

Business Class

WEEK 2 - SMALL TALK



Welcome to Class!

TODAY'S AGENDA

- Hello!
- Small but important talk
- Cultural differences
- How to start?
- 1st Q&A session
- At the office
- At company lunch or diner
- At client meeting
- At conference or training
- How to finish small talk
- 2nd Q&A session
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Class Objectives & Rules

EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES

★ Objectives:

- In today's lesson, you're going to learn how to make small talk in English, easy, fun, and successful so that you can get to know a new coworker and develop better relationships with the people that you see at work regularly.
- By the end of this lesson today, you'll be ready to start asking questions at work and enjoy conversations with your coworkers.



Lesson for Today

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Small talk is a short, informal and friendly conversation. It can take place among people who know each other or strangers. It is commonly used at networking and social events (at the office, meetings, conferences).

A lot of people say that they hate small talk. We have this idea that it's something hard, stressful, uncomfortable, boring, or even meaningless.



The importance of small talk



IS IT NECESSARY?

- You can't be friends with someone you don't know
- You have to make transition from stranger to friend somehow
- It is a means by which we negotiate interpersonal relationships (there are scientific studies proving that)
- Significant implications for ongoing and future interactions

SMALL TALK IS A SIMPLE ANSWER

- ...although it feels uncomfortable at times
- Dividends are too valuable to ignore
- Building meaningful connection by learning something new about coworker or business partner

Why is small talk important?



YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHERE IT LEADS YOU

- Just a small investment
- No risk (apart from bruised ego, sometimes)
- Benefits can be huge



IT MAKES YOU SMARTER

- Social interaction boosts your ability to solve problems
- Encourages you to read others and take their perspective



IT FEELS GOOD

- Often a light banter leaves you with a feeling of a relief
- Humans are social beings and we crave connections

Why is small talk important



IT OPENS YOUR EYES

- It makes you pay attention
- You have to put your smartphone down to make it properly



YOU'LL BE LIKED

- Making friends and influencing people require being liked
- People like other people who are generous and engaging
- Small talk is a gesture of respect



YOU HAVE NO CHOICE

- Almost all business activities require small talk
- E.g. in sales, innocuous conversation might be as important as the deal pitch

Cultural differences



SMALL TALK VARIES

- There is no single standard for small talk
- Americans, in general, talk with strangers without hesitation, other nations or cultures find it as a waste of time
- Southern Europeans say a lot to convey very little information
- Variable climate leads to weather being a frequent topic
- In Asian and Arab countries questions about family are normal
- In status oriented cultures (China, LATAM, Japan) small talk starts with questions that enable social categorizations

BEWARE TABOOS

- Cultures have different perception of interpersonal relationships
- Attitudes towards small talk may lead to awkward situations
- Weather, politics or the economy are usually safe topics in most European countries
- Nordics are known to have little culture of small talk

Is everything clear so far?

Let's have a Q&A session!



How to start?

INTRODUCE YOURSELF

That should be easy :-) We've practiced during a job interview. It can be as simple as saying "Hi, my name is Justyna. What's your name?"

MAKE A CONTEXT COMMENT

Mention the exact situation you are in or the environment around you. This can be weather, a painting in the room or the coffee you are drinking.

MOVE TO THE NEXT STEP

Find the good/real topic to talk about. Ask question and encourage the other person to talk about herself. You can prepare with a list of different topics.

SHOW INTEREST

Show that you're interested in hearing answers and you really listen. React to what people say ("I see what you mean", "Wow, what an amazing story!", etc.)



At the office

STRANGERS IN THE OFFICE

- It's easier to talk to people you spend 8 hours a day with
- How about when there's a new person in the company and you need to make her/him familiar with the rest of your team
- Sometimes you are the one who is new

HAPPENS EVERYWHERE

- Kitchen or corridors are most common
- By the desk is handy but pay attention to open spaces
- It's even more important to have a small talk over video, when you work from home and don't have a regular contact with coworkers

11 small talk ideas

1. Ask for help
2. Offer help
3. Welcome someone new
4. Ask about the weekend
5. Bring up current cultural news
6. Discuss most current events/news/sports
7. Know and discuss industry/business news
8. Context topics (use surroundings)
9. Ask about the area (shops, lunch, etc.)
10. Open-ended questions
11. Ask to join you in doing something

At company lunch or dinner



KEEP THE CONVERSATION PROFESSIONAL

Even though business lunch is a social event, it's also an extension of the workplace. While it's expected that you socialize more than you do at the office, you should also keep the conversation professional. Whether you're dining with co-workers, your supervisor or a client, your behavior during the lunch influences your workplace interactions with these people.

PEOPLE CAN ALSO ASK QUESTIONS TO YOU

Prepare a few topics on food in general, you can discuss what was the most challenging dish you prepared yourself, or which cuisine you like most and why

At client meeting

Small talk creates the bond with your client!

Even the most outgoing people struggle when it comes to making small talk with people they barely know. Especially when that small talk is just killing time before you ask for something—and mostly that something is money.

1. Do your research
2. Avoid opening with business
3. Keep it professional
4. Go generic when all else fails



At conference or training



THERE ARE SEVERAL BASIC TOPICS YOU CAN ASK ABOUT:

- Places
- Travel
- Hotel
- Weather
- Work



DURING THE BREAK:

- What do you think about last presentation?
- How did you like to discussion about....?

