

Dead Ends & Open Doors: Starting a conversation

I. The Dead-End Test: Yes/No or one-word answers. The other person answers, & there's nothing left to say.

Ask yourself: If I say this, does the other person have something easy to ask me next? If the answer is no, it's a dead end.

The rule: If it can be answered with "yes," "no," or one word, it's a dead end. A true door opener uses what, how, where, or why — a one-word answer isn't grammatically possible.

II. Door Openers: Phrases that help give introductions somewhere to go. — Vocabulary

NOTICING SOMETHING

- I love your [scarf/bag] — where did you get it?
- What brought you here today?

THE PLACE OR EVENT

- How do you know [host's name]?
- What have you enjoyed most about [event] so far?

INSTEAD OF "WHAT'S YOUR NAME?"

- I don't think we've met — I'm _____. What brings you here today?

JOINING SOMEONE

- Mind if I sit here?
- Is this seat taken?

III. The Power of Specificity: "I like animals." → "I raise monarch butterflies."

Which one gives you more to respond to? More specific doesn't mean longer; it means concrete.

IV. Four Types of Interesting Things to Say that Help Connect with Others — Vocabulary

INTERESTS

"I've always been fascinated by..." ...*astronomy*.
 "I spend a lot of my free time..." ...*gardening*.

ABILITIES

"I'm pretty good at..." ...*fixing things*.
 "I have a talent for..." ...*remembering birthdays*.

ASPIRATIONS

"I've always wanted to..." ...*learn piano*.
 "...is on my bucket list." ...*Seeing the Panama Canal is on my bucket list*.

CHARACTER & HABITS

"I tend to..." ...*be quiet at first*.
 "I'm the kind of person who..." ...*always has a project going*.

V. Generally True vs. Happening Now — Grammar

SIMPLE PRESENT

Habits, routines, things generally true about you.
 "I read mysteries. I grow roses."

PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

Something happening now, in progress.
 "I'm reading a mystery set in Ireland."

The recipe: am / is / are + verb-ing

Verbs: add -ing (read → reading). **Silent -e:** drop the e (make → making). **1 vowel + consonant:** double it (stop → stopping).

Watch out: know, want, like, believe, understand, and need almost never take -ing.

VI. Keep It Going — Response Phrases — Vocabulary

REACTING

- Oh really?
- That's so interesting.
- No way!

RELATING

- Me too!
- I know exactly what you mean.

BUYING A SECOND TO THINK

- That's a good question... let me think.
- Hmm, how do I put this...

SHIFTING TO A NEW IDEA

- That reminds me...
- Speaking of which...

 **This week:** try one door opener and one specific detail in a real conversation.