

Conversations

Conversations are driven by two things: questions and comments. Questions help drive the conversation forward and comments can range from “That’s fun!” to sharing your own experience with the situation.

Be aware of balance in conversations. Ideally, you want it to be 50/50 with both people equally invested. Realistically, this often doesn’t happen, it’s common for one person to dominate. If you feel like you’re dominating, ask a question! The first few might be like pulling teeth, but most people have one question or topic that they’ll talk about for longer, you just have to feel that out.

A note on comments: Try to pair a “That sounds fun!” kind of comment with something about yourself or a question. On its own it’s a conversation killer, but paired with other content, it becomes a supportive statement. See the difference:

<p>Them: “I played soccer in high school.” You: “That sounds fun!” Them: “Yeah it was!” You: “Yep.”</p> <p><i>*conversation dies, RIP*</i></p>	<p>Them: “I played soccer in high school.” You: “That sounds fun! I played in a summer league when I was in elementary school. I always wished that I stuck with it. When did you start playing?” Them: <i>*launches into a story about their childhood and the friends they made, you become best friends, they come to know Jesus and you spend eternity together*</i></p>
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Asking Good Questions

Questions are the drivers of conversation, similar to the gas pedal on a car. You can push it then coast for a bit, but after a while, you’ll need to do it again.

Basic Principles of Question Asking

1. Ask open-ended questions
2. Listen!
3. Ask follow-up questions to better understand

Ask Open-Ended Questions

- Questions that can be answered simply “Yes” or “No” are not conducive to good conversations.
- Parts of good open-ended questions
 - How and why questions will typically give you longer responses than who, what, and when
 - “Tell me about ____”
- Things to ask about
 - School
 - The obvious ones in this stage are about their major, what made them decide that, and what they want to do with it.
 - Others: favorite classes so far, why they like them, what are some things you’re nervous about with your major/occupation, did you always want to do that or is it recent, what changed your mind?
 - Good follow-up questions will give you the ability to go deeper than their rehearsed answers
 - Family
 - For people who are homesick (aka most freshmen), this is something that could be really meaningful! We all love talking about people we care about and it often puts us at ease to do so. Granted, every situation is different and not all are positive, so be sensitive to when they’re ready to be done talking about it.
 - Things to ask about in one-on-one situations: who they get along with best in their family, who they don’t get along with, what do they wish was done differently in their family, what traditions they have, how might God be asking them to invest in those relationships?
 - Extracurricular activities
 - This can be good to get a feel about what their time commitments looks like and if they’re looking to join things!
 - Things to ask about: what they did in high school, if they want to continue in college, what they’ve already joined, what they’re wanting to join
 - Friends
 - Similar to family, most people love talking about their best friends! It’s often really meaningful to me when people ask about people I care about.
 - Things to ask about: who their best friend is and why, how they met, how often they get to see them now, favorite things they’ve done together, what their relationship looks like, what they want it to look like

Listen!

- We often listen to respond instead of listen to understand, but when you listen with an agenda, follow-up questions aren’t relevant because you didn’t hear what they were actually saying.

Ask follow-up questions to better understand

- People often aren't going to tell you everything at the first go, but are willing to share other things. If their answers become short or their body posture changes to become more closed off and facing somewhere else, that's a good place to stop asking questions about it. Some people are really open and will answer anything you ask them, others will need to build trust in your relationship first and that's okay!
- Asking follow-up questions shows you're a good listener and that you're interested in what they're saying.

Coming up with follow-up questions:

1. Go through the 5 Ws & 1 H – Who, What, When, Where, **Why**, How

If you don't know these things about what they just said, ask! Ask if it's something they do regularly or just that once, if they would want to do it again, who they did it with, what would they change about it, etc.

2. Think about a similar situation in your life, including the event itself, your favorite parts, your motivations, the people that were involved, and the ways that it impacted you.

We know our own stories a lot better than other people's. Don't assume that their experience is the same as your experience, but you can use the details you remember about it to help yourself realize details of their story that you don't know. You can also pull from things you've heard from other people who are in the same field or situation! If you're trying to relate to them, try to use your own experiences. If you're trying to semi-relate but using that information to come up with questions, other people's experiences are great!

Examples:

"I was in band too! What did your practices look like?"

"My best friend was on yearbook staff too! She always covered volleyball games, what things did you normally cover?"

"I've heard it can be challenging to live at home while you're in college, how has that been for you?"

3. Ask clarifying questions

Sometimes we misunderstand and think we know everything about the situation. Repeat a gist of what they told you back to them to make sure you understood correctly.

4. Ask about the consequences of things

This is something that's likely better suited for a one-on-one relationship rather than at

a Welcome Week event.

For confessed sin: Don't respond with your opinion on the subject right away because you're uncomfortable. They already suspect/know it's a sin.

Ask more questions to understand it better: How long has this been happening? What happened around the time when this started? Was there a specific situation? How has this sin affected you? How has it affected others? Have you told anyone else (especially if it involves other people, but this is helpful for accountability/seeing if parents know)? If so, how did your [family, friends, etc] respond to that? How did you feel about their response? What would your life look like without this sin? Do you want to get well?

For difficult situations: What do you think about that? How did that make you feel? What about that made you feel that way? How might God be calling you to approach that situation? Can I pray with you about this? – don't be afraid to say that you don't know, but also don't be afraid to pray with them about it.

Practice with follow-up questions:

1. "Hey how's welcome week going?"
"Good"

What makes this a bad question?

What could you ask instead?

If you were to ask this question (as often happens during welcome week), what question could you follow with?

2. After presenting the "pick three pictures that describe your life right now" cards, what questions could you ask to follow up with based on these responses?

"I picked this picture because I feel really lonely."

"I picked this picture because I feel like there's standards that are set for me but I don't think I can meet them."

"I picked this picture because it seems like God is showing me the next steps I should be taking, but not more than that."

Guiding Questions

We often learn better when we think of things instead of people telling it to us.

Guiding questions are meant to help the student learn to think through things they should consider in making decisions or in their approach to a situation. Granted, there are times when they will be completely unaware and you'll have to tell them. But for some things, it's better for them to come to those conclusions on their own, it helps them learn how to think through things, especially from a Biblical standpoint.

When in doubt, point them back to Jesus and compare how their life looks to how His looked.

Example:

1. You've noticed that the student struggles with selfishness in the way they relate to others. How might you ask leading questions to help them realize this?

How do you look to serve your friends? – bringing to mind things they should be considering

How does the way you relate to your friends look like how Jesus related to His?

What would it look like for your relationships to look more like that?

2. John 15:5-8

Fruit = disciples

- What is the fruit? *Fruits of the Spirit*

- But do we work to produce the fruit of the *Spirit* on our own? *No, it's the Spirit growing that in us*

- Is the goal of our life to produce the fruit of the Spirit? *No*

- What is our goal? *Knowing God and making Him known*

- Right, so back to the plant metaphor, what function does the fruit have? Why do plants have fruit? *Reproduction*

- Tie that back in to our purpose, what does it look like to reproduce? *Disciples*

→ We are disciples making disciples