

# Conversation Skills II

## Extending Conversations

A Curriculum for Adolescents and Adults  
with Developmental Disabilities

Dr. Marilyn Banks

IEP

RESOURCES

The CD-ROM contains a printable version of the entire book in the PDF file **ConvSkillsII.pdf**. Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to view or print this file and can be installed from the CD-ROM.

Also included on the CD-ROM is the graph template file mentioned on page 67, **Workrelated.xls**. Microsoft Excel is required to use this file.



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# Introduction

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## Extending Conversations

Conversation Skills I set the standard as a proven method for students who needed help in learning how to make basic conversation. The original user friendly lessons have been used successfully all over the country and in Canada. Schools, hospitals, colleges, and businesses have used it to help workers with disabilities be more widely accepted, communicative, and relaxed in the busy work environment.

I am pleased to introduce its sequel, Conversation Skills II: Extended Conversations. Its goals include stretching the range of effective conversations acquired in the first volume. A lot more emphasis is placed here on learning and remembering personal names for greater social fluidity at work and in the community.

In addition, Conversation Skills II has created the dual concepts of “Mini-conversations” and “One-liners.” Both are designed to help students and young people with disabilities, who are entering the work force, in acquiring finely honed conversation skills for use at work and in the community. These lessons were created to expand the communication skills learned in the first program. With this book, students will learn how to speak up and take the initiative in situations that are enhanced by projecting a warm and positive persona.

The lessons that focus on remembering names provide students with simple techniques for mastering this vital skill. Nothing can either endear you or alienate you faster than the ability, or inability, to remember the names of people to whom you have recently been introduced. These lessons have been field tested and the results have motivated fellow employees to gravitate towards the participants of this program and view them, for the first time as real friends!

While Conversation Skills Volume I was organized in a chronological fashion, Conversation Skills II is more open-ended. It is presented in five separate sections that can be used in very specific ways with different students based on their individual needs. Also, the lessons in Conversation Skills II have been designed and constructed with titles that can be easily tailored to IEP goals, or used for personal action plans as prescribed by employers.

There is something for everyone from the simplest communication needs to the most complex. Yet, there is always a rational explanation for each lesson and a self-managed check sheet that turns the control over to the individual doing the lessons. Modeling of proper methods is always short and to the point. It is meant to be easy and uncomplicated.

One major difference in Conversation Skills II is the Work Related Conversation skills that have been used successfully in the work environment for over 20 years. These particular lessons, found in Part Four, address an often expressed need of employers: that they want workers to be able to articulate in the work environment. One of the notable features of this section is its graphing capability that will give teachers and others an accurate picture of student progress and strengths. It will also give job coaches and others plenty of ideas about what their students need to do to improve their conversation skills on the job.

In a fastpaced world where everyone is using text messaging to communicate, the melodious and reassuring sound of the human voice is becoming extinct. As a result, in our treasured work and community families there is even a greater need for people to talk to each other and exchange meaningful dialog. Conversation Skills II is based on this fundamental need and strives to nourish and fine tune the skills it requires.



It has long been a fact that people with disabilities more often lose their jobs due to poor social skills than any other reason. These lessons are aimed to remedy that reality. Workers with disabilities will be able to take great pride when they are able to draw from these skill repertoires that will help endear them to others. In addition, it is my dream that because of this book, workers of all abilities will make lasting friendships.



## **Why do students and workers need to learn social skills?**

Many people can do a job but have not had any social skills training. Workers with disabilities or who are shy are usually the first ones to be let go when employers downsize. A friendly worker is perceived as a more efficient worker.

## **What Skills does Conversation Skills II teach?**

Through modeling and guided practice, students learn how to Greet Others, How to Remember Names, How to make Small Talk, and in general How to Communicate in a work environment.

## **Who Can teach Conversation Skills II lessons?**

Teachers, speech and language pathologists, social workers, and job coaches can teach the basic lessons in 1025 minutes. Self motivated individuals have even taught themselves to do the lessons with success. The execution of the actual lessons is placed in the hands of the user who records his own results.

## **Who should participate in Conversation Skills II training?**

Conversation Skills II was designed for participants with severe, moderate, or mild disabilities in mind. But, it was also designed for people without disabilities who might be shy or just want to improve their ability to initiate pleasant conversation with others.

