

Conversation Starters

Building Meaningful Connections Through Authentic Conversations



Starting conversations can feel intimidating, but meaningful conversations often begin with a simple question. The best conversations are not built by having the perfect questions. People are more likely to remember how interested you were in them than the exact question you asked.

1. First introductions: Start with friendly questions that are easy to answer and help break the ice.

- What brought you to this event today?
- How long have you been part of the Trojan Family?
- What is your role at USC?
- Is this your first time at one of these events?

2. Time-Based Check-Ins: Simple questions about the day or week can help the conversation feel natural.

- Mon–Tue:
 - How was your weekend?
 - Did you do anything fun?
- Wed: How's your week going so far?
- Thu–Fri:
 - Any exciting plans for this weekend?
 - What's been the highlight of your week?



3. Building deeper connections: Once the conversation is flowing, ask questions that invite people to share more about their experiences and perspectives.



- What inspired you to pursue your current career path?
- What do you enjoy most about working at USC?
- What does a typical day look like in your role?
- What's the most rewarding part of what you do?
- Are you involved in any faculty or staff groups on campus?
- What do you wish you'd known when you first started here?

4. Finding common ground: Shared interests are one of the easiest ways to build rapport and keep the conversation going.

- Favorite sport to follow?
- Do you have kids or pets at home?
- What do you like to do outside of work?
- Are you involved in any volunteer work?
- Have you picked up any new hobbies lately?
- Do you participate in any faith groups or causes?

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5. **Recommendations:** People generally enjoy sharing things they genuinely like. Asking for recommendations often leads to engaging conversations and helps uncover shared interests.

- Any restaurant near campus you'd swear by?
- Read anything great recently — book or newsletter?
- Podcasts you're into right now?
- Watched anything worth bingeing lately?
- Apps or tools that have changed how you work?
- Best hidden gem in the city you've found?

Pro tip: After they share a rec, ask "What do you love about it?" — it keeps the conversation flowing and shows genuine interest.



Questions or Want to Learn More?

For more information, contact Julie Chobdee, Associate Director, Health & Well-being Program, at Jchobdee@usc.edu.

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