



Let's create the scenario. You're on a cruise by yourself or with a travel pal, both hoping to meet someone new and interesting. Tonight you're all spiffed up and looking your absolute best for the main dress-up dinner, so this may be your opportunity.

You're assigned to a table of ten, and you're in luck. The person sitting next to you is very good-looking, about your age, so you cleverly come up with sparkling questions, all great conversation starters.

1. Is this your first cruise? This can get some reaction, especially if that person is actually on a first cruise. You can now reveal all of your great knowledge of cruising. Even if this is your first cruise, too, you've studied up so you can be an authority on features of the ship, entertainment schedule, spa, pool, best places for food and booze, and which shore excursion is the very best.

2. What's your hometown? Whatever town your soon-to-be-friend names, you have something pleasant to say about it. For example: Oh, so you're from Lancaster, Pa. I've been there many times. Love the pretzels and family-style restaurants. New York City? I go there every year for the Rockettes show at Radio City. If the answer is Newark or Cleveland, you'll have to think hard, but clever you will come up with something nice to say about any hometown.

3. Do you have a family? If the answer includes five kids, find a polite way to turn your attention to a dinner companion on your other side or across the table. Maybe that person will suddenly become much better looking and more interesting.

4. What kind of work do you do? When you're told, try to be as pleasant as you can. Example: So, you're a teacher. That must be the most satisfying profession in the world. Or, you're a certified public accountant. I've always admired someone who's an expert on numbers. You can try a bit of humor and teasing on some vocations. Example: So, you're in law enforcement. What do I have to do to get you to arrest (handcuff) me?

5. Are you enjoying the cruise? This could be your chance to empathize with whatever the person says. If the answer is no, accompanied by complaints, you can say you've had the same experiences. For example: Oh, I agree. That show they put on last night was terrible. I'm a better dancer than anyone in that chorus line. And the jokes must have come out of an old Milton Berle TV show script.

6. The absolute, resolute final question: If all goes well with your conversation, and that person sitting next to you looks better all the time, maybe the last question you ask will be: After dinner, would you like to join me at midnight for a drink and stroll around the deck? And then ... the rest is up to you.