

HOW TO MAKE SMALL TALK

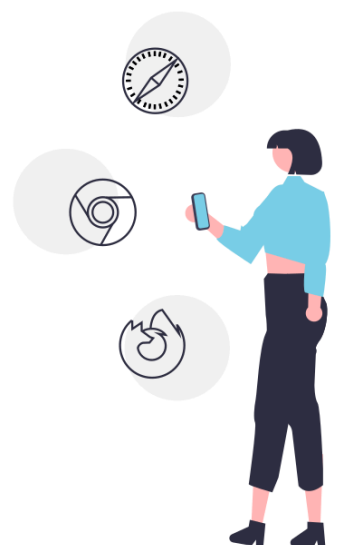
Watch the [video](#) titled “How to Make Small Talk” by Business Insider

1 WARM UP

Which aspects of a job are most and least important to you? Rank them from 1 to 8.

salary	job security	promotion opportunity	free time
holidays	training	professional relationships	job satisfaction

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____



Task: Using the information above, describe your ideal job.



2 DESCRIBING JOBS

Task 1: Match the words from the box to the definitions.

glamorous	routine	dull	demanding
stressful	challenging	varied	rewarding

1. **Demanding:** requires a lot of skills, time, energy, attention.
2. **Dull:** a job that could also be called boring.
3. **Challenging:** is hard, but also exciting and interesting.
4. **Varied:** is different day to day or week to week.
5. **Rewarding:** makes you feel pleased and satisfied due to the things you do.
6. **Glamorous:** full of excitement, adventure, and luxury.
7. **Stressful:** involves significant pressure, demands causing anxiety.
8. **Routine:** is the same every day.

Task 2: Use the words above to describe the jobs pictured. Use full sentences.



1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

Task 3: Use the words to describe the following jobs:

1. Your job.
2. Your best friend's job.
3. Sales manager.
4. Entrepreneur
5. Finance director.



3 WHAT DO YOU DO?

Task 1: Match the category headings (a-d) with the phrases in the table (1-4).

a. Exchanging greetings. b. Introducing other people. c. Saying what you do. d. Introducing yourself.	
1. _____ Hello / Hi. I'm... Hello / Hi. My name is... I don't think we've met before. I'm...	2. _____ This is... I want you to meet... I'd like to introduce you to...
3. _____ It's nice to meet you. (too) It's great to meet you. (too) I'm glad to meet you. (too) I'm pleased to meet you. (too) I've heard a lot of great things about you.	4. _____ I deal with... I handle... I'm in charge of (+noun / -ing) ... I'm responsible for (+noun / -ing) ... My job involves (+noun / -ing) ...

Task 2: Use the phrases to complete the dialogue below.

- John:** Hi Hannah. **I want you to meet** Janet. Janet is our new sales rep.
- Hannah:** **It's great / nice / I'm glad to meet you**, Janet.
- Janet:** It's great to meet you too. What do you do, Hannah?
- Hannah:** I'm the customer service manager. **I deal with / I handle** all the complaints.
- Janet:** That sounds challenging. What do you do, John?
- John:** **I'm in charge of** ensuring the sales department achieves the target.
- Janet:** That sounds demanding and stressful!
- John:** Well, I don't **deal with** everything alone. I've got a great team.

Task 3: Use the phrases to complete another dialogue below.

- Nathan:** Hello, **I don't think we've met before.** I'm Nathan from finance.
- Jennifer:** **It's nice to meet you,** Nathan. I'm Jennifer.
- Nathan:** I see you're from the marketing department.
- Jennifer:** Yes, **I'm responsible for** ensuring the department achieves targets.
- Nathan:** That sounds demanding.
- Jennifer:** Yes, I really enjoy the challenge. What do you do, Nathan?
- Nathan:** **My job involves** managing the company's budget and payroll.
- Jennifer:** I have a friend who wants to start work in finance. Have you got a minute?
I'd like to introduce you to her.

Task 4: Role Play

1. Work in small groups. Practice introducing yourself and other people to each other. Then find out about each other's jobs and responsibilities.
2. Assume you have the following jobs. Introduce yourself to the group using the phrases from earlier in the exercise. If needed, you can use the responsibilities listed in the box below as a guide.
 - a. Sales rep.
 - b. Software engineer.
 - c. Finance manager.
 - d. Customer service rep.
 - e. HR manager.
 - f. Marketing director.

sales targets	recruitment	department budget	complaints	ROI
product development	IT projects	salaries	training	company targets



4 KEEP THE CONVERSATION FLOWING

To keep the conversation flowing there are a few techniques you can use. The first technique is echo questions

Echo questions

To make echo questions, repeat the verb to be, auxiliary verb, or use do in the correct tense if there isn't an auxiliary verb.

