

THE ART OF CONVERSATION

IDENTIFICATION

THE PARALLEL CODE

To make conversation with a fellow of the craft you must first identify them. For this some things have been agreed to be held as standard practice.

A fellow of the Cant will when available for conversation and work, identify themselves by displaying two parallel bands on the body.

This may be a tattoo or a piece of jewellery. The position signifies the type of work.

STANDARD MARKINGS

Position	Craft
Left Ear	Con Artist
Right Ear	Secure Messenger
Right Eye	Lookout
Neck	Assassination
Right Bicep	Smuggling
Left Bicep	Forgery
Right Wrist	Intimidation
Left Wrist	Fencing
Left Thumb	Bribery
Left Index	Trap finding
Left Middle	Lock picking
Left Ring	Kidnapping
Left Pinky	Interrogation
Right Thumb	Persuasion
Right Index	Pickpocket
Right Middle	General work
Right Ring	Information broker
Right Pinky	Burglary
Left Ankle	Stalking

CONVERSATION

Identifying a contact is one thing, discussing their craft in public is quite another, and so The Cant offers a standard way of making conversation in front of unsuspecting individuals.

Broaching conversation with a fellow is deliberately misleading and so, without knowing the code, the information will seem mundane and boring to overhear.

When approaching you should always act as though you are familiar with the person. If they reciprocate this familiarity then it shows an acceptance of the conversation. How you begin the conversation shows your intent.

INTRODUCTIONS

Key Word	Meaning
Eyes	Request for sanctuary
See/Seen	Warning to lay low
Trouble	I'd like to hire you

EXAMPLE

"Aren't you a sight for sore eyes!" which would be a request for the fellow you are speaking with to provide you with sanctuary.

TIMELINE

Once the greeting is exchanged and the other party has responded familiarly you will know they are indeed a tradesman. It's best that they know the timeline of the job and to do this you should specify the time since you last seen this person. The key words are not required but a general expression of the urgency.

Time	Timeline
Weeks	Low urgency
Months	Medium urgency
Years	High urgency
Forever	Immediate

Not all fellows get along, in this business rivalries and enemies can be formed as easily as allies. It is always wise to establish from both sides if you are working alone or on behalf of an organisation.

You can find this out by enquiring how each other has been. The responses should either mention you being alone or part of a group. Depending on your game world you may also add specific words to highlight an organisation.

EXAMPLE

PC How have you been?

NPC I'm well, surrounded by family which is always a good place to be. You?

In this case the key words are surrounded, signifying an organisation and family which is an organisation within my world.

DIFFICULTY

Not all jobs are equal in difficulty, be that the challenge or danger involved but this is in the hands of the fellow being hired, if they wish to know they will enquire after someone's health. the level of health relates to the difficulty.

Difficulty	Health
Easy	Good health
Medium	Bad health
Hard	Dead or dying
Unknown	Uncertain

PAYMENT

If there's one thing most fellows share it's the love of coin for their work but discussions of coin tend to gather attention, yet every job has a price.

Conversation should be brought around to something that involves numbers and family.

The connection to you signifies the currency to be discussed and the number a multiple of 100.

Value	Relation
Copper	Parent
Silver	Sibling
Gold	Child
Platinum	Grandchild

HAGGLING

Note that you can still haggle in this way if questions are left open but if the question is closed off then the price is set.

ENDING THE CONVERSATION

Once a price is agreed the conversation should move to discussion of a location.

In this way the details can be discussed in private. Either part may suggest a location but most commonly you will be new to the area and the person you are speaking with will know a more suitable place.

This will simply be them ending the conversation and suggesting a future meeting place.

EXAMPLE CONVERSATION

DM: As you enter the tavern the warmth of the room hits you, a welcome warmth in contrast to the cold miserable night outside. You see a small and inviting fire burning and by it a cloaked figure. You notice a necklace of two parallel woven leather bands around their neck. You know from your time in the underworld this is an assassin for hire and luckily you have just the job for them.

See if you can follow the flow of conversation and think, if you were a fellow PC in this party who has no knowledge of Thieves' Cant or a commoner in the bar, would you know what was being discussed?

PC There's trouble!

NPC It's been too long my friend, far too long. Come share a drink with me.

PC Gladly. It must be what? A few months since Torlay? How have you been?

NPC Indeed, I am well my friend. Surrounded by family which is always a good place to be. You?

PC I'm just passing through with some companions

NPC Have you seen Faramore lately? How's their health?

PC Faramore has been a little unwell lately but nothing to worry about.

NPC How old is his son these days? Six?

PC No I think he must be five.

NPC Definitely six, I'm sure of it.

PC You're probably right, he must be six.

NPC I'm sorry I have to run, I am running a card game later tonight. Do you know the Tollmans Tavern?

PC It's at the other end of town isn't it? I've not been in yet.

NPC Well come along tonight, around seven and I'll introduce you.

PC I'd love to, I'll see you there. Take care.

So during this the PC has established that they wish to hire the NPC for a job, it is non-urgent and will be of medium difficulty. The NPC asks for 600GP, the PC tries to haggle to 500GP but the NPC stays firm at 600GP. This 600GP is agreed and they set a meeting for seven tonight to discuss the details in privacy at the Tollmans Tavern.

CHIT-CHAT

It is not always convenient or possible to wait until a meeting point can be arranged to discuss the details of a situation, this is why Chit-Chat was created. For fellows to talk in seemingly gibberish while in front of non-fellows yet have a full and detailed conversation.

Chit-Chat is the simplest of codes in that it is a swapping of the meaning of one word to another but it does involve the fellow having memorised a large repertoire of these.

