

## SMALL TALK

### Vocabulary

**small talk** – polite conversation about unimportant things, often between people who do not know each other well

**conversation** – an informal talk in which people exchange news, feelings, etc.

**topic/subject** – something that people talk or write about

**safe** (topic/subject) – not likely to upset anyone or make people argue

**weather** – the temperature and other conditions such as sun, rain, and wind

**weekend** – Saturday and Sunday, especially seen as time off from work

**holiday** – a day fixed by law on which people do not have to go to work or school

**sport** – a physical activity in which people compete against each other

**(un)acceptable** – morally or socially (not) good enough

**(in)appropriate** – (not) correct or suitable for a particular situation

**personal** – relating to the private areas of one's life

**salary** – a fixed regular payment, typically paid on a monthly or biweekly basis but often expressed as an annual sum, made by an employer to an employee, especially a professional or white-collar worker

**divorce** – the legal ending of a marriage

**controversial** – likely to cause disagreement

**religion** – the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods

**politics** – ideas and activities relating to gaining and using power in a country, city, etc.

**negative** – harmful or unpleasant (the opposite of positive)

**uncomfortable** – causing or feeling unease or awkwardness

**awkward** – causing or feeling embarrassment or inconvenience

**silence** – complete quiet because nobody is talking

**news** – information about something that has happened recently

**comment/remark** – an opinion that you express about someone or something

**information** – facts or details that tell something about a situation, person, etc.

**situation** – a combination of circumstances that exists at a particular time in a particular place

**event** – something that happens, especially something important or interesting

**friend** – someone who you know and like very much and enjoy spending time with

**acquaintance** – someone you know, but who is not a close friend

**guest** – someone who is invited to an event or special occasion

**staff** – the people who work for an organization

**customer** – a person that buys goods or services

**queue** (BrE)/**line** (AmE) – a row of people, cars, etc. that are waiting one behind the other

**coworker** – a person with whom one works; a colleague

**break** – a period of time when you stop working in order to rest, eat, etc.

**rude** – likely to offend people (the opposite of polite)

**joke** – something that you say or do to make people laugh

**sec** (short for second) – a unit for measuring time; there are 60 seconds in a minute

**aura** – a feeling or quality that seems to surround a person or place

**tough** – difficult to do or deal with

**plushy** – a soft toy

**watercolor** – a type of paint that you mix with water OR a picture painted using watercolors

**AC** (short for air conditioning) – a system for controlling the temperature in a building or vehicle, typically to maintain a cool atmosphere in warm conditions

**ridiculous** – very silly or unreasonable

**struggle** – a long period of time in which you try to deal with a difficult problem or situation

## Verbs

**to wait for someone/something** – to stay somewhere or not do something until something else happens, someone arrives, etc.

**to talk (about something)** – to say things to someone as part of a conversation

**to say something** – to express feeling, thoughts, etc. using words

**to discuss something** – talk about something with someone else

**to know someone/something** – to be familiar with a person, place, etc.

**to hear about/of someone/something** – to find out a piece of information about someone or something

**to compliment someone (on something)** – to say something nice to someone in order to express admiration or praise

**to stare (at someone/something)** – to look fixedly at someone or something

**to avoid someone/something** – to stay away from someone or something

**to interrupt someone** – to stop someone from what they are saying or doing by suddenly speaking to them

**to hang out (with someone)** – to spend time with someone

**to check something out** – to examine something to learn more about it

## Phrases

**to make small talk (with someone)** – to have a conversation about small things that are not important

**to get to know someone** – to become acquainted with someone

**to initiate a (casual) conversation** – to be the first one to talk to start a conversation

**to have something/lots in common** – to share the same interests, features, etc.

**to break the ice** – to do or say something to get the conversation going in an uncomfortable situation or when strangers meet

**to cross the line** – to go beyond what is acceptable

**It's none of your business.** (informal) – It doesn't concern you.

**I learned my lesson.** – to decide not to do something again because it has caused you problems in the past

**a bubbly person/personality** – someone who is lively and cheerful

**to light up the room** – to make a place brighter (in a figurative sense) with your presence

**to be off the table** – to be withdrawn or no longer available (e.g. for consideration, discussion, etc.)

**to make it** – to succeed in doing something

**I'd appreciate it.** – used to make a polite request

**Significant Other (SO)** – someone with whom you have a romantic relationship

**to get antsy** (informal) – to become very nervous, worried, or unpleasantly excited

**I bet!** (informal) – used as a reply to a statement to show that you agree with it or that you expected it to be true

**I (totally) get you!** (informal) – I can relate to you.

**to be in the same boat** (informal) – to be in the same difficult situation as others

## Grammar Corner

We often use tag questions for clarifications (i.e. “Is this right?”) or confirmations (i.e. “Do you agree?”) in spoken English. In the tag part, we use the auxiliary verb (or the main verb if it is the verb *to be*). If this is a statement, we use the negative form of the auxiliary verb in the tag part. If this is a negative sentence, we use the positive form of the auxiliary verb.

