SMALL TALK

1. When was the last time you met someone new?
2. What did you talk about? What did you learn about them?
3. Where do you usually meet new people?
4. What typical topics of conversation do people in your country talk about with strangers to be polite?
5. In what situations do you make small talk?
6. What are some typical small talk questions used in a business context?



Social exchanges. Match the expressions on the left with the definitions on the right:

1.	make small talk	a.	talk with someone for a very short time
2.	talk shop	b.	talk to someone in a friendly, informal way
3.	have a chat	c.	start to talk with someone you don't know
4.	exchange a few words	d.	have a conversation about unimportant things with someone you don't know very well
5.	strike up a conversation	e.	talk about business with people you work with when you are not at work

Describe when you last engaged in the activities above, e.g. I exchanged a few words with our sales director after the meeting last Monday.

Listening: Making conversation. Match the following conversation openers with the responses on the right.

1.	Haven't we met somewhere before?	a.	Yes, I think so. I can't quite remember where though.
2.	Mind if I join you?	b.	That's right. It's good to see you again. You haven't changed a bit.
3.	How do you like our new location?	c.	I've found it very practical so far. I can't wait to implement some of the ideas that have been discussed.
4.	How are you enjoying the conference?	d.	Whatever you're having is fine.
5.	What are you having?	e.	Not at all. Be my guest.
6.	Daniel, long time no see. It must be 6 years or so.	f.	Yes, we're old colleagues. We go back about seven years.
7.	Do you two know each other?	g.	Well, it's certainly a nice change. I see you have a splendid view of the cathedral from your conference room.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Match the openers from above and responses to the situations below. Listen to check your answers.

a. introducing yourself to someone you think you have met before

b. greeting someone you already know

c. asking if you can sit with someone

d. making small talk (x3)

e. offering someone a drink at a bar or restaurant

Now listen again and complete the rest of the mini dialogues:

Dialogue 1 A: A_____ 1 , my name's Helen Rice, from Global Training Solutions.

B: Oh r_____ 2 , it was probably at the management skills development conference in London last year. How do you do, I'm Susan Clarke.

Dialogue 2 A: Wonderful canteen you have here.

B: Yes, we do. I s_____ 1 you've ordered the mushroom soup. G_____ 2 c_____ 3 !

Dialogue 3 A: Yes, it c_____ 1 b_____ 2 all those grey apartment blocks that surrounded our previous headquarters. W_____ 3 are you located?

Dialogue 4 A: Yes, we've c_____ 1 had our f_____ 2 share of marketing experts today. T_____ 3 of marketing, how's your new campaign coming along?

Dialogue 5 A: Right. Two beers i_____ 1 is t_____ 2 .

Dialogue 6 A: Neither h_____ 1 you. I'm t_____ 2 that you are now the regional manager.
B: Yes, that's right. It's quite a challenge, you know.
A: I bet!

Dialogue 7 A: Actually, it's m_____ 1 l_____ 2 eight. We first started working together during the company merger.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Complete the task below with words and expressions from the dialogue extracts.

1. Asking questions: _____

2. Changing the topic: _____

3. Using background knowledge: _____

Which categories do the following expressions belong to?

• By the way, • I understand that • What are your plans for the summer break? • I hear that • When was the last time you visited this city?

Complete the phrases with one word. Listen and check. Then use the phrases to complete the table below.

1. I don't _____ you know Mark.
2. _____ to meet you!
3. How's it _____?
4. How do you _____ Sophie, Mark?
5. What _____ you?
6. That's _____!
7. Is that _____?
8. What _____ ... do you like sports?
9. Wow, good luck with _____!
10. Good for _____!

Introducing someone	Meeting someone	Asking questions
_____ 1	Pleased to meet you.	_____ 2
Have you met Aisha?	_____ 3	What type of ... do you like?
This is Andy.	_____ 4	What's your job?
	How do you do? (more formal)	_____ 5

Asking the same question	Responding to answers
And you?	Really?
_____ 6	_____ 7
	_____ 8
	_____ 9
	_____ 10

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Scan the text about small talk in a workplace on page five and match the headings (a-f) to each of the paragraphs (1-6)

a. Fostering workplace bonds b. Embracing curiosity c. Overcoming the strange feeling d. Uncovering personality e. Happiness and well-being f. Learning from strangers

The art of small talk Unlocking hidden connections

1. _____

Small talk is more than just idle pleasantries, as researchers suggest it can reveal key personality traits and even affect future social interactions. A study by the University of Warwick found that just four minutes of chit-chat can provide insight into one's personality, such as extroversion or introversion, and influence subsequent interactions. Participants who engaged in small talk were better at predicting their partner's personality traits and behaviour in strategic games, ultimately earning more money.

2. _____

Small talk can also serve as a gateway to deeper connections and facilitate collaboration in the workplace. Georgie Nightingall, the founder of Trigger Conversations, emphasises the importance of genuine curiosity and expanding beyond superficial topics.

3. _____

In the context of daily life, small talk can foster happiness and well-being. According to Bob Waldinger, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, brief but warm exchanges with strangers or acquaintances, known as "weak ties," can directly affect happiness and energy levels. Ongoing research since the 1970s shows that these minor interactions contribute to a greater sense of well-being.

4. _____

Even though small talk can be awkward, people generally tend to like us more than we assume. By engaging in casual interactions, we can learn new things and form connections that may have a lasting impact on our lives.

5. _____

Despite being an introvert, Dr Gillian Sandstrom, a senior lecturer in the psychology of kindness at the University of Sussex, finds talking to strangers enjoyable and insightful, adding that "everybody has a story."

6. _____

Small talk is a valuable aspect of human interaction that can reveal personality traits, influence future interactions, and foster happiness and well-being. By engaging in genuine conversations and embracing curiosity, we can enrich our lives and create meaningful connections with those around us.

Sources: The Guardian, New York Times



LIVEWORKSHEETS

Scan the text again and find a word that matches the definition.

1._____ casual or unimportant (adj., para. 1)

2. _____friendly or polite words and phrases used in social situations (plural n, para. 1)

3. _____happening or coming after something else (adj., para. 1)

4. _____the quality of being outgoing, friendly, and enjoying being around people (n, para. 1)

5. _____the quality of being quiet, shy, and preferring to be alone or with a few close friends (n, para. 1)

6. _____make something easier or help it run more smoothly (v, para. 2)

7. _____ working together with others to achieve a common goal (n, para. 2)

8. _____an entrance or opening that allows access to something (n, para. 2)

9. _____not deep or serious (adj., para. 2)

10. _____people you know but are not very close friends with (plural n, para. 3)

acquaintances idle subsequent gateway collaboration extroversion superficial introversion pleasantries facilitate

Use some of the words from above to complete the text below. You might need to change the form of the words.

At the airport, two strangers, an 1_____ and an 2_____ , struck up a conversation while waiting for their flight. The extrovert initiated the conversation with some 3_____ and asked the introvert about their favourite type of music. It turned out that they both enjoyed listening to the same soothing melodies while working, which 4_____ their concentration. They shared stories about their work and discussed how they had to 5_____ with others in their respective jobs. They found it interesting that building an 6_____ with a colleague could sometimes be as simple as discussing common interests, even if it started with a 7_____ chat. They also talked about the importance of being open to new ideas and not staying tethered to their old ways of thinking. Both of them agreed that small talk could serve as a 8_____ to more meaningful conversations, which could lead to professional growth.



LIVEWORKSHEETS