

SECTION ONE



BEGINNER LEVEL

LESSON TWO

THE SHORT CONVERSATION

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“Whether we seek Friendship, Family, Romance, or Professional Pursuits – Small talk will often be our window into realizing their possibilities!”

THE SHORT CONVERSATION

(An overview)

GOAL: The child will demonstrate the ability to have a Short Conversation with the Conversation Coach or peers four out of five times without the use of the Conversation Stones. In order to successfully achieve a Short Conversation, the child will make Meaningful Eye Contact and will respond to or initiate a Greeting, a Conversation Starter, a Conversation Stopper, and a Farewell.

MATERIALS:

- Conversation Stones
- Dry-erase marker
- Ball

The Short Conversation is the brief, though slightly longer version of the Yellow Conversation. It's what we might typically call chitchat or small talk. Following an initial greeting, one of the conversation partners will likely ask a question. If there is a prior existing relationship, the questions may focus on the family, current social activities, or shared future events. If there is not a prior existing relationship (i.e. talking with someone in a bank line), the questions may focus on the weather or asking how one's day is going. Following a few more questions and comments, one of the conversation partners will indicate that the conversation is about to end (i.e. "Nice seeing you again, I'd better be on my way") and may add a final farewell.

Like the Yellow Conversation, the significance of the Short Conversation cannot be overstated. A child who struggles with this basic conversation may be perceived as rude or socially inept by family, friends, teachers, acquaintances, coaches, etc. In contrast, a child who is successful with the Short Conversation will likely present as a more friendly and outgoing individual.

NOTE:

SPECIAL NEEDS: Many children with special needs should be able to achieve the Short Conversation since the verbal demands are limited. The pattern of initial Greetings, Conversation Starters, Conversation Stoppers, and Farewells are fairly predictable and redundant. As such, the Conversation Coach can develop Conversation Scripts that the child can learn and then use in a variety of settings.

MEANINGFUL EYE CONTACT: Meaningful Eye Contact will continue to be an essential part of this second lesson. In fact, MEC may be a goal that is maintained throughout the use of the *CMC* program depending on the needs of the child.



LESSON TWO

THE SHORT CONVERSATION

INTRODUCTION

Signs to consider in this lesson: hello, goodbye, yellow (for the Yellow Conversation), short (for the Short Conversation), start (for the Conversation Starter), stop (for the Conversation Stopper), question and answer.

In our last lesson, we learned about the Yellow Conversation. What happens in a Yellow Conversation? We have our hellos and our _____. (Children respond). That's right! We have our hellos and our goodbyes. In this next lesson, we are going to learn about the Short Conversation. To do this, we are going to add some new stones to our Conversation Path. One of them is going to be called the Conversation Starter, and the other one will be called the Conversation Stopper. (Place the yellow Hello and Goodbye Conversation Stones on the floor in front of you. Leave enough space for two new stones to be placed in between them. Have the children sit on chairs or on the floor in the shape of a semi circle. Leave yourself enough room to be able to move along the stones or beside them.)

BASIC TRAINING

Here is our Conversation Starter. (Place the Green Conversation Starter stone on the floor after the yellow Hello stone.)

Here is our Conversation Stopper. (Place the Red Conversation Starter stone on the floor between the Green Conversation Starter and the Yellow Goodbye stone.)

Now I am going to show you how I can have a Short Conversation. (Throw the ball to one of the children with stronger language skills, and say "hello." Continue tossing the ball back and forth with the child as you engage in a Short Conversation. You will walk along the Conversation Path as you do this. The child may be sitting in a chair or standing.)

The following is a sample dialogue:

YELLOW STONE	Hi Shannon! (Shannon responds)
GREEN STONE	<p>How are you doing? (Shannon responds, and you may provide a comment or a couple of other questions.)</p> <p>What have you been up to lately? (Shannon responds, and you may provide a comment or a couple of other questions.)</p> <p>How is your family? (Shannon responds, and you may provide a comment or a couple of other questions.)</p>
RED STONE	<p>Well, it's been great seeing you again, but I really must run now! (Shannon responds)</p>
YELLOW STONE	Bye for now. (Shannon responds)

That is a Short Conversation. They are so easy to do, and we can have them almost anywhere. Let's take a look at our stones and find out a bit more about the two new ones.

To begin a conversation, we have our Hellos. (Step on the yellow stone, and sign "hello.")

Then we have our Conversation Starter. We will often start a conversation by asking someone a question. For example, I asked Shannon how she was doing. ***This is one of the BEST questions we can use to start a conversation!*** (Step on the green stone, and sign the words "start" and "question.")