*e.g. You're a cool person, **aren't you?***

*The weather isn't nice, **is it?***

*Josh plays tennis in his free time, **doesn't he?***

*Emma and Kate didn't wish you a happy birthday, **did they?***

We can use second conditionals to describe hypothetical situations. We often use “*if I were you, I would + (opinion/advice)*” to express our opinion or to give advice. In this case, the form ‘*were*’ of the verb *to be* is used even with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person in the *if* clause.

*e.g. If I **were** you, I would say something funny to break the ice.*

*If I **were** him, I wouldn't interrupt people while talking.*

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## Real Life Situations

*(P1 – Person 1, P2 – Person 2, S – Staff, C – Customer)*

### Acquaintances

P1: Charlie, is that you?

P2: Dan! I haven't seen you in forever!

P1: Wow, time just flies by! You look a bit different.

P2: In a good or bad way?

P1: In a good one, of course! You seem very happy, there's just some aura around you.

P2: I've just had lunch! Maybe that's the reason.

P1: And your jokes are as funny as always!

P2: Thanks! How have you been?

P1: Good, good. I'm actually moving to another state.

P2: Oh, really? Where to?

P1: Texas. I got a job offer.

P2: Wow, congratulations! Are you excited?

P1: It's a mix. I'm sad to leave this area, I got used to everything here, but now I'd need to set a new routine.

P2: Yeah, that can be tough, but you're going to make it!

P1: Thanks! How are you doing?

P2: I'm pretty great. Working, hanging out with friends, hobbies here and there.

P1: That sounds lovely. Well, I'd better get going now. It's been nice meeting you!

P2: Totally! Good luck there!

P1: Thanks! See you!

### Guests

P1: Hi there! Are you Kelly?

P2: Yeah, I'm Kelly. Nice to meet you ...?

P1: I'm Ann, Ben's friend. We've known each other since we were kids.

P2: Ah, I see. Nice to meet you, Ann.

P1: Nice to meet you too, Kelly. It's a great party, isn't it?

P2: Yeah, it's pretty good. How do you know my name though?

P1: We hang out pretty often with Ben, and we just happen to talk about work, coworkers, and stuff like that, you know?

P2: I totally get that.

P1: So, you're working as a receptionist, huh?

P2: Yeah, it's nice. No complaints.

P1: Does it get boring?

P2: At times, yes. But there's always something to do in an office, so I don't really have time to do anything.

P1: What about your salary then?

P2: I'm not really comfortable talking about that.

P1: Sorry, I crossed the line here. I hope I didn't make you uncomfortable.

P2: It's OK. Excuse me for a sec.

P1: Yeah, sure.

*\*P2 leaves the room\**

P1: Well, looks like I've learned my lesson.

### **Staff and Customers**

S: Can I help you, Sir?

C: Yes, I'd appreciate it. I need to buy a present for my new girlfriend, but I don't know what to buy exactly. We've just started dating, so we're still in the getting-to-know-each-other phase.

S: Oh, I see. I totally get that. How would you describe her personality?

C: She's a very bubbly person, she just lights up the room.

S: Your girlfriend sounds very sweet. You're a lucky man.

C: Oh yes, it's been wonderful. I don't want to buy something generic, you know? Teddy bears and other plushy nonsense are off the table.

S: What about her hobbies or interests?

C: Actually, I know that she likes painting in her free time.

S: What kind of paint does she use?

C: I remember her showing me a couple of watercolors. Lots of nature.

S: If I were you, I would check out our art department on the second floor. Our staff will be more than happy to help you find something perfect for your significant other.

C: Awesome! This is what I need. Thanks a lot. You've been so helpful!

S: You're welcome! I'm sure your girlfriend will appreciate the effort you've put into finding a present for her.

C: I just want to make her smile. Thanks again. Have a nice day!

S: Have a nice day as well, Sir!

### **Coworkers**

P1: Wow, it's really hot today, isn't it?

P2: I thought about that too! And it's only May. Would you mind opening a window, by the way?

P1: Sure, no problem. I guess it's too early for the AC.

P2: Thanks! Yeah, I'd get eaten alive if I were to turn it on right now. Especially given that even in summer some people get antsy about having the AC on.

P1: I bet! Actually, how was your weekend? I remember you saying something about camping or hiking?

P2: Oh, yeah! My weekend was amazing – I went hiking with my husband. We've been trying to lose some holiday weight. I know it sounds ridiculous as winter holidays were a long time ago, but it's been a real struggle.

P1: I totally get you! I keep telling myself that I've still got some time before the beach season.

P2: I'm in the same boat. We've just started, so I can't really tell the difference, but I do feel healthier! I don't want to go on a diet or something like that, so I'd rather have small, but steady progress.

P1: That sounds reasonable. Well, I have to get back to work here, but I'm wishing the best of luck to you and your husband!

P2: Thanks a lot! You too!