Searching for something to say? People tend to get nervous when they have to talk to someone they don't know very well. But here's a secret: The person you're talking to doesn't know you well, either, so you're probably both feeling nervous. How do you handle the situation? Easy. Start off with a basic question, like, "What do you do for a living?" If you then really listen to the person's answer, you'll easily find an opening for a follow-up question.

"What do you do for a living?"

"I just graduated college. I've been applying for jobs in marketing."

"Is that what you studied?" (There's the follow-up question. So easy.)

"No, I was a studio art major, actually. But I want to put my art skills to work at an advertising agency or something like that."

"Really? I have a friend who's working with JMP. Did you try applying there?"

"Yeah, I did, but they aren't hiring right now. So what do you do for work?"

Once you start talking to someone, all you really have to do is listen. By doing this, you're

actually telling this person a lot of positive things about yourself. For one thing, you're letting them see that you're interested. And by learning more about the other person (usually the goal in the first place), you're demonstrating that you aren't completely self-absorbed. Finally, you're showing that you're confident enough to talk to people you don't know without losing an ounce of your poise, wit and charm.