

40 Collocations for Communication

This is a free sample lesson from the [Advanced Vocabulary & Collocations Course](#)

Ready for some collocations? Let's expand your vocabulary by learning interesting combinations with the key words comment, conversation, and speech.

There are a lot of adjectives that can describe comments or remarks. Here are some positive ones:



- **constructive comments/remarks** are ones that have a positive effect or help show how to make things better. We often see this in the expression “constructive criticism,” meaning criticism that’s presented in a kind way in order to help improve
- **incisive comments/remarks** are ones that are clear and sharp, that directly communicate the reality of the situation
- **perceptive comments/remarks** are ones that show good insight and understanding
- **witty comments/remarks** are clever and funny

On the negative side, we have:

- **pointed/cutting comments/remarks**, ones that are “sharp” and hurt others’ feelings



- **scathing comments/remarks**, ones that communicate very harsh and intense criticism
- **derogatory/disparaging comments/remarks**, ones that communicate strong disrespect in a nasty way
- **obscene/vulgar comments/remarks**, ones that are offensive to common standards of decency, such as talking explicitly about sex

Sometimes comments are clear, and other times they are **cryptic**, which is the opposite – cryptic comments are mysterious and hard to understand or interpret.



A **provocative comment** is one that produces a reaction in people – this may be positive, inspiring thought or action, or it may be negative, producing controversy or anger.

Reporters often ask famous people for their opinions on issues, and the celebrity might **decline to comment** (meaning politely say they will not comment). Other times, they might make an **off-the-cuff comment**, meaning one that is informal, spontaneous, not planned or prepared.

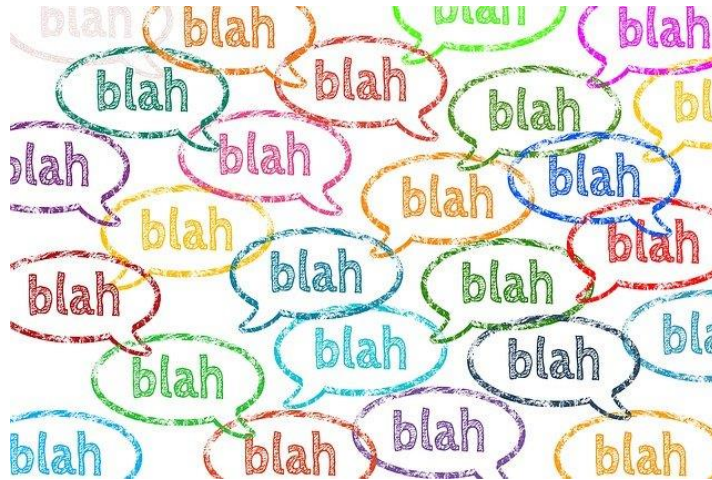
Let's turn our attention to conversation. When we're participating in a conversation, we can say we're **engaged in conversation**. If the conversation is intense and we're really focused on it, then we're **deep in conversation**.



We can have an **animated conversation**, one that is full of energy, emotion, and often gestures. The opposite would be a **hushed conversation**, one that is done in quiet voices, often because we don't want other people to **overhear our conversation** – accidentally listen to it.



A **fascinating/stimulating conversation** is one that holds our interest and we enjoy paying attention to it. However, if it's an **endless conversation** – one that seems to continue on forever – we might eventually get tired of it. It's also unpleasant if one person or one topic tends to **dominate the conversation**, meaning control it and take up all the time.



When we're in a place where we don't know anyone, we can try to **strike up a conversation** (start a conversation) with someone new. This will probably be **polite conversation** – friendly and civilized.

Sometimes it's hard to keep a conversation going with someone we don't know, and there might be a **lull in the conversation**, meaning a natural pause. Some people are very uncomfortable in social situations, and these folks might have **halting/stilted conversations**, meaning ones that have a lot of unnatural pauses and awkward moments.

How about the word "speech"? Someone might give an **acceptance speech** when receiving an award, a prize, a promotion or new role, etc. There's also a **farewell speech** when someone is saying goodbye or leaving a place or position.

At a conference or event, the main speech is often called the **keynote** and the person who gives it is the **keynote speaker**. Those things are planned far in advance.



On the other hand, an **impromptu speech** is given spontaneously. For example, you might stand up and give an impromptu speech at your friend's wedding – you hadn't planned it ahead of time, but you felt inspired in the moment to address the group.

An **eloquent speech** is one that uses words very effectively. Someone could also give an **impassioned speech** meaning the speaker has a lot of emotion, or a **rousing/stirring speech** meaning the speech inspires emotion or action in the listeners.



Unfortunately, sometimes the speaker is **long-winded**, meaning he or she talks too long, and the speech seems **interminable** – like it will never end.

Those expressions were referring to more formal speeches, but the word speech is also used to describe someone's manner of speaking in general. If someone's

speech is slurred, it means they're not pronouncing things clearly and it's hard to understand. Drunk people often have slurred speech.



Some people are born with a **speech impediment/impairment**, meaning they naturally have problems speaking clearly, often the result of some medical issue. Often with therapy, they can learn to **speak coherently/intelligibly** (clearly/understandably).

The verb “speak” collocates with many adverbs, such as:

- **speak warmly/fondly**, meaning to speak with nice, pleasant, positive emotions about something. I speak fondly about the dog my family had when I was a child.