Examples:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. He has been to 200 countries. | A: Has he? |
| 2. She went to Paris last week. | A: Did she? |
| 3. I loved that new film. | A: Did you? |

Task 1: Reply to the statements using echo questions.

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| a. She works at Apple. | A: Does she? |
| b. John has an interview tomorrow. | A: Has he? |
| c. Sarah and Paul were fired yesterday. | A: Were they? |
| d. I'm going to work from home tomorrow. | A: Are you? |
| e. He always wants to finish early. | A: Does he? |

Echo words

The repetition of keywords keeps the conversation flowing as it shows that you are interested and understand what the speaker is saying. Echo words can also change the focus or direction of the conversation.

Examples:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. She sold her house for \$300,000. | A: \$300,000! |
| 2. I went to McDonald's for lunch. | A: McDonald's! |
| 3. I used to live in Brazil. | A: Brazil! |

Task 2: Reply to the statements using echo words.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| a. I have an interview at Microsoft next week. | A: Microsoft |
| b. Joe has handed in his notice. | A: Joe |
| c. Hannah left the office at 3pm yesterday. | A: 3pm or Hannah |
| d. I have a new job in Argentina. | A: Argentina |
| e. My boss wants me to work on Saturday. | A: Saturday |

Wh questions

To keep the conversation flowing remember to use wh follow-up questions. These types of questions show that you are interested in the other person's story or situation

Examples:

1. I went to the library yesterday.
 - a. Why did you go to the library?
 - b. Which library did you go to?
 - c. What did you do while you were there?
 - d. Who did you go with?

Task 3: Write 5 Wh questions to the following statement.

Statement - I'm going to play badminton tonight.

1. **Where are you going to play?**
2. **Who are you going to play with?**
3. **What time are you going to play?**
4. **Why did you choose badminton over other sports?**
5. **Which badminton club do you play for?**

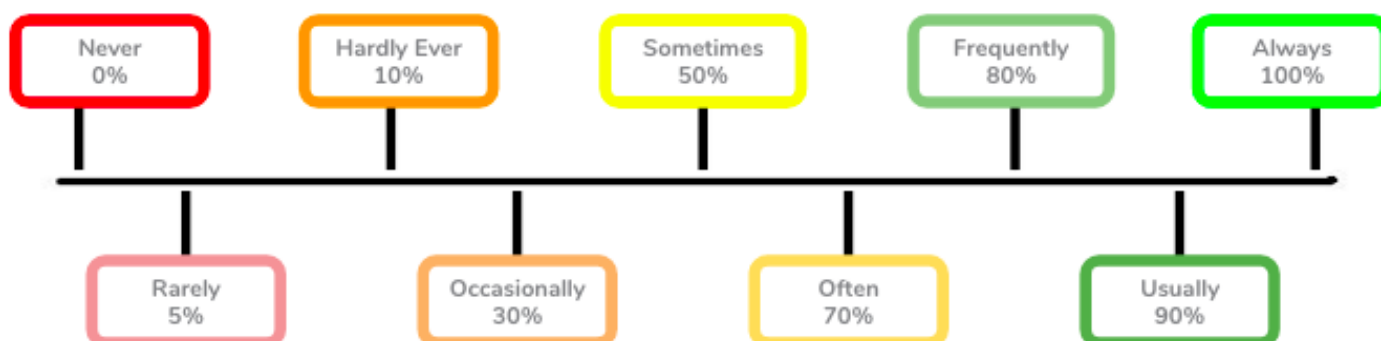
Task 4: Read the following statements below. Discuss how you could use echo questions, echo words, and/or Wh questions in each scenario.

1. He wants to learn English.
2. Maria is going to ask for a \$10,000 pay raise.
3. I went to the pub and watched football last night.
4. Joanne is on holiday this week.
5. Hannah has worked there for 5 years.
6. I got lost in the city centre for 2 hours.
7. My brother bought a new laptop at the weekend.
8. I'm thinking of booking a holiday to Costa Rica.



5 ADVERBS OF FREQUENCY

Study the theory of adverbs of frequency below, then complete the exercises.



Percentage	Adverb	Example
100%	Always	I always go to the gym on Monday.
90%	Usually	John usually plays football at the weekend.
80%	Frequently	She goes to Starbucks frequently.
70%	Often	They often go to Scotland in their free time.
50%	Sometimes	He goes to the beach sometimes.
30%	Occasionally	She occasionally eats junk food.
10%	Hardly Ever	Laura hardly ever drinks alcohol.
5%	Rarely	Now that I have a job, I rarely play video games.
0%	Never	He failed the exam because he never studied

As a class, discuss how often you do the following things listed in the box. Keep the conversation going for as long as possible using the techniques learned in exercise 4 of today's class.

work at the weekend	work from home	have meetings with your boss
socialise with your colleagues	eat out for lunch	have meetings with clients
work late during the week	feel stressed	finish early

6 SMALL TALK: VIDEO ANALYSIS

Task 1: Decide if the statements, based on the [video](#), are true or false.

