

Verbs related to talking



Synonyms are words that have a similar meaning and might be used instead of each other. The verbs **agree**, **debate**, **argue**, **approve**, **address**, **chat**, **discuss**, **speak**, **tell** and **say** are all synonyms for the verb **talk**.

DEFINITIONS



Agree: to say 'yes'. Or to accept a plan, request, etc.

Debate: to discuss something, especially formally, before making a decision or finding a solution.

Argue: to speak angrily to somebody because you disagree with them.

Approve: to agree to a plan, proposal, request, etc. Or to say that something is good enough to be used, or is correct.

Address: to make a formal speech to a group of people. Or to say something directly to somebody.

Chat: to talk in a friendly informal way to somebody.

Discuss: to talk about something with other people, especially in order to decide something. Or to talk about something in detail, showing the different ideas and opinions about it.



WHICH WORD?



Speak / Talk

Speak and *talk* have similar meanings.

Talk is more common in spoken English and usually suggests that two or more people are having a conversation or discussing something:

E.g. We *talked* on the phone for nearly an hour.

Talk with is more formal than *Talk to* in *BrE*, but it is very general in *AmE*.

Speak is a little more formal and suggests that someone is using their voice or that one person is saying something to a group:

E.g. I was so shocked I couldn't *speak*.

Speak with is a little more formal than *Speak to* in *BrE*.

Note:

When a noun follows *speak*, it must be a language:

E.g. He *speaks* Italian.

Talk can be followed by nouns such as *business* or *sense*.

WHICH WORD?



Say / Tell

Say never has a person as the **object**. You say something or say something to somebody. *Say* is often used when you are giving somebody's exact words:

E.g. 'Sit down', she *said*.

Say can also be used with a clause when the person you are talking to is not mentioned:

E.g. She didn't *say* what she intended to do.

Tell usually has a person as the **object** and often has two objects:

E.g. Have you *told* him the news yet?

Tell is used when somebody is giving facts or information, often with **what**, **where**, etc:

E.g. Can you *tell* me when the movie starts?

Tell is also used when you are giving somebody instructions:

E.g. The doctor *told* me to stay in bed.

EXERCISES



A. Fill in: *agree, debate, argue, chat, or discuss.*

1. I'm not prepared to _____ this on the phone.

2. What were you _____ about?

3. I don't want to _____ with you - just do it!

4. The question of the origin of the universe is still hotly _____
by scientists.

5. I asked for a pay rise and he _____.

B. Fill in: *speak, talk, say or tell.*

1. The President refused to _____ to the waiting journalists.

2. I saw her in the street but we didn't _____.

3. When they get together, all they _____ about is football.

4. Did she _____ you her name?

5. That's a terrible thing to _____.

Answer keys:

1. discuss
2. chatting
3. argue
4. debated
5. agreed

1. speak
2. speak
3. talk
4. tell
5. say