

## Learn the Art of Ending a Conversation

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Have you ever “gotten stuck” with someone?

You want to move on and meet other people, and you have no idea how to do so politely. It appears that the other person would also like to network with others, and, she, too, fidgets nervously rather than ending the conversation.

You’re not alone. Many people are so concerned with starting a conversation that they give no thought to extricating themselves. In fact, most workshops deal with creating a Verbal Business Card followed by your elevator pitch and give little thought to ending what you may have successfully started.

### Be Upbeat

Your last words are as important as your first words. Plan and rehearse (if necessary) exit statements. Since at least 90 percent of your message is communicated through your body language and vocal tone, rate, pitch and inflection, keep an “open” stance and sound upbeat. You can easily tell the difference between people who say, “It was nice meeting you,” and you think, “Yeah, sure” vs. those who sincerely say, “It was nice meeting you.”

### When to do it

- After about 10 minutes
- When the other person’s eyes noticeably begin wandering around the room, i.e., the “lounge stare”
- When others shift their stance toward other people in the room or toward the door
- When the conversation lags
- When the other person repeatedly answers in a monotone with nothing words like “interesting,” “hmmm,” “really.”

### How to do it

- Ask for the other person’s card if you do not yet have it.
- Set up a time to call or meet with the other person.
- Excuse yourself shortly after another person has joined the conversation.
- Be up front. Be cordial and begin your remarks with “It has been nice talking with you and ...
  - I will keep your card on file for when I need ...”
  - It’s my first time here, and I would like to meet some of the other members, too.”
  - I haven’t been here for six months, and I want to rekindle some acquaintances.”
  - I can only stay for an hour, and I want to say “hi” to several other people.”
  - I’d like to continue this conversation. May I call you next week?”
  - I’ll e-mail you that referral tomorrow.”
  - Would you like to have lunch sometime?”

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And when all else fails:

- “I want to get something else to eat (or drink).”

### **Say Good-Bye to everyone you met**

Plan time at every event to spend a minute or two saying good-bye to everyone you met. Keep it short, upbeat and positive, and always use people’s first name (which you will have remembered!)

- “Kelly, it was nice meeting you. I’ll call you Thursday.”
- “Bob, thanks again for the tip on the stock market.”
- “Mary, I’ll call tomorrow to set up a lunch meeting.”
- “Ken, I’ll call my associate to share how you can help him with ...”

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**Lillian D. Bjorseth helps you build high-value relationships by honing your business networking, business development and communication skills. She’s the author of *Breakthrough Networking: Building Relationships That Last, 52 Ways to Break the Ice & Target Your Market* and the *Nothing Happens Until We Communicate* CD and workbook series. She’s a contributing author to *Masters of Networking*. Lillian spent 11 years at AT&T where she trained top executives in communication and media skills. Contact her at [lillianspeaks@duoforce.com](mailto:lillianspeaks@duoforce.com), [www.duoforce.com](http://www.duoforce.com) or 630-983-5308**

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