When we are ready to stop our conversation, we will move to our Conversation Stopper. We might say something like "It's been nice talking to you." This lets people know that our conversation is about to end. For example, I said to Shannon "Well, it's been great seeing you again, but I really must run now." That was a Conversation Stopper. (Step on the red stone, and sign the words "stop.")

When we are finished our conversation, we say our Goodbyes. (Step on the final yellow stone, and sign "goodbye.")

Let's take a closer look at our Conversation Starters and Stoppers.

The Conversation Starter is green, because green means "go." Just like when your mom comes up to a green light, she goes, right? So how can we go into our conversation? We can ask people a question! (Pick up the green stone, and draw four quadrants onto it. In the middle of the quadrant, you can either draw a question mark or write the words Conversation Starter. As you are talking, write or draw pictures of the suggestions that you and/or the children provide into the quadrant spaces. For example, with older children, you might write four questions in the quadrants (i.e. "How are you?"). For younger children, you might draw stick men talking to each other with a comment bubble over one of their heads that says, "How are you?"

Four possible Conversation Starters may include the following:

1. Asking how a person is doing (i.e. How have you been?)
2. Talking about the weather (i.e. How are you making out with all of this rain?)
3. Asking about current activities (i.e. What's new with you?)
4. Asking about the family (i.e. How is your family doing?)

The Conversation Stopper is red, because red means "stop." Just like when your mom comes up to a red light, she stops, right? So how can we stop our conversation? (Pick up the red stone, and draw four quadrants onto it. In the middle of the quadrant, you can either draw a stop sign or write the words Conversation Stopper. As you are talking, write or draw pictures of the suggestions that you and/or the children provide into the quadrant spaces. For example, with older children you might write four comments in the quadrants (i.e. "Nice chatting with you."). For younger children, you might draw two stick men with one walking away from the other. Over his head would be a comment bubble that says "Nice talking to you."

Four possible Conversation Stoppers may include:

1. Letting your conversation partner know that you enjoyed talking with him/her (i.e. Nice talking with you!)
2. Wishing them a good day (i.e. Well, I hope you enjoy the rest of your day. I really must run!)
3. Commenting about when you will see them next (i.e. I'll see you later tonight!)
4. Ending a conversation with a family member (i.e. I love you.)

PRACTICE RUN AND ROLE-PLAYS

I am going to let each of you have a turn doing a Short Conversation, but first, let me show you how we can have a Short Conversation with more than one person. (Select two volunteers. You won't use the ball for this role play, but you will keep walking along the Conversation Path as you talk with the two children.)

The following is a sample dialogue:

YELLOW STONE	Hi kids! (Look at both of your volunteers, and wait for them to respond).
GREEN STONE	How are you doing today? (Wait for both of them to give a response. Make appropriate comments, and add questions if considered appropriate).
RED STONE	Well, it's great to see you both! Say hi to your parents from me! (Wait for both of them to give a response).
YELLOW STONE	Bye! (Wait for both of them to give a response).

As you can see, I just had a Short Conversation with two people at the same time! Now it's your turn to practice some Short Conversations. You can look at our Conversation Stones to help you think of what to say. Who would like to start? (Allow each child to have a Short Conversation with someone else in the group.)

HELPFUL HINTS...

1. Words can be written OR pictures can be drawn on the green and red Conversation Stones.
2. Signing is optional but encouraged. You may use it as much or as little as needed to provide visual support for the children as they learn the vocabulary which may include the following words: yellow, hello, goodbye, question, start (for Conversation Starter), stop (for Conversation Stopper).
3. When working in a small group or a classroom setting, look for the children with the stronger language skills to use when introducing the lesson, when initiating new activities or when walking the Conversation Path. For example, when demonstrating the Conversation Path activities, you may notice that some of the children appear to be more shy or reserved in their desire to participate. In this case, allow them to be "the observers" as you select the more confident conversationalists to act as role models. This is also true when you have children who have more significant communication impairments or for those who are second language learners. Allow them the opportunity to observe the more skilled conversationalists before they are asked to practice their conversations on the Conversation Path. When such children start to participate, you may want to walk alongside them to provide verbal support (i.e. modeling) as needed.
4. When stepping on the stones, glance down at them to demonstrate that you are getting information from them. Try to select different examples from the stone quadrants to add variety to the conversation. By this role model, your children will then see that they can do the same thing.
5. Self talk or think out loud as you walk along the stones to model how you are processing your own conversation (i.e. "Let me see. Maybe I'll ask Andrew what he's been up to lately!").
6. In our conversations, we make comments (i.e. "Cool!", "Good for you!", "I'm sorry to hear that.") to show our conversation partner that we are listening. Such comments are not expected at this stage of the program. However, the Conversation Coach should be purposeful in using them and/or acknowledging them when they occur (i.e. "Wow, nice comment, Andrew!").

