prepare for your next conversation in English?
4. Which feels harder: starting the conversation, or keeping it going?

Key phrases to use

'I have a quick question about...'

'I wanted to ask you about...'

'I was thinking about what you said...'

'Can I check something with you?'

'I just wanted to say...'

B1 — Intermediate Practice

At this level, you can prepare more than just the opening. Practise saying the hard part out loud before you say it to someone else. It always sounds easier when you have heard yourself say it.

Questions to think about

1. Think of a difficult conversation you have been putting off. What is the one sentence you need to say? Say it out loud now.
2. After preparing your opening, do you feel more or less nervous? What changes?
3. What is the hardest type of conversation for you in English: disagreeing, asking for something, or saying no?
4. Prepare a question you genuinely want to ask someone this week. Say it out loud three times.

Key phrases to use

'Before we start, I just want to say...'

'I have been thinking about this and...'

'There is something I want to raise...'

'I wanted to check something with you before we get into it.'

'Let me say the hard part first: ...'

B2 — Advanced Application

At this level, preparation is not about lines. It is about positioning. What do you want the other person to walk away thinking? Prepare that, not the words.

Questions to think about

1. For your next important conversation, what is the one thing you want the other person to understand?
2. Do you prepare differently for conversations where you have power versus ones where you do not? How?
3. When you have prepared well, what is different about how you show up in the conversation?
4. Think of a conversation that went badly. What one sentence, prepared in advance, could have changed it?

Key phrases to use

'What I want you to walk away knowing is...'

'The one thing I want to make clear today is...'

'I have thought about how to say this and...'

'I want to be direct about something: ...'

'My goal in this conversation is...'

SELF-CHECK QUESTIONS

- What is the difference between preparing a script and preparing one sentence?
- Why is saying something out loud before a conversation more useful than thinking it?
- What does preparing one question do for a conversation?
- What is the hard part technique and when do you use it?
- What conversation coming up this week will you prepare for?

TODAY'S SMALL ACTION

Think of one conversation coming up this week. Decide on your opening sentence right now. Say it out loud. You are prepared.