



Social language at conferences and trade fairs

Roleplay the following stages of meeting someone at a conference:

1. Naturally start a conversation with someone nearby
2. Bump into each other later in the same conference and introduce other people
3. Arrange contact after the conference
4. Contact them that way

What phrases could you use in each of the situations above?

How realistic were those roleplays? What other conversations are common before and after conference sessions? Would any of these be in your list of the most common?

Talking to someone who you expected to be there

Talking to someone who you didn't expect to be there

Talking to someone who you haven't seen for a long time

Talking to someone who you've had contact with but never met face to face

Talking to someone who you've never met but whose organisation you know about

Talking to someone whose position or organisation you have never heard of

Not being sure if you've met someone before or not

Remembering you've had contact before, but not remembering the details

Introducing people

Offering to put the person who you are speaking to in contact with someone else

Commenting on the workshops/ presentations/ sessions

Mentioning other conferences/ trade shows

Starting a conversation with the person next to you

Talking about accommodation

Talking about food and drink

Talking about people and places that you both know or know about

Talking about the other people there

Talking about the venue and surroundings

Brainstorm useful phrases for the relevant functions above, then compare with below.

Someone who you expected to be there – “I thought you might be here.” “I thought this would be your kind of thing.”

Someone who you didn't expect to be there – “This is a nice surprise.” “I didn't know you were interested in.../ in the area.”

Haven't met for ages – “It's been ages.” “How long has it been?” “Almost didn't recognise you.” “How have you been?” “What have you been up to?”

Someone who you've had contact with – “It's so nice to finally meet you.” “I was hoping you'd be here.” “I was looking forward to meeting you.”

You know their organisation – “Your company is quite known (in...)”

Something you've never heard of – “I'm afraid I don't know much about...” “... is not really my area.” “It sounds like quite a big company. I'm surprised I've never heard of it.”

Not sure if you've met – “Have we met before?” “Were you at...?”

Remembering contact, but no details – “I recognise your face, but...”

Introducing people – “May I introduce my colleague...?” “I'd like to introduce you to...” “You really should talk to..., he's just over there.”

Putting people in contact – “If you're interested, I could give you his number.”

Commenting on the sessions – “It was quite heavy, wasn't it?” “It wasn't quite what I expected (but in a good way).”

Mentioning other conferences – “Did you come to the same thing last year?”

Starting a conversation – “Is anyone sitting here?” “I noticed that your name tag says...” “I see you are holding...” “Is this the right place for...?”

Talking about accommodation – “Where are you staying?” “Did you manage to get a room in this hotel?” “Are you staying at the... (again)?”

Talking about food and drink – “What's the coffee like?”

Talking about things you both know – “Oslo? I was there a few weeks ago.” “You must know my colleague...” “Pass on my (best) regards to...” “Say 'hi' to... (from me).”

Talking about the other people there – “I'm here with a few colleagues.” “I've noticed quite a few people here from your company/ field/ country.”

Mentioning surroundings – “Nice place, isn't it?” “Had a chance to explore?”

Work together to think of good responses to the following phrases.

“I thought you might be here.”

“This is a nice surprise.”

“Long time no see.”

“It’s so nice to finally meet you.”

“It sounds like quite a big company. I’m surprised I’ve never heard of it.”

“Have we met before?”

“You really should talk to..., he’s just over there.”

“If you’re interested, I could give you his number.”

“It wasn’t quite what I expected (but in a good way).”

“Did you come to the same thing last year?”

“Is anyone sitting here?”

“Where are you staying?”

“What’s the coffee like?”

“Oslo? I was there on holiday just a few weeks ago.”

“Nice place, isn’t it?”

Do any of your responses follow the structure answer + add some more information + ask a question back? If not, would that structure make any of your responses better?

Roleplay longer conversations starting with those phrases and responses.