HELPFUL HINTS *continued...*

7. When engaging in a conversation with a child, remember to make Meaningful Eye Contact with him/her.
8. If you have a child who holds onto the ball and doesn't appear to know what to do with it, you can use gestures (i.e. by putting your hands out or by demonstrating a throw) to indicate that it should be tossed back and forth.
9. If you have a child who talks out of turn when you are speaking, you can simply shake your head and put your finger to your lips as you look at him/her. Then point to the ball and then to yourself as you nod your head to indicate that you are the person who should be talking.
10. If you have a child who responds inappropriately to a question, you can shake your head, look confused and ask the question again. If the child still doesn't know how to respond, you can take a turn with another child with stronger language skills who can then model the appropriate response. Then repeat the activity with the original child. Think of this as a game of charades in that you are using your body to talk and are choosing to use oral language only when necessary. As such, the child is then relying on nonverbal communication (i.e. body language) and on the verbal examples provided on the Conversation Stones.

WRAP UP AND HOMEWORK CHALLENGE

Well, that's it for our lesson on Short Conversations. Now we've learned the Yellow Conversation and the Short Conversation. In our next lesson we will learn about the Looooooooong Conversations. They are the most fun of all! I have three homework challenges for you.

- 1) **I want you to have at least one Short Conversation with someone today.**
- 2) **When you go home tonight, tell your Mom and Dad what we learned about the Short Conversation. Maybe they can tell you some of their favorite Conversation Starters and Conversation Stoppers.**
- 3) **For our next session, I want you to think of two things that you LOVE to talk about. It might be your family, your favorite sport, your hobbies, your favorite video games or anything else that means something special to you.**

KEEP IT FUN

1. **Wall Display:** Extend your wall display by adding a green Conversation Starter stone and a red Conversation Stopper stone to your Conversation Path.
2. **Collage:** Look through the photos you took from your last collage. Talk with the children about which situations would NOT typically allow the Short Conversation (i.e. the library and the hallway). Remove these pictures, and then use the rest to create The Short Conversation Collage. This visual image is a good way for the children to see that talking situations are reduced with the Short Conversation, because there are times when we can't talk out loud.
3. **Sing:** Sing the Hello Song or the Short Conversation Song. The first half of the Short Conversation song is a chorus. It can be fun to sing with the younger children. You can walk along the path as you sing the lyrics which provide examples of things we might say when we're having chitchat. For older children, the lyrics would be spoken rather than sung.

The second half is the Short Conversation Chant. Though you can do the chant with younger children, it is likely that the concepts being trained may be above their level of understanding. As such, it would then be used for listening pleasure only.

The chant can be a valuable educational tool for older children, especially for those who tend to be awkward with their chitchat or small talk. The chant helps the children focus on the two main reasons we tend to have this type of conversation. They are a) when we want to have a chat with people we've just met, and b) when we haven't got much time and we see someone we know. Being aware of the function for chitchat can help some children understand how and when to engage more effectively in their interactions with others.

4. **Worksheets:** **THE SHORT CONVERSATION AND ME** can be done in class or sent home as an assignment. The **HOW TO PRACTICE THE SHORT CONVERSATION AT HOME** sheet can be sent home for additional practice.
5. **Walk the Conversation Path:** Continue having the children practice their Short Conversations on the Conversation Path.
6. **Conversation Recipes and Scripts:** Look for images of people having chitchat, and have the children practice their conversation recipes and scripts.
7. **Think – Pair - Share:** Let the children cut out their own Conversation Starters and Conversation Stoppers with green and red construction paper. They can then think about and write down their favorite questions and comments for engaging in chitchat with others. They can practice their Short Conversations at their desks in pairs. They can then report back to the class about how they did and what information they learned from their conversation partner. Once this activity is done, the children can take their conversation circles home to add to their home wall display, or they can add them to the smaller version of the wall display in their booklet.
8. **Chitchat Shuffle:** This is an easy activity that can be used for a child who has an understanding of how to do chitchat but who tends to be redundant and lacks variety in the things they say. To do this activity, type up examples of various conversational scripts that we tend to use in chitchat, and then cut them into sentence strips. Put the sentence strips face down on the table. Make four category labels entitled: Hellos, Conversation Starters, Conversation Stoppers, and Goodbyes. Have the child turn over the sentence strips, read them out loud and then place them under the category labels that would best represent them.

