

Small Talk

Small talk is an important part of business. It is a chance for you to build rapport with your colleagues and clients. It can be used before a meeting, cocktail parties, break rooms, and networking events. It's important to know how to small talk effectively to help your career.

Warm-up:

- What is the purpose of small talk?
- What topics are appropriate for small talk?

Tips for small talk:

- 1. Initiate the conversation.** Have confidence and initiate the conversation. Doing so will give off an impression that you are confident and interested.
- 2. Be aware of your body language:** 90% of communication is from non-verbal cues. Smile, have an open-stance, and speak in an appropriate tone to put others at ease.
- 3. Ask a question or make a statement** about the current environment, situation, or weather. Do not start with a random statement or a question.
- 4. Be interesting.** Try to be informed about current events and have an interesting story to tell. You should be well-informed about the many topics to hold a conversation.
- 5. Focus on the other person and listen carefully.** You should focus on asking questions and be interested in what the other person has to say.
- 8. Discuss safe topics** such as movies, sports, and weather. You may get into more serious or specific topic as the conversation progresses. Also, try to let the other person lead you into the topic they are interested in.
- 9. Choose your words carefully and be thoughtful.** You do not want to say something to offend the other person. Be careful what you say, because it's difficult to take back what you say.
- 10. End the conversation politely or with a plan.** Have an exit strategy before beginning small talk. In case the other person is not interested or the two of you don't have much to discuss. Try to memorize few expressions, like "I have to get back to work, but it was nice talking to you." Or "I need to get back to my office, but I enjoyed talking to you."

Discussion:

1. Do you think you are good at small talk?
2. How can effective small talk improve your career?
3. How does it feel when a stranger starts a small talk with you?
4. Have you ever initiated small talk with a stranger?
5. Do you prefer to talk or listen during a conversation?

Key Expressions:

Initiating small talk

- Hello, I don't think we've met. My name is (name).
- Hi, you are from the (company/department), aren't you?.
- How is (something in the surrounding- could be food/beverages, weather, etc.)?.
- I really like your (item/style, etc)?
- Amazing weather today, isn't it?

Showing interest

- Really?
- Uh huh...
- That's amazing.
- Oh wow.
- I see.
- That's very interesting.

Ending small talk

- I have to get back to work, but it was nice talking to you.
- I would love to talk more, but I have a meeting to attend in few minutes.
- It was great meeting you. I hope we can continue our conversation later.
- I need to step away for a bit, but I really enjoyed our conversation.
- It was nice speaking to you. Maybe we can meet up later.

Your Turn:

1. Have a small talk with your partner about the following topics:

- Weather
- Sports
- Hobbies
- Movies
- TV shows
- Books
- Internet
- Food
- Travel
- Other

* In a group class, students can stand up and talk to a class mate for few minutes and move on to a different class mate.

2. Role play the following situations:

Situation 1:

A new colleague has joined your team. Introduce yourself to the new team member and initiate small talk.

Situation 2:

You arrive early to the conference room for a meeting. There is another person you do not recognize in the conference. Initiate small talk while waiting for the meeting to begin.

Situation 3:

You are in the front lobby of your office building and you run into an old friend you haven't seen in a long time. Initiate small talk.