*Through modeling and guided practice, students learn how to Greet Others, How to Remember Names, How to make Small Talk, and in general How to Communicate in a work environment.*

## How does Conversation Skills training work?

Simply read over the rationale and objectives. Then follow the simple methods outlined for each lesson. Role-playing is the proven method that helps ideas to stick. Use additional suggested practice. Do not hesitate to repeat lessons that seem to be more difficult. Give the student the assignment sheet and explain its use. Then meet again with the user to assess progress and give positive feedback. Keep records as outlined in specific sections and follow the guidelines to graph student progress. Use the Certificates of Achievement often to provide positive feedback and keep participants motivated. Watch your trainees become social butterflies!



*Watch your  
trainees  
become  
social  
butterflies!*





# Each lesson follows this structure:

## Rationale:

The reason why students need to know this skill.

## Objective:

Their goal in learning it.

## Methods:

How you teach it.

## Extra Practice:

Additional helpful exercises.

## Assignment Sheet:

Homework to help secure student acquisition of the skill.

## Debriefing Session:

Go over the completed assignment sheets as a group. Commend, clap, and reward each person who gave the "good answer" even once. If they took a sheet home and returned it, put a star on the sheet and give lots of praise. This is one of the most important debriefing sessions you will have. You might even have to reteach the skill and do this lesson several times. It is fine to do any lesson more than once because it often takes this kind of repetition for them to make it their own. This entire course can be repeated yearly in order to fine-tune the skills and "hardwire" the verbal initiations and response. I have met up with students five or six years after taking these lessons and they are still "hardwired" for the proper responses. Their comfort zone is repetition!

## Self-Managed Checklist:

Follow the Objective page. Checklists help students to chart their success and progress with the skill of the week. Directions are at the top of each page and are self-explanatory.

**Lesson 3**  
Work Related Conversation . . .  
Acceptance of criticism or correction

**Rationale:**  
One of the hardest skills for any of us to master is accepting correction, and some people with disabilities have real difficulty with this. But criticism can help them to do a better job. In this lesson, we will use the terms criticize and correct interchangeably.

**Objective:**  
To help the student recognize good criticism and to respond with appropriate verbal phraseology, and appropriate facial expressions.

**Methods:**  
Give examples of being corrected. Start by letting them know:

1. You are criticized because you are not dressed properly for work.
2. You are asked to shave your beard or contain your hair.
3. You are asked to wear a shoe that is safe for the environment in which you are working.
4. You are told you need to bathe or use deodorant.

These are real-life issues where students need to respond in the right way. Talk about how criticism can help them on the job or at home. Talk about how we feel when someone criticizes us, even when it is positive. Be sure they get that being corrected does not make them a bad person.

**Extra Practice:**  
Ask what appropriate responses they can make when corrected. Have each student write (or you write) what their "good" response will be. Examples are, "thank you for telling me this," "I will do it better the next time," "I will try harder," or a simple, "OK."

**Assignment Sheet:**  
Help students write and repeat out loud their "good answer" to being corrected. Remind them you will be listening for their good answer when you need to correct them. Instruct them to circle a number when they have used their good answer. Give praise when you catch them using their good answers. Send the optional assignment sheet home so parents can do monitoring of correct responses. Offer a special reward to students who return sheets marked by parents. Go to the dollar store and get inexpensive prizes for this effort. This skill should be practiced across environments!

**Debriefing Session:**  
Go over the completed assignment sheets and commend, clap, and reward each person who gave the "good answer" even once. If they took a sheet home and returned it, put a star on the sheet and give praise. This is one of the most important debriefing sessions you will have. You might have to reteach the skill and do this lesson several times. It is fine to do any lesson more than once because it often takes this kind of repetition for them to make it their own.

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**Self-Managed Checklist**  
**Lesson 1**

Mini-Conversation . . .  
Be the First to Ask:  
"Do you have any brothers and sisters?"

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your reply is:

"I have \_\_\_\_\_ brothers and \_\_\_\_\_ sisters."

Mark yes after you asked the question and mark yes after you give your reply.

