Toastmasters International Media Center

7 Tips for Successful Holiday Party Conversations

ENGLEWOOD, Colo., Nov. 10, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- Now that holiday work parties, family gatherings, and social events are starting to fill up the calendar, some of us might be feeling a bit apprehensive about how to adjust back to in-person holiday events. Engaging in small talk and having casual conversations can be the source of anxiety for some, as natural conversations don't always come easily to many of us. With that in mind, Toastmasters has seven communication tips for a more successful holiday party experience.

1. **Look for a friendly face.** When arriving at the event or when you're feeling out of place, seek out the people you know and enjoy spending time with. Remember to navigate toward people who seem to be popular, because it's likely they're good communicators and will help you feel at ease.
2. **Watch your body language.** Be sure to face the individual who is speaking, make eye contact and nod to let them know you're paying attention, listening, and understanding. Refrain from texting or repeatedly checking your phone, as this is disrespectful.
3. **Avoid awkward topics.** While acceptable small talk topics vary depending on culture, you generally want to avoid discussing the following topics with someone you don't know well: your health issues, personal/confidential information, controversial issues, and inappropriate jokes.
4. **Ask open-ended, specific questions**. Encourage others to talk by asking open-ended questions that can't be answered with just a "yes" or "no." You can use the phrase "Tell me about …" to elicit longer responses or to avoid asking questions that might be uncomfortable to answer.
5. **Share your stories.** When the timing is appropriate, share your humorous and happy holiday memories. People like to share their own holiday experiences, so this topic should go over quite well during this time of year.
6. **Set your expectations.** It's difficult to have in-depth conversations at holiday gatherings, so prepare for others to join in and even interrupt at times. Conversations will typically be brief so don't expect to resolve any pressing business or personal matters at the event.
7. **Know when and how to exit.** Before leaving the event, navigate your way around and try to say a brief hello to the people you haven't had the chance to converse with. Be sure to say thank you to the hosts of the party. They likely put in a great deal of effort in the hopes that you would enjoy yourself.

For more holiday conversation advice and tips, read Diane Windingland's "7 Tips to Brush Up Your Small Talk" in the *Toastmaster* magazine.

Windingland will be part of an expert panel in the upcoming Toastmasters webinar: Let's Talk Holiday Talk on November 15. The free webinar will help attendees hone their party talk, toasts, and more. Click here to register for the webinar.

To find a local Toastmasters club where you can practice and develop one-on-one communication skills, go to www.toastmasters.org/Find.

About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a worldwide nonprofit educational organization that empowers individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders. Headquartered in Englewood, Colo., the organization's membership exceeds 280,000 in more than 14,700 clubs in 144 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people from diverse backgrounds become more confident speakers, communicators and leaders. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org. Follow @Toastmasters on Twitter.

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