

CONFIDENT SPEAKING LESSON 2

MAKING SMALL TALK *WORKSHEET 1*

MAKING SMALL TALK



Small talk refers to light, general conversation. It is an important part of being sociable in English. In this lesson, you will learn some useful expressions and topics that you can use when making small talk. Let's begin!

Warm-Up



THE WEATHER

One of the easiest and most common subjects of small talk is the weather. Turn to a classmate or two and start a conversation about the weather today.



Ways to Begin Small Talk

Listen to your teacher say these phrases for beginning small talk. Then repeat them together.

- Nice day, isn't it?
- Long time no see.
- How's it going?
- How are your kids?
- How's work?
- What's new?
- Did you watch the game last night?
- Still keeping busy?
- Have you been waiting long?
- Any plans for the weekend?

MAKING SMALL TALK



READING

A. Subjects for Small Talk

There are certain topics that are suitable for small talk, and there are also some subjects to avoid mentioning

DO talk about:

- weather
- current events
- celebrities
- sports
- food
- family
- pets
- school
- hobbies
- holidays
- hometowns
- work and jobs

DON'T talk about:

- politics
- religion
- finances
- pregnancy
- weight
- personal problems

B. Purposes of Small Talk

The subject of small talk may seem unimportant or light, but the purpose is important. Here are the three main reasons people make small talk:

1. to be friendly
2. to fill an uncomfortable silence or to make a situation feel more comfortable
3. to lead into a more serious discussion

C. Situations for Small Talk

People often make small talk when they are waiting for something to happen. It is also common to make small talk when you first see or meet someone on a specific day. Here are some locations and situations where small talk often takes place:

- at bus stops
- in queues
- in waiting rooms
- in staff rooms
- at conferences
- at parties or get-togethers
- in gyms or recreation centres

If you see the same person later in the day, it is not necessary to make small talk again.

However, you can do one of the following:

- say "Hi!" again
- say "Bye."

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Dialogue 1

Practice making small talk with the person sitting next to you on an airplane.

A: Nice day, isn't it?

B: Yes.

A: Is London home, or are you from Vancouver?

B: I'm going to London for work. How about you?

A: I'm visiting relatives.

B: Nice. Let's hope the weather is like this in London.

A: It's supposed to be hot and sunny all week.

B: Fingers crossed!

Dialogue 2

Now practice making small talk with a neighbour that you know.

A: Hey! It's been a while.

B: Hi! How are things?

A: Pretty good. How are the kids?

B: Good. They're happy that school is almost finished. Hey, did you get a new dog?

A: Yes! He's a beagle.

B: Aw. He's so cute. What's his name?

A: Barney. He's cute, but he's a lot of work!

Dialogue 3

Now practice a dialogue and answer the questions.

Questions

1. Do these people know each other?
2. What is the subject of the conversation?
3. Where do you think this conversation takes place?

Dialogue

A: Good morning! Did you see the game last night?

B: Of course. What a finish!

A: Sure was. You think we'll make it to the championship?

B: I hope so.

A: Me too. Any big plans for the weekend?

B: Just some housework. You?

A: My parents are coming over.

B: Nice. Well, I guess we should get this meeting started.

PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE

STRESS

In English, we place more emphasis on important words in a sentence.

This gives our language rhythm and helps us understand each other better.

A. Dialogue

Work with a partner.

Practice reading this conversation with the correct stress.

A: Nice **day**, **isn't** it?

B: **Yes**.

A: Is **London** home, or are you from **Vancouver**?

B: I'm going to London **for work**. How about **you**?

A: I'm visiting **relatives**.

B: **Nice**. Let's hope the **weather** is like this in **London**.

A: It's supposed to be **hot** and **sunny all** week.

B: **Good** to know!

B. Practice

What are the most important words in this conversation? Underline them.

A: Hey! It's been awhile.

B: Hi! How are things?

A: Pretty good. How are the kids?

B: Good. They're happy that school is almost finished. Hey, did you get a new dog?

A: Yes! He's a beagle.

B: Aw. He's so cute. What's his name?

A: Barney. He's cute, but he's a lot of work!

Try this!

Try this with your partner:

1. First, read the conversation like a robot. Give each word equal stress.

2. Now read it out loud again. Emphasize the words you underlined.

Does the conversation sound better?



Situation 1

You are at a bus stop and your bus is going to be another 10 minutes. An old lady arrives and smiles. She looks friendly.

Situation 2

You are on a train and a young person gets on and sits next to you. They are looking at their phone and you notice they speak the same native language as you. They are probably a student.

Situation 3

You are queuing in the supermarket. You have been waiting a long time in the queue and the person next to you has too.

Situation 4

You are on an aeroplane. Next to you is a mum and her young child.