Conversation Techniques

Here are some conversation techniques that help us to effectively communicate with others. Some may think these are tricks, but they are techniques commonly used by everyone. They are used in everyday conversation and there's no shame in using them.

1. The thing that most people want to hear in a conversation is their own voice. You can use this to your advantage by asking opinion type questions. Leave the other person a way to elaborate. After you ask, shut up and listen. If you keep talking, and do not allow the other party to answer, you will be seen as rude. Ask open-ended questions. They can make you a hero. An example:

   "How do you feel about..?  
   What is your thinking on....?,  
   Do you believe that..?"

These are questions that can't be answered with a "yes" or a "no".

2. Be direct and look the other person in the eye while you talk. Avoiding eye contact may cause what you say to be taken as untruthful. Recount or reflect what the other person says. When you reflect, you take part of what the other person said, and repeat it with the "do you mean...?", or the "are you saying..." in front of it. Things like "Oh?", "Really?", and "You don't say" also make some one elaborate on what they have said, but are not reflective. Don't say "Oh, really"? That infers that you don't believe the speaker and it requires him to try to convince you. Of course, that's okay, if that is your intent.

3. Listen for concepts and don't concentrate on facts. Facts are there to back up the concepts. Ask yourself "What is this person telling me"? I went to college years ago and because no one ever told me this, I made lots of totally useless notes with all sorts of facts. To practice this, listen to speeches and you may find that the speaker had no concepts at all!

4. Try to use your thought speed to mentally recap what is being said. You think more than 4-times faster than a speaker will be speaking. Don't waste that thought speed on anything else. Know that whatever you say, the facts are that after a conversation, the listener will only retain something like 50% of it. And after 48-hours, he will have retained only 25% of what he heard. Also note that because the backgrounds (histories) are not the same from speaker-to-listener, we cannot get 100% of the information transferred between two people. There is always a big loss.

5. Pauses in conversation usually will cause the other person to speak. They will do so because the other person feels awkward and unnatural if you stop saying anything. This
technique will cause the person to expand on what he has said or sometimes to recant or rephrase his statement. This is a very powerful tool of conversation. And, if you are in control of the conversation, you can make the pause as long as is necessary. You will also see when someone is using pauses on you.

6. Conversational skills can be gauged by how you read the body language of the other person. While you listen to them, watch them. Sometimes they say one thing and really are feeling something quite different. It takes a lot of practice to be good at this. Look for the topics "body language" and "nonverbal communication" to learn more about them.