I asked my friend if he/she has any brothers and sisters?	Yes	No
I said how many brothers and sisters I have?	Yes	No

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# Part One



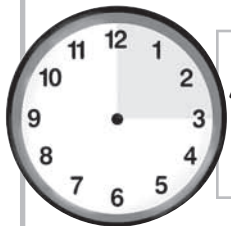
## *Learn to Introduce Yourself and Greet Others*

### **Greetings and Introductions**

Recently, a group of high school teachers, who are very involved in transition, were trained to use the following lessons with their students. The day after the teacher-training took place, a visiting teacher emailed me and said, “I walked into the school this morning, and a student who had never greeted me introduced himself and asked me to sign his sheet. I was delighted and knew that the teacher had already begun the lessons with the student.” (Self, 2007)

As you go through these lessons, remember that this time is well spent and will promote future successes in your community.





**Time  
Allotted:**  
15  
minutes

# Lesson 1

## Introduce Yourself

### **Rationale:**

It takes effort to be the first to introduce yourself and say your first and last names. When we meet new people, we do not always take the initiative to step forward and be the one who breaks the ice. This is even more difficult for people with disabilities, but they can add this to their repertoire with a little training.

### **Objective:**

This lesson is the groundwork for an upcoming in-depth study on names. Students will learn to say their first and last names when introducing themselves.

### **Methods:**

Explain to students that they are going to introduce themselves by saying “Hello, my name is Fred Jones.” They are encouraged to say both the first and last name because most of us tend to just say our first names. Have each student practice saying their first and last names in this manner at least five times. Then, have them practice with you and with each other.

### **Extra Practice:**

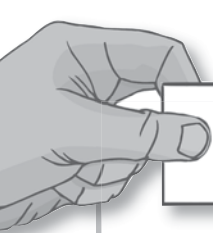
If you are in a classroom situation, you may accompany the students to a nearby classroom or principal’s office, and have them practice being the first to introduce themselves by saying their first and last names. If they have been through the lessons in the first Conversation Skills, they might remember to extend their hand and make eye contact. You might review these lessons at this time.

### **Assignment Sheet:**

After practicing the introductions, pass out the assignment sheets and do not forget to have students put their names and the date on the papers. Instruct students to look for chances to be the first to introduce themselves and say their first and last names. Have them circle a number each time they do this.

### **Debriefing Session:**

When the students report back, quiz them to find out if they did the introductions. Commend all for doing the introductions. If any did not do the task, encourage them to keep trying to do it at least once. This is not an easy task. Try it on yourself when you see new people to get the feel of how difficult it can be.



# Lesson 1



Introduce Yourself . . .

## Say Your First and Last Name

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please greet new people and be the first to tell them your first and last names. When you are the first one to introduce yourself and say your first and last names, circle a number.

I introduced myself and said my first and last names:

1            2            3            4            5

1            2            3            4            5



# Lesson 2

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## Smile

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### **Rationale:**

Many of us do not smile enough. This includes me and I am using the lessons to work on this powerful social tool. It is said that a friendly smile knocks down a person's defense and disarms him. Some people do it naturally, but for those who need a reminder, this lesson is for you!

### **Objective:**

To get your students to practice smiling and to smile at others they see on a day-to-day basis. If some are already doing this, that's good. They will just be that much further ahead.

### **Methods:**

Tell the students that a "smile improves your face value." It will seem a little strange, but have them practice smiling at you and at each other. Then have them look at themselves in the mirror and contrast a frown with a smile. Discuss how much more pleasant it is to see them smile. Compliment all on their lovely smiles and let them know that this is the lesson for the week. They will become conscious of smiling until it is second nature.

### **Extra Practice:**

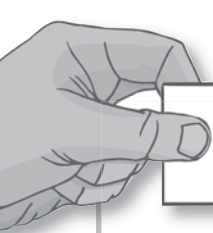
You might stroll down the hallway outside your classroom as a group with smiles on your faces. If some do not show a lot of teeth when they smile, it is ok. As long as they at least turn their lips upward. When you return from the smile stroll, discuss the reactions of others who received the beaming smiles. This should be a fun exercise!

### **Assignment Sheet:**

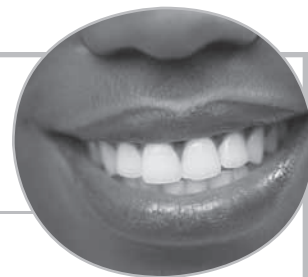
After the fun exercise, pass out the assignment sheet and have them put their names and date on the papers. Instruct the students to smile if they get within 5 feet of a person. They can say hello, but the main idea is to practice the smile alone for the sake of this lesson.

