

Week 3

How to make small talk: initiating a conversation

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Making small talk can be very difficult and nerve wrecking even for an extrovert. And it's especially difficult for an introvert.

How about
you?

Task

In a group of four or five, discuss any factors that contribute to the difficulties of starting small talk and how do you cope with the difficulties? Then share the results of your discussion to the whole class.

10 tips for starting a conversation

(source: [Laurie Pawlik-Kienlen](http://l-pawlik-kienlen.suite101.com/make-small-talk-a13827), Feb 15, 2007, retrieved from <http://l-pawlik-kienlen.suite101.com/make-small-talk-a13827>, on Friday, September 23rd, 2011)

1. Keep up with current events.

Make small talk about the news, sports, your community, or politics (unless politics is too controversial. On second thought, that can generate some pretty fiery dialogues!)

2. Comment on a piece of clothing or accessory.

Ask where it came from, what the significance is, ~~how much it cost~~ (just kidding).

Making small talk is about being observant about people you don't know well.



3. Pay attention to what they're saying.

When you're making small talk, follow up on phrases; for instance, if they say they're "excellent", ask why – ask where you can get some. If they mention that they're exhausted, follow up on it. When you're making small talk, remember that great conversations and good connections can be just around the corner.

4. Share an anecdote about your day.

Did you lose your keys or find \$10? Maybe you ate at a new restaurant recently, or found a great new CD. Making small talk is about sharing the little things.

Anecdote means 'a short often funny story, especially about something someone has done' (Cambridge Dic., 2008)

5. Ask what movies or books they've seen or read recently.

At first you may feel contrived if you were asked about this, but then you could have a fantastic conversation about the book! Making small talk is about trying new conversations.

6. Talk about TV.

Share your favourite tv shows - whether it's Oprah's revelation of The Secret or The Kick Andy shows. If you're Indonesian, The Morning News Program might be interesting to discuss! Making small talk about pop culture is easy and fun.

7. Recall your past conversations with the same person.

Ask if their son is still ill or how the Mexican holiday went. Making small talk is easier when your memory is good.

8. Ask open-ended questions that require an explanation.

For instance, "How are you?" isn't as effective as "Whatever happened with '_____' you were dealing with?" ('_____' could be a business deal, family problem, or financial investment) Remember that anything is a potential topic of conversation. You can even talk about how uncomfortable you are making small talk – and ask them how they do it.

9. Relax.

Enjoy yourself. People are interesting! If you combine these tips for [making small talk](#) with sincere interest for other people, you'll embark on a fascinating conversational ride.

10. Let it go.

If the conversation feels like dragging a piano uphill then it may be time to move on or let silence take over. You can't connect with everyone, and some conversations simply refuse to take life! Making small talk involves knowing when it's time to move on.

Thank you!