- **speaking authoritatively**, meaning to speak in a powerful, reliable way, with authority. My friend is an experienced lawyer, so she can speak authoritatively about the law.
- **speaking hesitantly**, meaning you speak with hesitation, maybe because you are reluctant to share your opinion, or you're worried about the other person's reaction.
- **speaking earnestly**, meaning you're sincere, honest, and serious about the topic.

And of course “speak fluently,” which is what you’re learning to do more and more inside this course! I hope you’re finding it helpful. Remember, it’s essential to practice as well, so go ahead and try the quiz for today’s lesson.

Review & Practice Pronunciation

constructive comments/remarks	have a positive effect or help show how to make things better
incisive comments/remarks	are clear and sharp, communicate the reality of the situation
perceptive comments/remarks	show good insight/understanding
witty comments/remarks	are clever and funny
pointed/cutting comments/remarks	are "sharp" and hurt others' feelings
scathing comments/remarks	very harsh and intense criticism
derogatory/disparaging comments/remarks	show strong disrespect in a nasty way
obscene/vulgar comments/remarks	are offensive to common standards of decency
cryptic comments	mysterious and hard to interpret
provocative comment	produces a reaction in people (positive, negative, or controversial)
decline to comment	politely say you will not comment
an off-the-cuff comment	one that's informal, spontaneous, not prepared
engaged in conversation	participating in conversation

deep in conversation	VERY focused and involved in conversation
an animated conversation	full of energy, emotion, gestures
a hushed conversation	in quiet voices
overhear a conversation	accidentally listen to it
a fascinating/stimulating conversation	holds our interest and we enjoy paying attention
an endless conversation	seems to continue forever and we get tired of it
dominate the conversation	control it and take up all the time
strike up a conversation	start a conversation
polite conversation	friendly and civilized conversation
a lull in the conversation	a natural pause
halting/stilted conversations	have a lot of unnatural pauses and awkward moments
an acceptance speech	given when receiving an award, prize, promotion, etc.
a farewell speech	given when saying goodbye or leaving a position
keynote	main speech at a conference or event
an impromptu speech	given spontaneously
an eloquent speech	uses words very effectively
an impassioned speech	speaker has a lot of emotion
a rousing/stirring speech	inspires emotion or action in listeners
a long-winded speaker	talks too long
an interminable speech	feels like it will never end (negative connotation)
speech is slurred	not pronouncing things clearly
a speech impediment/impairment	problems speaking clearly due to a medical issue
speak coherently/intelligibly	speak clearly/understandably
speak warmly/fondly	with nice, pleasant, positive emotions
speak authoritatively	in a powerful, reliable way, with authority
speak hesitantly	speak with reluctance; wait to speak because you're nervous
speak earnestly	speak sincerely, honestly, seriously

Quiz – Lesson 8

Complete each sentence with a word from the box.

declined	engaged	interminable	stilted
derogatory	hesitantly	off-the-cuff	stimulating
dominate	hushed	pointed	struck up
earnestly	incisive	rousing	witty

1. Even when my husband's co-workers get together socially, issues from their job often _____ the conversation.
2. He was fired after making racist and _____ comments about his co-workers from other countries.
3. I _____ a conversation with the couple sitting next to me on the train, and we chatted the whole ride.
4. We had a _____ conversation on the airplane while everyone else was sleeping.
5. I'll talk to him later - I don't want to interrupt him while he's _____ in conversation.
6. In the last part of the movie, the general gives a _____ speech to his soldiers.
7. I've had a few _____ conversations lately that have really sparked some new ideas.
8. John tried to make a _____ remark to defuse the tense situations, but nobody laughed.

9. Most of the conference attendees didn't fill out the survey, but a few made _____ comments that really showed us how to improve next year's event.
10. My daughter is a vegetarian and speaks _____ about the importance of treating animals well.
11. Nowadays you have to be careful even when making _____ comments, because someone might film you and post it online.
12. The staff pressed the manager for details about the upcoming company reorganization, but she _____ to comment.
13. Ugh, I hate sitting meetings all day listening to my bosses' _____ debates about what to do.
14. When asked, I spoke _____ about my plans for next year since I hadn't completely committed to them yet.
15. I still remember that _____ conversation when my ex-boyfriend said he no longer had feelings for me, after we'd just moved in together.
16. My parents always say nice things about me - except for a couple _____ remarks about how I never could keep my room clean.

Writing Exercises

Teacher feedback available in the [Advanced Vocabulary & Collocations Course](#)

1. Talk about a time you gave or received constructive criticism.



2. Describe a perceptive comment you recently heard or read.
3. Write about a time someone made a cutting or scathing remark to you.
How did you react?
4. The last time you were deep in conversation, who were you talking to and what was the topic?
5. Have you ever overheard an interesting or funny conversation? What was it about?
6. When you're with your family or friends, what topics tend to dominate the conversation?
7. When's the last time you struck up a conversation with a stranger?
8. If you were invited to be the keynote speaker at an event, what would you speak about?
9. What's the best way to get out of a conversation with someone who's long-winded?
10. What's something you often speak warmly about?

Quiz Answers – Lesson 8

1. dominate
2. derogatory
3. struck up
4. hushed
5. engaged
6. rousing
7. stimulating
8. witty
9. incisive
10. earnestly
11. off-the-cuff
12. declined
13. interminable
14. hesitantly
15. stilted
16. pointed

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