You can say:

- I'm going to grab some coffee, do you want to join?
- I'm going to grab some coffee, can I bring you something?



IF YOU ORGANISE THE CONFERENCE:

- You can welcome your visitors by introducing yourself and asking the questions.
- Then you can offer something to drink or offer small office tour.
- Then it's time for the business

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Topics to be avoided

- Finances
- Politics and religion
- Sex
- Death
- Personal gossip
- Offensive jokes
- Narrow topics



Our tips

TESTED ON HUMANS ;-)



START WITH A COMPLIMENT

"I love that sweater." "Those are cute shoes."
It's a great strategy to start in a polite and positive way.

ENGAGE WITH QUESTIONS

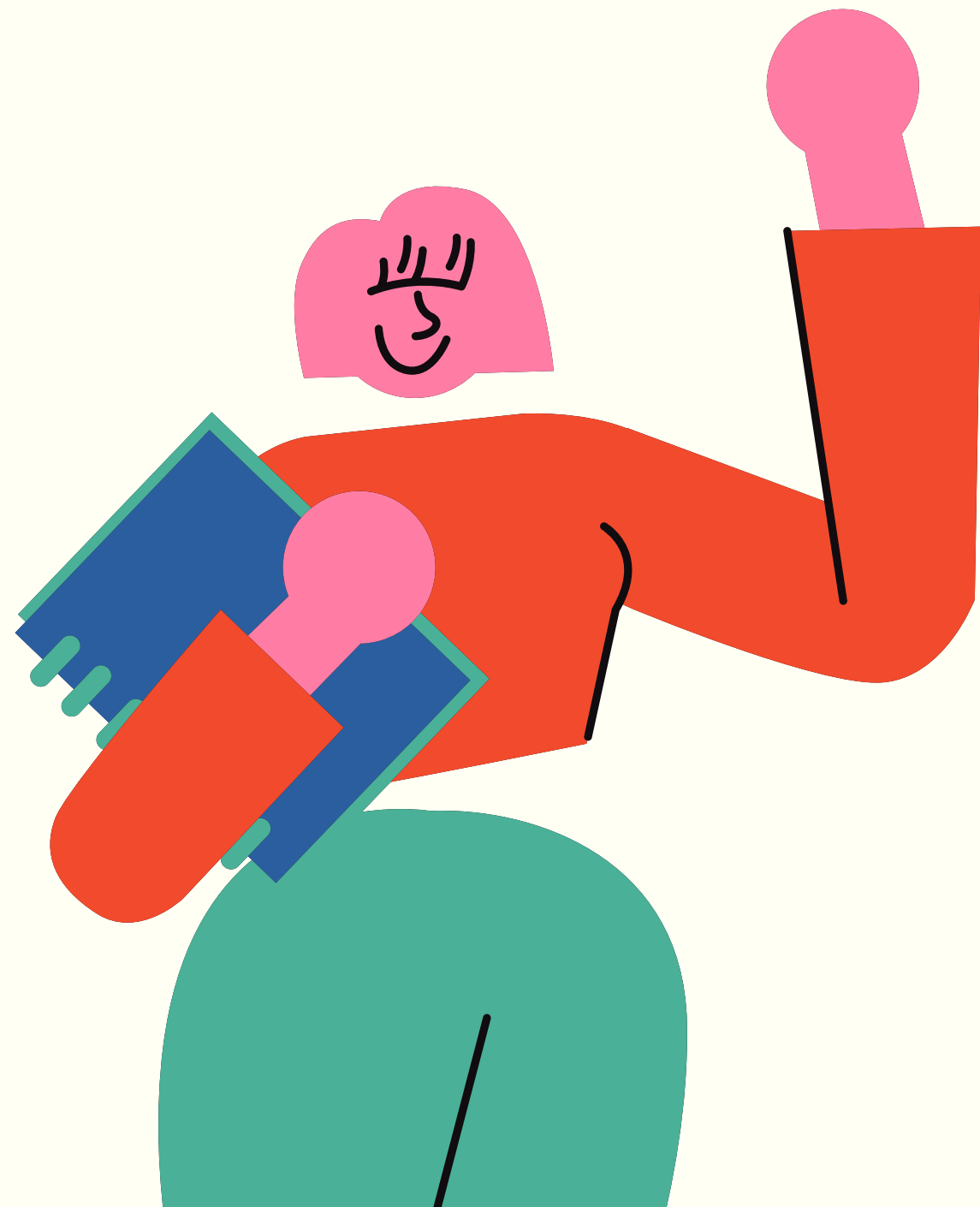
Encourage the other person to talk and talk and talk... That way you can learn more about someone and you build better connection.
"What do you like about...?"

ASK FOR ADVICE

Everyone loves to give their advice, recommendations and opinions. "I'd love to find out where the best places to get coffee around here. What's your favorite near the office?"

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Summary of Today's Class



RECAP 1

The importance of small talk

RECAP 2

Cultural differences

RECAP 3

Ideas for small talk

RECAP 4

Our tips and advice

Is everything clear so far?

Let's have a Q&A session!



Thank You

FOR JOINING TODAY'S CLASS

In a few second you will get the recording and ebook.
Please have a look at the tasks I have prepared for you.
See you next week!



Sources:

<https://www.forbes.com/>

<https://hbr.org/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_talk