1. The video provides tips for becoming more conversational. **T**
2. According to a study from the University of Michigan, social interactions can boost problem-solving skills. **F**
3. It's not important to look for someone approachable when starting a conversation. **F**
4. Carol Fleming advises people to use the acronym ARE when starting a conversation. **T**
5. The "A" in the acronym ARE stands for "always remember to stay away from controversial topics like politics." **F**
6. It's recommended to use a person's name during a conversation. **T**
7. Compliments are an effective way to start a conversation and keep it going. **T**
8. People like to talk about themselves, so it's important to listen and show that you are engaged in the conversation. **T**
9. The video suggests that it's better to avoid controversial topics like politics when making small talk. **T**
10. The tips provided in the video can only be applied in elevator situations. **F**





Task 2: The video states that communications expert Carol Fleming says to remember the acronym ARE during small talk. Put the words next to the correct definition.

Anchor

Reveal

Encourage

1. **Encourage:** this is your time to ask a question, and encourage them to respond. Keep your questions open-ended; this allows for a more in-depth conversation. If you can't think of a topic, stick to the easy ones like their hobbies, job, and family.
2. **Anchor:** find something you have in common; this can be something you've experienced or something you're both experiencing at that moment.
3. **Reveal:** say something about yourself that relates to your anchor topic, creating trust and providing something for them to respond to.

Task 3: Complete the quotes taken from the video uses the words from the box

listening

controversial

name

smile

compliment

1. Always remember to stay away from **controversial** topics like politics.
2. A **compliment** works well too, just be sure to transition the conversation afterward, some people don't know how to handle them.
3. Start with a **smile** and an introduction; this puts everyone at ease.
4. Using the person's **name** and conversation will also yield good results, people appreciate the special attention.
5. Remember to listen. People love to talk about themselves. Restate what you hear to show you are **listening**.

Task 4: Discussion questions

- a) What topics are good for small talk? Which topics would be inappropriate? **Good - jobs, hobbies and family. Bad - politics, religion.**
- b) What does finding an "anchor" mean? **Find something you have in common.**
- c) Why is revealing something about yourself considered a good technique? **Creates trust and gives them something to respond to.**
- d) Give three examples of compliments that would work well during small talk.
- e) Why is using a person's name useful? **By using a person's name you are giving them special attention.**
- f) How can you show you are listening during small talk? **Restate what they say.**

7 ROLE PLAY

Act out each scenario with a classmate. Use all the language and techniques from today's class wherever possible. Take turns playing each role.



Scenario

Role 1: Jonathan, a sales representative.
Role 2: Maria, a human resources manager.

Jonathan and Maria work in the same building but have never met. They bump into each other in the elevator and have a conversation.



Scenario

Role 1: John, a business consultant.
Role 2: Sarah, a marketing manager.

John and Sarah work at the same company but haven't had a chance to get to know each other. They bump into each other in the break room and start talking.



Scenario

Role 1: David, sales manager.
Role 2: Melissa, a business owner.

A salesperson meets with a potential client to discuss a product or service. Before starting the meeting, they engage in some small talk to build rapport and establish a positive relationship.



HOMEWORK

Read the article then complete the comprehension and writing tasks.

1 SMALL BUT IMPORTANT TALK

In business, small talk is often seen as an insignificant aspect of communication. Many people believe that it is a waste of time, and that it distracts from the important matters at hand. However, the truth is that small talk can be a powerful tool for building relationships and achieving success.

Small talk is a way to connect with others on a personal level, which can help to create trust and build rapport. When you take the time to engage in small talk, you show that you value the other person as a human being, not just as a business contact. This can help to break down barriers and create a more comfortable, relaxed environment for communication.

Another benefit of small talk is that it can help to identify common interests and areas of shared experience. For example, if you discover that you and a business associate are both fans of a particular sports team, you may be able to use that as a conversation starter and build a stronger connection. This can lead to more productive business relationships, as you are more likely to work well with people that you have a strong connection with.

Small talk can also be used to gather important information about the other person, such as their interests, preferences, and goals. This information can be valuable in helping you to tailor your approach to that person, which can increase the likelihood of success in business dealings. For example, if you know that a potential client is a fitness enthusiast, you may be able to incorporate that information into your pitch and create a stronger connection.

In addition to building relationships and gathering information, small talk can also

help to defuse tense situations and diffuse conflicts. When people are in a high-stress environment, such as during negotiations or when dealing with difficult issues, small talk can help to ease tensions and create a more positive atmosphere. This can make it easier to reach an agreement and can prevent confrontational conversations.