9. **Dice and Men:** This is an alternative to the Chitchat Shuffle. To do this activity, you will need a generic board game, a dice and some men. Play the game as you normally would by rolling the dice and moving the men in the intended game format. However, when it is the child's turn, ask them to come up with some examples of scripts for the conversational features used in chitchat. For example, if the child rolls a three, you might say "Tell me three ways that we say hello," or "Tell me two of your favorite ways to say goodbye."
10. **Meet 'n Greet:** This is a great activity to start your day if you are teaching in a small group or classroom setting. Have the children get out of their seats and spend about 5 minutes checking in with 3-4 of their peers by having a little chitchat.
11. **Video Modeling:** You can use video modeling (i.e. self) in a structured setting as the children are walking the Conversation Path. You may also choose to do video modeling (i.e. self and others) of chitchat in a more natural environment. Video modeling is a strategy that would be of benefit for children with autism. The goal will be to create a good example of the targeted conversation.
12. **Video Recording:** You can use video recording by taking samples of the children walking the path and then talking about how they did as they review the video clips. The goal of this strategy is to help the children evaluate their performance. Upon viewing the clip, a child may do a self-evaluation. This can be done verbally, or the child may fill out a Conversation Superstar form; which is found in the Supplementary section of the manual. The Conversation Coach may ask the other children to provide feedback as well. This can be done verbally, or the peers may fill out a Three Praises + One To Think About form; which is found in the Supplementary section of the manual. These activities provide multiple opportunities for the children to learn how to give praise that is specific (i.e. stating what was done well) and criticism that is constructive (i.e. stating would could be done to improve one's ability).
13. **Role-Plays:**
 - a. **Pre-select the Demonstration Role-Play**
Choose role-plays that are appropriate to the age of the children and their level of "need to know."
 - b. **Implement the Demonstration Role-Play**
 - The role-play should be done by the adults and should demonstrate what "not to do" in a conversation. Try to practice the role-play before doing it in front of the children so that it can be executed smoothly.
 - When you introduce it to the children say, "*Watch this conversation, and tell me what is wrong with it when we're done.*"
 - c. **Discuss the Demonstration Role-Play**
Once the role-play is finished, ask follow-up questions, and then redo the role-play to see how it could look:
 - *What did Person A do wrong in that conversation?*
 - *What would Person B think about Person A?*
 - *How would you feel if that happened to you?*
 - *What could Person A have done differently?*
 - *How would that have made Person B feel?*

Role-Play (Examples)

The following is a list of some role-plays that could be considered for the Short Conversation Lesson.

These are only examples. They can be modified as best seen fit for the child's age and/or the learning environment:

- a) All age groups: CHILD walks past another student in the school hallway. He greets the other child. The other child returns the greeting. CHILD says, "How are you?" The other child says, "Fine" and walks away. CHILD looks confused.
- b) All age groups: CHILD is on the playground at recess and the bell rings. A student starts to engage in

chitchat with CHILD. CHILD is engaging in the conversation but looks concerned about getting back to class. Other student does not pick up on the nonverbal cues. For older children, this example could be done in the school cafeteria. In both cases, CHILD looks anxious.

- c) All age groups: PARENT comes home after work and attempts to engage in chitchat with the child. Child uses a whining voice as they describe a squabble they just had with a sibling. For older children, they could complain about the fact that they have chores to do. In both cases, PARENT looks frustrated.
- d) Older age group: TEACHER is walking past a student in the hallway. TEACHER greets the student and he responds, "Wassup!" Chitchat continues with a couple more conversational exchanges with the child using language that might be more suitable for peers but not for the teacher. TEACHER looks bewildered.
- e) Older age group: An adult is going through the grocery line. CASHIER greets the adult and asks how their day is going. The adult starts to describe personal topics (i.e. problems with the kids). CASHIER appears uncomfortable with the conversation.

DISCUSSION

1. What one key word would sum up Lesson Two? The word would continue to be CONNECT.

As in Lesson One, you want to develop a connection with the children. You want them to see you as a person of interest; someone with whom they would want to have a conversation.

In Lesson Two, you want the children to connect with the Conversation Path. Walking the path should be an enjoyable activity that the children want to do with you and/or their peers.

In Lesson Two, you want the children to connect with the conversation scripts on the stones; to become familiar with the language so that they can easily remember it and use it in carryover activities.

For some children, eye contact and turn taking may continue to be areas of focus for this lesson and subsequent lessons. This may particularly be the case for some of your children who have autism.

