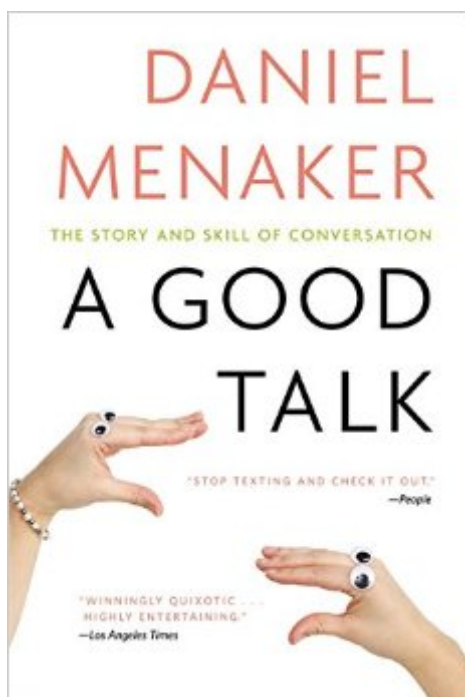


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# A Good Talk: The Story And Skill Of Conversation



## Synopsis

A GOOD TALK is an analysis of and guide to that most exclusively human of all activities-- conversation. Drawing on over forty years of experience in American letters, Menaker pinpoints the factors that drive and enliven every good conversation: the vagaries (and joys) of subtext; the deeper structure and meaning of conversational flow; the subliminal signals that guide our disclosures and confessions; and the countless other hurdles we must clear along the way. Moving beyond self-help musings and "how to" advice, he has created a stylish, funny, and surprising book: a celebration of "the most exclusively human of all activities." In a time when conversation remains deeply important-- for building relationships, for relaxing, even for figuring out who we are-- and also increasingly imperiled (with Blackberries and texting increasingly in vogue), A GOOD TALK is a refreshing celebration of the subtle adventures of a good conversation.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.1 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (33 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

A stranger in an airplane sparked a conversation with me the other day. Rather than the usual awkward seatmate dialogue, we ended up having a good conversation. He told me about his time in Iraq and playing craps in Vegas. I told him about my visit to Laos, where he would be stationed next. Although our half-hour exchange may have felt like little more than a way to pass time, we were actually discovering connections, establishing common ground, and taking on roles. I didn't realize this until about a week later, when I read "A Good Talk: The Story and Skill of Conversation, former New Yorker editor Daniel Menaker's latest book." In his seven-chapter discourse on conversation,

Menaker explains the evolution, mechanics, and benefits of human conversation. His entertaining new read offers a fresh perspective on how and why conversations play significant roles in our lives. Inside the Book Menaker has a tendency to elaborate and digress. He shows this habit right from the beginning, with 22 pages of opening remarks. In his wordy, amusing style, he speculates on the origin and evolution of conversation. He makes points about the essence of conversation by referring to various social science studies. You leave those opening remarks with a clearer sense of why conversation is hard to study, what makes it unique, and where it probably came from. You also feel like Menaker has talked to you, a theme that continues throughout the book. Next, Menaker explores the history of conversation, from Socrates to talk shows. He goes on to break down the components of a conversation, using a long transcribed conversation between himself and an acquaintance as a case study.

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