

7 ways to politely shut down a conversation

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Lately, I've been working through the challenges of juggling several large life events, as well as handling a full workload. I sold a house, bought a house, renovated a house, and now I'm moving from one place to another. Needless to say, my time, and my attention p, is limited. Usually, I'm up for a lively conversation with friends but more often than not, recently I have to cut it short and get back to work.

My choice comes down to two options: continue talking and suffer the stress of knowing I have many other tasks to accomplish today, or end the chat without offending or rejecting anyone.

The good news is that it is perfectly acceptable to limit your social interactions while at work. If you do it correctly, people will understand that you are not cutting them out of your life. You want to talk to them, but you do have to prioritize in order to get things done. Here are a few tips that can help.

1. Give visual signals.

When someone approaches you, pause but not for too long. Keep on working. Most people will get the message that you are busy. Another approach is to use headphones to give a visual signal that you are trying to concentrate. This may prevent others from interrupting you in the first place. If you work in an office setting, put up a " Please Do Not Disturb" sign on your door.

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2. Excuse yourself.

Listen for a brief time to be polite, then simply say, “ Excuse me, I’d love to talk more, but I have a deadline to attend to.” If they continue the conversation anyway, you respond firmly with, “ Let’s set up a time to talk later.”

3. Set an appointment.

You don’t want to risk offending someone with whom you are trying to establish a relationship, so if you are too busy at the moment to chat, suggest finding another time, like lunch or drinks after hours, that will work for the both of you. They will appreciate your acknowledgement of them and you’ll both look forward to a relaxed time together.

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4. Listen with distraction.

When someone really wants to talk and doesn’t get the message that you’re super busy, listen with one ear without fully engaging. Offer little feedback, or one-word answers, while distractedly looking back at your desk or at the project at hand. After a few minutes, excuse yourself by saying something like, “ I’m sorry. I’d really like to give you my full attention but I have to finish up before the end of the day.”

Offer an apologetic smile as you say it, or use a smiley emoticon if you’re dashing off a quick email or text message.

5. The 'pass off.'

When you are trapped in a rambling conversation, pull in another person to join you if possible. Introduce the topic to the new person, and once the other two get a conversation going, politely excuse yourself and don't look back.

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6. Claim a previous engagement.

As a last-ditch maneuver, you can always blame a pressing engagement, such as a promised phone call or a scheduled appointment, and use that excuse to break off the conversation. While I'm a proponent of being honest, other commitments can help salvage your precious time from those who simply don't get the message.

7. Do unto others.

When your workload slows down, you might find yourself in the situation where you want to raise some friendly conversation, but others are busy. Be as respectful of their time as you want them to be of yours.

When working with others, you must maintain a balance between a friendly atmosphere and getting the work done. With respect and consideration, you can create a congenial and productive work environment.