2. What key areas might be focused on in Lesson Two? At this level, the Conversation Coach may choose to focus on many areas depending on the individual needs of the child. In part, they might include the following:
 - a. Improving grammar. The Conversation Coach may be targeting grammar separately from the program, however the concepts may be worked on within the lessons. For example, if a child is working on subject-verb agreement, opportunities may come up naturally as the child is using conversation scripts (i.e. How are you? How is your family doing?).
 - b. Improving syntax. The Conversation Coach may be targeting syntax separately from the program, however the concepts may be worked on within the lessons. For example, if a child is working on using complete simple sentences, they may be encouraged to do so whilst having their conversations on the Conversation Path.
 - c. Improving problem-solving skills. The Conversation Coach may be targeting problem solving separately from the program, however opportunities to work on them will come up naturally within the lessons. For example, if a child is having difficulty navigating through a conversation, the coach can make it into a teachable moment as they consider ways to resolve the problem.
 - d. Increasing awareness for the concepts that surround chitchat. This will be accomplished through group discussions (i.e. Why do we do chitchat? Who do we use it with? When do we use it?).

- e. Increasing the ability to use one Conversation Starter and one Conversation Stopper. This goal might be selected for the child who has limited language skills. For other children, your goal might focus on increasing the ability to use a variety of starters (i.e. How are you doing? What's new? How is your family doing?) and stoppers (i.e. Nice chatting with you! Nice to see you again!). For the more adept conversationalist, the goal may focus on improving the ability to recognize appropriate starters and stoppers based on the conversation partner's relationship with the child. For example, the Conversation Coach may teach the child when it is appropriate to use generic (i.e. How are you?) versus more stylized (i.e. Hows it goin'?) Conversation Starters based on the relationship one has with the conversation partner.
3. Why are the terms "Conversation Starter" and "Conversation Stopper" used? The CMC program aims to use language that is simple and self-explanatory. Start and Stop are self-explanatory.
 4. Why do you walk through the conversation stones? Firstly, movement is fun and a good sensory motor activity for many children. Secondly, the children not only see the beginning and the end of the conversation, they also get a chance to feel what it's like to walk through it! This process involves the following:
 - a. Setting a goal: The children start at the beginning of the path, and their goal is to make it to the end of the path.
 - b. Planning the steps to attain the goal: The individual stones represent the parts that the child will need to complete in order to attain their goal.
 - c. Adapting, negotiating and making decisions along the parts of the path: As the children are walking the path, they are making decisions as they select their scripts. They may also have the opportunity to trouble shoot when they experience difficulties along the way.
 - d. Evaluating the plan: Once the conversation is completed, the child may have the opportunity to do a self-evaluation. This can be done verbally, or the child may fill out a Conversation Superstar form; which is found in the Supplementary section of the manual. The Conversation Coach may ask the peers to provide feedback. These peer-evaluations may be done verbally, or the children may fill out the Three Praises + One To Think About forms; which are also found in the Supplementary section of the manual.



LESSON TWO

TEACHING TOOLS

SHORT CONVERSATION



Illustrations of CMC Color Coded Conversation Path

SHORT CONVERSATION



THE SHORT CONVERSATION AND ME

ANSWER KEY

Short conversations are just a little longer than the Yellow Conversation! They have a Hello, a Conversation **STARTER**, a Conversation **STOPPER**, and a Goodbye.

Places where I may have a Short Conversation:	
EXAMPLES: A NEWSPAPER ROUTE	PASSING SOMEONE ON THE STREET
GROCERY STORE CASHIER	WAITING IN A LINE

SITUATIONS WHERE I MAY HAVE A SHORT CONVERSATION

FILL IN THE BLANK:

When I want to have a **CHAT** with someone I've just **MET**, the Short Conversation is as good as it can get!

Give one example: A new classmate.

When I haven't got much **TIME** and I see someone **I KNOW**, the Short Conversation is just the way to go!

Give one example: Seeing a friend at the mall when I'm late to meet my mom.

Conversation starters that I might use: (Remember they are usually questions about weather, family, current activities or about how someone is doing)	
HOW ARE YOU?	HOW IS YOUR FAMILY?
ARE YOU ENJOYING THE WEATHER?	WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

Conversation stoppers that I might use: (Remember, they are often comments)	
NICE TALKING WITH YOU.	BETTER RUN.
OH, LOOK AT THE TIME!	WELL, I HAVE TO GO.

THIS IS WHAT A SHORT CONVERSATION LOOKS LIKE TO ME!

On the back of this worksheet, draw a picture of what you think of when you imagine a Short Conversation!