

EXPRESSING OPINIONS

In a friendly discussion, you don't want to present your opinions so strongly that you start an argument! You can express your opinion in a more tentative way like this:

I sometimes think that ...
Well, I've heard that ...
Wouldn't you say that ... ?
Do you think it's right to say that ... ?
It's my feeling that ...

And you may want to ask other people to explain their point of view more exactly, using expressions like this:

I didn't follow what you said about ...
Sorry, I don't see what you mean.
I don't exactly see what you're getting at.
What exactly are you trying to tell me?

And other people may not understand what you say to them. So you may need to rephrase your own statements, beginning like this:

That's not exactly what I mean ...
Let me put it another way ...
Sorry, let me explain ...
Let me try that again ...

AGREEING AND DISAGREEING

Here are some useful ways of agreeing or disagreeing with someone's opinion. Notice that you need to be very *polite* when disagreeing with someone in English – even someone you know quite well.

AGREEMENT: *Exactly.*
I couldn't agree more.
That's just what I was thinking.
You know, that's exactly what I think.
That's a good point.

DISAGREEMENT: *Yes, that's quite true, but ...*
I'm not sure if I agree ...
Well, you have a point there, but ...
Maybe, but don't you think that ...

PREVENTING INTERRUPTIONS AND INTERRUPTING POLITELY

Even if you pride yourself on being a "good listener," there will be times when you want to keep talking and not be interrupted. Here are some useful techniques for you to try to prevent interruptions:

There are three points I'd like to make ...
(You can't be interrupted until you have made all three!)

Even though ...
(You can't be interrupted until you have spoken two clauses.)

And another thing ...
(You can't be interrupted until you have added a sentence.)

Pausing in the middle of a sentence, not between sentences.
(You can't be interrupted until you have completed your sentence.)

If you want to interrupt politely when another person is speaking, you need to be alert for suitable opportunities. This may take a lot of practice. If you break into the conversation at the wrong time, you may be considered aggressive. The end of a sentence is often a safe place to break in – but not always (see above!). Here are some useful techniques for interrupting:

If I could just come in here ... (formal)

Sorry to interrupt, but ...

Um ... um ... um ... (repeated until the speaker lets you speak)

By the way ... (to change the subject)

That reminds me ...

The way I see it ...

BRINGING OTHER PEOPLE INTO THE DISCUSSION

Actually, you probably don't want to appear to dominate people all the time! You may want to hear other people's views and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak in a conversation. A chairman at a meeting can just nominate speakers or point to them, but in a conversation it's better to use less direct methods:

Don't you agree, John?
What do you think, John?
You're very quiet, John.
I think John will agree with me when I say ...
John's looking skeptical.
I don't know what John thinks, but ...