### **Debriefing Session:**

When the group meets again, ask each one to describe who they smiled at, what affect it had, and how they felt. Commend all for their smiling efforts and tell them to keep up the good work.



# Lesson 2



Greetings ...

## Smile

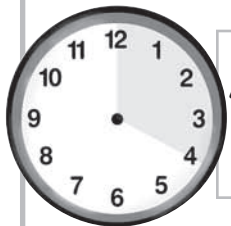
Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Be the first to smile at others in your school, at work and in the community.  
Each time you smile, circle a number below.

1      2      3      4      5

1      2      3      4      5

1      2      3      4      5



**Time  
Allotted:**  
20  
minutes

# Lessons 3-5

## Eye Contact, Shaking Hands, Smiling

### **Rationale:**

The use of these three greetings comes naturally for most of us. However, this is not necessarily so for people with disabilities. For them, it can be almost like trying to pat your forehead and rub your tummy at the same time. So, here we will dissect these skills and then combine them together after the practicing of each.

### **Objective:**

In lesson three, you are going to get the students to make eye contact to the best of their ability. Some find it painful to look people directly in the eye, so do not press the issue if they cannot do it. Teach them to look at the person's tie or chin if that is the best they can do. In lesson four, the students practice the "two pump" handshake. Encourage them to give a medium firm hand-grip and to avoid giving a "floppy fish" hand shake. Finally, in lesson five have them practice putting all of the techniques together to complete the initial greetings.

### **Methods:**

Use the techniques mentioned above to teach each skill separately on different days. Have them practice each skill with you and with each other. Once they have it fairly well, bring in students from nearby classrooms to practice for just a few minutes. The firm handshake might be the most resistant to correction if they do not have this skill already. Emphasize the "two pump" method and that will help encourage the right amount of pressure.

### **Extra Practice:**

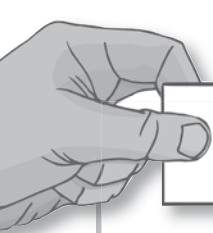
Prearrange visits with administrators in your school and ask them to give students a few minutes to practice with them. You simply line them up outside the administrative office and have them go in one by one to use their newly acquired skills. Ask the person to rate them and commend them on what they did right.

### **Assignment Sheet:**

There is a separate assignment sheet for each skill. Students carry the sheets with them for the week and circle each time they perform the skill. You can break up the assignment sheets into weekly assignments. Do not rush it. It might take several sessions before you get to assignment sheet number five.

### **Debriefing Session:**

Be sure to get back together as a group after each assignment sheet is completed. Commend everyone for their efforts and ask them to talk about their experiences. Be sure that everyone keeps their completed sheets in a three-ring folder. When lesson five is completed, give them all the first certificate of achievement and praise them for it.



# Lesson 3



Greetings ...

## Eye Contact

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

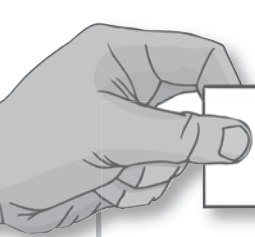
Try using your eye contact methods with other. Each time that you know that you looked at someone, circle a number.

1      2      3      4      5

1      2      3      4      5

1      2      3      4      5





# Lesson 4



Greetings ...

## Shake Hands

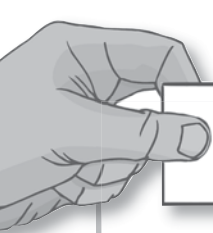
Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Practice shaking hands with “two pumps.” Each time you shake someone’s hand, circle a number below.

1      2      3      4      5

1      2      3      4      5

1      2      3      4      5



# Lesson 5



Greetings . . .

Meet Someone, Shake Hands, Smile,  
Make Eye Contact

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Practice shaking hands with “two pumps.” Each time you shake someone’s hand, circle a number below.

1            2            3            4            5

1            2            3            4            5

1            2            3            4            5

# *Certificate of Achievement*

*This certificate is presented to*

\_\_\_\_\_

## Greetings!

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_