PEOPLE

Relation	Meaning
Mother	Guild Leader
Father	Direct Superior
Grandmother	Queen
Grandfather	King
Uncle	Royal Advisor
Brother	A member of the guild
Children	A member of family
Cousin	Rival guild
Visitor	Target
Guest	Someone on the inside

ANIMALS

Animal	Meaning
Cow	Your companion
Bird	My companion
Sheep	Targets companions
Ducks	An outside party

PLACES

Place	Meaning
Home	This town/city
Coast	Another town/city
Mountains	Royal palace
Fields	Local noble's home
Hills	Jail

EVENTS

Event	Meaning
Ball	Assassination
Grand Ball	Multiple Assassination
Garden Party	Smuggling
Dance	Lookout
Suprise Party	Kidnapping
Farm	Burglury

DISTANCE

Distance	Meaning
Other side of town	Copper
Outside	Silver
Over there	Gold
Right here	Platinum

SCALE

Scale	Meaning
Intimate	No witnesses
Local	Minimal casualties
Town	Do as you please
City	Kill many
Capital	Kill them all
Continent	Hide the bodies
World	Don't hide the bodies

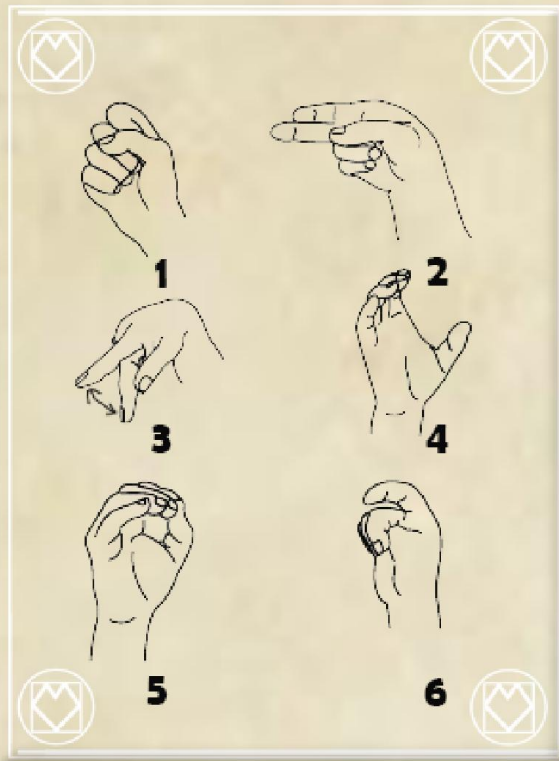
FOOD

Food	Meaning
Beef	Will you take the job?
Pork	I will take the job.
Mutton	I will not take the job.
Venison	You need to pay more
Tomato	Never speak to me again.
Onion	I'm going to kill you

HAND SIGNALS

SILENT SIGNALS

Fellows of the Cant often dwell in environments requiring vocal discussion but also passage of hasteful information. For this the Silent Cant was created.



Signal	Meaning
1	Hold where you are
2	Something is there
3	Move on stealthly
4	Silence the enemy
5	Silent kill
6	Attack on 3

CONVERSATION

Where a conversation is needed, detailed information to be conveyed in full words, The Cant can be used to spell full words and even sentences where a fellow is skilled in it's use.

DM Note

I consider this to be too time consuming for use at the table. Anyone, DM or player who wishes to refer to an actual system of communication I would suggest to see the **Dransian Finger Language** as an option however I simply ask the player to tell me what they wish to say and make a judgement call on how long that takes.

TALKING WITH CARDS

You may find the information broker playing cards and inviting you to join them after you have opened the conversation.

One addition is needed to the normal approach, you should ask *"how much is the bet?"* The bet is the amount you will pay for each piece of information.

The broker will tell you the bet amount and hand you three cards, you should inspect them and then strike up a conversation about your request. When you ask, place your bet in-between you and the broker.

The cards the broker hands you will provide the information, pay attention to when within the sentence you are handed the card.

THE CARD CODE

Suit	Meaning
Hearts	This person/location is friendly to you
Diamonds	This person/location is a good mark
Spades	You can find work here
Clubs	This person/location is heavily guarded

Once you have asked all your questions, fold your hand, feign loss and leave the bets you have made. This is the brokers' payment and taking anything back is bad form.

EXAMPLE

PC Hello trouble, it's been ages! Care for a game?

NPC It's been too long my friend, sit with me

PC how much is the bet?

NPC Two silver

hands you three cards

PC So, I'm new in town. I hear it's run by the military?

places two silver down

NPC General Tarus runs the local guard

hands you a heart card

PC No nobles to speak of then?

places two silver down

NPC Well there's Lord Tolomere

hands you a diamond card

hands you a club card

PC I see, and is there anywhere good for a drink?

NPC Prancing Fancy is a bit upmarket

hands you a spade card

You now know the local general is a friend, the local lord is a good mark but well guarded and that you can find work at the Prancing Fancy.

CANT MARKS

Information cannot always be passed in person and while Chit-Chat can be used as code in a letter. Sometimes a simple mark to show which direction to go or where to find a cache is needed.

This is why Cant Marks were created.

You may find the below marks on walls in dungeons, the sides of buildings or carved into a door.



CREDITS

This creation as a whole has been inspired by [The Thieves' Cant video](#) by Dael Kingsmill, you can find her via [MonarchsFactory on Youtube](#). Sections such as the card game and double bands were taken from this video and only edited slightly.

This Chit-Chat section of this guide has been heavily inspired by [/u/DreadClericWesley](#) on Reddit via their guide located [here](#). Both have consented to this information being made available for free to you.

The thought of expanding the hand signals into a full language was inspired by PiperEvans via Youtube however this idea was eventually dropped from the guide but credit none the less.

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