

LESSON

1

Small Talk Basics

Learning Objectives

After this lesson, you will be able to...

- ✓ **understand what small talk is.**
- ✓ **understand the basic rules in small talk.**

1 Warm Up Activity

Discuss the following questions with your instructor.

1. How would you start a conversation with a person you met for the first time?
2. Why do people make small talk?
3. What are some interesting topics for small talk?

2 Starting a Conversation

A good way to start a conversation is to make a comment on an observation. The following are some comments you can start small talk with. Add some of your own conversation starters to the list!

① Nice weather today, right?

② Sorry about the delay. Have you been waiting long?

③ There's quite a lot of traffic. What kind of transportation did you take?

④ Are you looking forward to the weekend?

Responding to a conversation starter is very important in keeping the conversation going. Practice the conversation with your instructor.

Mr. Che

It seems like it's going to rain, doesn't it?

Mr. Son

Yeah, it does. Did you bring an umbrella?

Ms. Le

That was an impressive presentation by Janice, don't you think?

Mr. Bae

I agree. Her voice was loud and clear. I wish I had her confidence.

Mr. Reeve

It's Friday. Are you going to join the party later?

Ms. Hull

I am. I heard we are going to the new restaurant down the block.

4 Useful Expressions

In order to keep the conversation going, sometimes you need to change the topic. Below are expressions you can use to change the topic more smoothly. Use them to complete the sentences.

- That reminds me
- Speaking of
- Funny you should mention that
- By the way

① _____, I've been invited to your team's dinner.

② _____. I had the same experience during my business trip to England.

③ _____ museums, have you been to the Louvre?

④ _____, have you met Mr. Smith?

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Share Your Thoughts

Share your thoughts on the following basic rules for small talk.

- ① Keep the conversation positive. Avoid talking about negative topics.
- ② Try to remember names and address the person by calling his/her name.
- ③ Don't talk about random topics that may not be common knowledge.
- ④ Don't shower the other person with a string of questions. Let small talk happen naturally.
- ⑤ Listen to what the other person is saying. Always listen after you have asked a question.

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Ending a Conversation

Below are some examples that can be used when you want to politely end the conversation.

- It's been great talking to you, but it's time for me to go.
- I think it's time to head back into the meeting. Let's continue this conversation next time.
- Why don't we talk about this some more after the meeting?
- I'm glad we had a chance to talk. Let's catch up next time!

Wrapping Up

Share two things you learned from this lesson and review.

1. _____

2. _____

2

Small Talk Timing

Learning Objectives

After this lesson, you will be able to...

- ✓ **understand when to small talk.**
- ✓ **make appropriate conversations in different situations.**

1 Warm Up Activity

Discuss the following questions with your instructor.

1. When was the last time you made small talk?
2. What do you do while you are waiting for someone/something?
3. What are some important small talk manners?

2 Making Introductions

Small talk may be needed when you are surrounded by strangers, and you want to approach somebody and introduce yourself. Look at some ways you can do this. How would you introduce yourself?

- ① **Hi, I'm Mark. What brings you here today?**
- ② **Hello, I'm Jane from South Korea. Where are you from?**
- ③ **I haven't seen you around here before. What's your name?**
- ④ **Is this your first time attending this event?**

Key Conversation

Small talk is useful when you want to avoid awkward silences and kill time during waiting time. Practice the conversation with your instructor.

Mr. Murray

Ms. Park is running a little late. Traffic is so bad at this time of day, isn't it?

Ms. Lee

You bet. I use public transportation to save time.

Ms. Lay

The meeting has been delayed a little. Have you eaten lunch yet?

Mr. Finch

No, I haven't. I ate a big breakfast. I'll probably grab a bite after this.

Mr. Ray

Mr. Jones is still on the phone with a client. How was your flight?

Ms. Hughes

It was great . There weren't any problems, and I enjoyed the food.

Useful Expressions

Match the comments with the appropriate questions below that can be used to continue a conversation . Then make your own questions.

- ① I just came back from France last week.
- ② I'm a mechanical engineer.
- ③ I have one daughter.
- ④ I'm not feeling well today.

- a. Oh no. What's wrong?
- b. Did you enjoy the trip?
- c. How old is she?
- d. How did you get into that line of work?

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Share Your Thoughts

Which of the following are appropriate and inappropriate questions to ask? Why?

- ① How much do you make in that job?
- ② That is an interesting line of work, how did you get into it?
- ③ Do you have any brothers or sisters?
- ④ Did you gain weight?
- ⑤ Who are you voting for in the election?

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Situational Small Talk

The following are situations that may need small talk.

- You are waiting for the elevator with a new client.
- You are at a conference with no one you know. You see somebody standing alone by the coffee bar.
- You visit an overseas branch of the company and you want to be friendly with the local employees.
- You are waiting for the meeting to start and you want to make a conversation with the person sitting next to you.

Wrapping Up

Share two things you learned from this lesson and review.

1. _____

2. _____