

Politely change the subject



When the conversation turns political, religious, too personal or controversial, or it just seems to go on forever, here's how to change the topic without offending others:

Bite your tongue. No doubt, the easiest thing to do is say "I don't want to talk about this." While that may work with close friends or family members, it won't go over well in a professional setting.

Use questions wisely. First, find out a bit of backstory. For example, say "What got you so interested in?" From there, you can ask additional questions that segue into a new topic.

Acknowledge their points. An empathetic statement, such as "I can relate" or "I understand where you're coming from" can defuse a heated discussion. Then you can change the conversation by saying "That just made me think about ..." and move to a new subject.

Build on one point. Isolate an idea and take the conversation in a different direction. For example, if during a long-winded discussion about a business trip, the person mentions a town you've visited, you can say "I've been there. I loved ... Where else have you traveled?"

Blame your faulty memory. Wait for a pause, and then say "I just thought of something. Before I forget ..." and then bring up a different topic.

Return to a prior topic. Say: "You know something you said earlier about _____ intrigues me. Can you tell me more?" You keep the focus on the other person, but move to a topic that interests you.

Compliment the person. Simply say something like "That's a great watch" or "Where did you get those earrings?" or "I saw your presentation last week. Wow."

Excuse yourself. If all else fails, excuse yourself to go to the restroom, grab a drink or do some other short task. When you come back, you can start a new conversation.

—Adapted from ["How to Change Topics Mid-Conversation,"](#) Lisa B. Marshall, www.quickanddirtytips.com.