



TBIconneCT Conversation Practice for Families

Having a conversation is a very complex skill and is often affected after a traumatic brain injury (TBI). This resource provides some general tips on practising conversations together after TBI, and a repository of topics you could choose from when practising. We recommend **working with a speech pathologist** to get some more specific tips about what and how to practise.

General Advice for Conversation Practice

- Choose **a time** that works well for both of you. Conversations are harder when you are distracted or tired.
- Pick **a setting** where you will be best able to focus. Distractions from TV, radio or technology can make it harder.
- Gather any **resources** that will support the conversation. Examples include calendar, diary, pen and paper to write down your ideas, photos.
- **If the conversation gets difficult**, you might want to make a note of what happened and what you could try differently next time. This would be great to discuss with your speech pathologist.

Suggested Conversation Topic

General Discussion – Sharing Ideas

- Talk together about a past event that you both enjoyed.
- How was your childhood different to the childhood of today's generation?
- Have a catch-up conversation, with both people focussed on showing interest in what has been happening for the other person.
- Discuss together what you liked and disliked about a holiday you went on in the past.
- Have a chat about your experiences in high school. What were your best memories and your worst memories?
- Have a chat about your experiences in primary / elementary school? What were your best memories and your worst memories?
- What kinds of food did you enjoy when you were younger? How have your tastes changed as you have become older?
- Have a chat about what was happening in your life when you found out about different important news events (e.g., man walking on the moon, 9/11)?

- Have a discussion about the best / most admirable qualities of your kids / parents.
- Have a discussion about how you are similar or different in personality to your parents.
- Would you have enjoyed living in a previous time in history? What do you think would have been good about living during this time period?
- What places have you lived? How do they compare with each other?
- How do you think life will be different in ten years' time?
- Let's say you have a family friend who has just finished high school and is not sure what they should do next regarding work or study. What advice would you offer?
- Have a discussion about the apps you find most useful on your phone.

Structured topics requiring working together

- Work together to come up with a list of events happening in the next 12 months that will be important to your family.
- Work together to come up with a list of situations you are expecting to face in the next four weeks where communication will be important.
- What are three pieces of advice you would give to a person whose partner / child had just had a brain injury?
- What are five good things about living in the country you live in?
- What are five good things about owning a pet?
- What are five good things about playing sport?
- Work together to make a list of activities which you find lift your spirits when you're feeling down and why they help.

Structured topics with some shared decision making

- Talk together about your plans for an upcoming event (e.g., a birthday, a holiday, something you need to fix around the house). Try to discuss it as a team to work out your "game plan".
- Work together to come up with a list of holiday destinations you would like to visit sometime in the next 5-10 years.
- Let's say a family member is passing through your town / city and is staying with you for a day. What would be the best things to show them in your city?
- Let's say that you've won \$2000 from a local travel agent. What kind of trip would you plan to take together?
- Let's say you've won \$2000 from a local hardware store. What kind of home improvement projects would you undertake together?
- Discuss together a plan for a hypothetical dinner party with friends. What would you cook? Who would you invite?

Topics which require effective speaking and listening skills

- Pick a topic that you have some knowledge about (e.g., a holiday destination you have visited, a task you know how to do well, a sport you have experience with). Have a conversation in which you give your communication partner some advice about this topic.
- Ask your communication partner for some advice on a topic that they have some knowledge about.
- Explain to your communication partner something you saw on TV / read about that you think they would find interesting.
- Try to explain something complicated to your communication partner (e.g., a task you need to do at work, or a complicated movie plot).
- Talk to your communication partner about something that happened to you during the day and aim to introduce the context/purpose clearly (e.g., A funny thing happened...; I want your advice about...)

Personal opinion-based topics

- Have a discussion about the pros / cons of living in the city versus living in a more regional area.
- Have a discussion about the pros / cons of taking a holiday in your own country versus taking a holiday overseas.
- Have a discussion about the pros / cons of owning a pet.
- Have a discussion about whether it's better to buy or rent a house these days.
- Do you prefer to take trains or buses for public transport?
- For getting new clothes, is it better to order things over the Internet, or go a physical store?
- Is it better to watch a movie at home or at the cinema?
- What do you think about wearable technology (e.g., Fitbits, Apple watches)? What are the pros and cons?
- What do you think about driverless cars? How would you feel about getting in one?

General opinion-based topics

- What do you think about daylight savings? Should it be adopted by all states?
- Find a topic that is in the news this week and talk together about what you know so far and your opinions on this topic.
- What are the most important things for kids to learn at school?
- How important / beneficial is it to learn a second language?
- How does social media impact on people's lives in a positive / negative way?
- What do you think about our government's response to climate change? Should we be doing more or less?
- Do you agree with the government monitoring everyone's emails / phone calls / online activity in order to prevent terrorism?
- Should the government put a national tax on sugary drinks, in order to prevent obesity?
- Do you think that female sports players should be paid the same amount as male sports players?
- Is it worthwhile for governments to spend so much money on space exploration?
- How important do you think it is these days for kids to stay in school until the end of high school?
- What's your opinion on horse racing? Is it good fun or cruel to the horses?
- Is it still important for kids to have handwriting lessons at school, given they'll mostly use computers when they're older?
- What's the best approach to giving kids pocket money? Should they get any? Should they have to do chores to get it?