

Small Talk – Work Place Skill

What is small talk?

Small talk is the gateway to relationships. Small talk is also known as chit-chat or casual talking — a short conversation between you and someone you do not know or do not know well. Small talk subjects are non-threatening such as: weather, traffic, sports, food, music, movies, and positive local event. Subjects to avoid in small talk are those that cause strong opinions or anger such as: politics, religion, race, personal observations (about a person’s weight, clothing, hair style, or way they act), and sexual topics. Avoid negative comments about a company, its products, or other workers.



Why is small talk called a work place skill?

a) Small talk is a first step in starting a friendship with coworkers, customers, and supervisors. b) Business partnerships may start with small talk. Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield became friends with small talk when running laps at the gym. There would be no Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream if Ben and Jerry remained silent during their workouts! c) Small talk may create you a friendship with an important person that may result in a job offer or promotion because you show skills of professional friendliness.



Small talk skills will make people like me?

Yes. Skills in small talk **make** people comfortable with you, and **make** you an interesting person to be around everywhere you are.

How do I practice small talk at work?

You do not have to know or like a person to act friendly with them at work. Greet others by saying, “Good morning” or asking, “Hi, how are you?”

Smile when you greet people or pass a person in the hallway. Practice so your smile is natural. Persons who do not smile are thought of as angry or aloof (stuck up). Pretend that this person is your friend.

What is the goal of small talk?

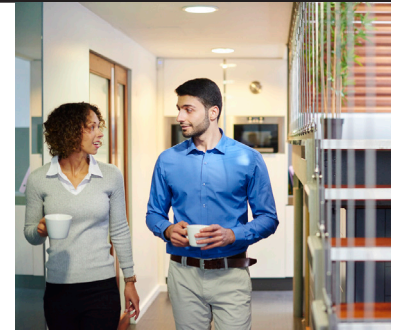
The goal is to connect with others. To connect, you need to keep small talk going for 2 or 3 rounds. If you answer a question or comment with one word, the conversation stops. For example, if you are asked if you saw a sports event, and you answer “no” — the conversation ends. To start small talk, you need to “express interest in the other person” by using more than one word answers such as, “I didn’t see that game. What happened?” **Round One:** Person asks you question. **Round two:** You give more than one-word answer. **Round three:** person adds another comment. Three or more rounds makes successful small talk.

Small Talk Tips

Be kind to yourself — You may feel shy or nervous around people and afraid to talk. If you say something wrong, forgive yourself and move on because your small talk skills will improve with practice. Some people have a natural ability to do small talk. Most people need to practice to learn small talk skills. Start practicing today!



Show interest in people by listening — Think the best about every person. Actively listen to what a person is saying. Look at the person talking — do not look at your phone. Here are words of wisdom about listening skills:
 a) One of the best forms of respect is to listen to what another has to say.
 b) The art of conversation is listening. c) The ability to listen is as important as the ability to speak. d) If speaking is silver, then listening is gold. After you listen, ask the person a question if you want small talk to continue.



Ask open-ended questions — Closed-ended questions can be answered with “yes” or “no.” Open-ended questions require more words to answer. Open-ended questions are used in small talk. People love to talk about themselves, and feel valued when you ask open-ended questions. Examples of open-ended questions:
 Where did you go to high school? (or college?)
 How did you find your job?
 What is your hobby?
 What did you do at work today?
 What happened at school today?
 What did you think of the game last night?



How was the traffic this morning?
 What was the thunder like at your home last night?
 What place around here do you like for lunch?
 What type of music do you enjoy?
 What movie have you seen lately?
 What do you do for exercise?



Advanced skill of a small talker is the skill to introduce people with ease. Announce the person’s name, then offer a bit of information or something in common with others in the group. “Jason, this is Sam. Sam lives in Careerville and is a carpenter.” “Britney, this is Emma. Emma is an art major also, and attends City College.” Most people forget names. If you forget a name, you may say: “I’m so sorry, what is your name again?” People love the sound of their name. To help you remember the name, and to make the other person feel good, use their name when leaving: "Nice talking to you Jason and Sam. See you later."

Make a polite get-away — Do not act bored with the small talk. If you want to end small talk, use the 2 step plan. Step #1: Use the words “I need” — **I need** to get some food now. I haven’t eaten yet. **I need** to talk to a coworkers I see over there. **I need** to check in with my supervisor. Step #2: Say something positive to the person before you leave: **I’ve enjoyed talking to you Ava. I hope to talk to you again.**

QUICK CHECK:

1. a) What is small talk? b) Small talk is between you and who? c) List 7 non-threatening subjects. d) List 5 subjects to avoid.
2. List 3 reasons why small talk is called a skill.
3. List 2 things that skills in small talk make.
4. a) Do you need to know a person to act friendly? b) What do you say when you greet people? c) If you do not smile, what 2 things may people think of you?
5. a) What is the goal of small talk? b) What happens if you answer a question with one word? c) How do you express interest in the other person? d) How many rounds make successful small talk?
6. If you say something wrong, why do you need to forgive yourself?
7. a) Listening skills: Write down the words of wisdom you like best. b) After you listen and want small talk to continue, what do you do?
8. a) What are closed-ended questions? b) What are open-ended questions? c) List 3 examples of open-ended questions you think you can use.
9. a) What is an advanced skill of a small talker? b) After announcing the person's name, what do you do? c) If you forget a name, what do you say? d) Do what to remember the name?
10. Describe the 2 steps to make a polite get-away.
11. a) Will you enjoy meeting new people using small talk? b) Give a reason for your answer.