Small talk is a necessary aspect of business communication. While it may not always feel like the most important part of a conversation, it is essential for building relationships, gathering information, and creating a positive atmosphere. In today's business world, where relationships are often just as important as the quality of the product or service being offered, the ability to engage in small talk is a valuable skill.

That being said, it is important to remember that there is a time and place for small talk. While it can be a powerful tool for building relationships and achieving business success, it should never be used to waste time or avoid important issues. When engaging in small talk, it is important to remain focused on the end goal and to use the conversation as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

In conclusion, small talk is a necessary and valuable aspect of business communication. It can help to build relationships, gather information, and create a positive atmosphere. However, it should always be used strategically and with the end goal in mind. By mastering the art of small talk, you can increase your chances of success in business and build stronger, more productive relationships with your colleagues and clients.

Decide if the following statements, based on the article, are true or false.

- a) Small talk is often seen as an insignificant aspect of communication in business. **T**
- b) Small talk can help to create trust and build rapport. **T**
- c) Small talk is a waste of time and distracts from important matters at hand. **F**
- d) Small talk can be a powerful tool for achieving business success. **T**
- e) Small talk cannot help to identify common interests & areas of shared experience. **F**
- f) Small talk can help you connect with a person based on their interests. **T**
- g) Small talk can defuse tense situations and diffuse conflicts. **T**
- h) Small talk is not necessary in today's business world. **F**
- i) Small talk is a valuable skill for building relationships in business. **T**
- j) Small talk should be used to avoid important issues. **F**
- k) Small talk should always be used strategically with the end goal in mind. **T**
- l) By mastering the art of small talk, you can build stronger and more productive relationships with colleagues and clients. **T**

On a separate piece of paper, write detailed answers to the following questions.

1. Why do you think small talk is often seen as insignificant in business communication?

2. In what ways can small talk help to create trust and build rapport in business relationships?

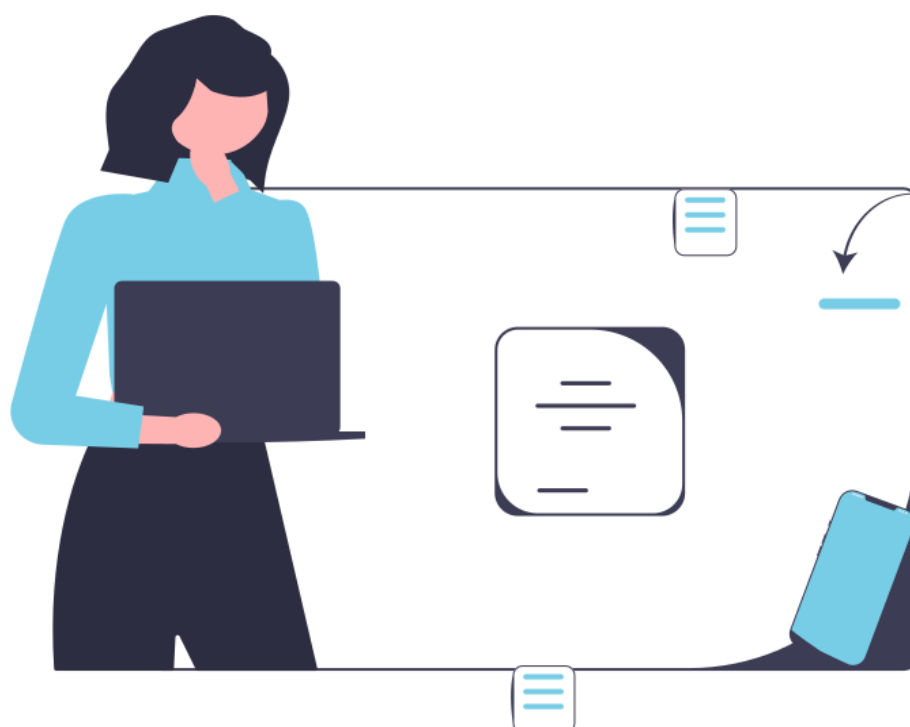
3. Do you believe small talk is a waste of time, or do you think it can be a powerful tool for achieving business success? Why?

4. How can small talk help to identify common interests and areas of shared experience in business conversations?

5. What are some ways that you can use information gathered through small talk to tailor your approach to a person in a business context?

6. In what situations do you think small talk can be especially helpful in preventing tense situations or conflicts in business communication?

7. How has technology affected the role of small talk in business communication?



8. Do you think small talk is more important in some industries or types of business than in others? Why or why not?

9. How can small talk be used to build better relationships with clients or customers in a business context?

10. How can you balance the need for small talk with the need to stay focused on important business matters during a conversation?

11. What are some of the risks associated with engaging in small talk in a business context? How can these risks be mitigated?

12. What strategies can you use to improve your small talk skills in a business context?

