

Talking vs. Talking about

One day Mr. Smith was walking around campus and he came upon some of his students.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

One of his students looked at him, smiled and said, **“We are talking about.”**

“Talking about.” he repeated with a frown. **Talking about what?**

The student lost his smile because he knew by Mr. Smith's question that something was wrong?

The sentence, **We are talking about** is really not a sentence. The predicate ends in a preposition which, in this instance is a clause marker.

A clause marker tells us that there is a prepositional phrase coming that will tell us more about what the subject is doing.

A prepositional phrase is a phrase that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun. In the sentence, **We are talking about** the noun is missing which means that the sentence is not a sentence at all, but a sentence fragment.

There are two ways to fix this sentence. The first is to change **We are talking about**, to **We are talking**. By eliminating the preposition we eliminate the need for the final noun.

For example:

Speaker A: **What are you doing?**

Speaker B: **We are talking.**

Without the clause marker we now have a complete sentence.

The second solution is to complete the prepositional phrase by telling what it is you are talking about.

For example:

Speaker A: **What are you doing?**

Speaker B: **We are talking about the weather.**

By adding the noun 'the weather' to the end of the sentence we have completed prepositional phrase and corrected the sentence. We could have used any noun to complete the prepositional phrase. The point is you must tell what it is that you are talking about.

More example sentences.

We are talking about our classes.

We are talking about life.

We are talking about last night.

So, the next time someone asks you, **“What are you doing?”**

Remember, you can be talking, or you can be talking about something, but you cannot be just talking about.