



## Office Small Talk

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Making small talk is not a skill that comes easily to many people. Since small talk can cover a wide range of topics, there's quite a lot of vocabulary that comes into play in just one conversation. But having a limited vocabulary doesn't need to hold you back. The most important thing about making small talk is having **confidence**. Confident communication will smooth over any rough spots or gaps in your English, and help the person you're speaking to feel more relaxed and engaged. Here are some tips for chatting in the office:

- Listen more than you talk. Before entering into a conversation that's already in progress, watch and listen to what's being said. There's nothing worse than an ill-timed comment or irrelevant statement.
- Stay focused on who you're talking to. Maintain eye contact and try not to look around the room. If you're too nervous to say much, just encourage your conversation partner to keep speaking by giving appropriate feedback and appearing responsive.
- Check your body language. A warm smile and steady gaze are always appreciated by colleagues. You should act confident and comfortable, even if you're not, because pretty soon you *will* be confident and relaxed.
- Be yourself. You needn't be a comic genius or great wit to have a casual conversation in the office. Just be honest and open, and people will respond to you.
- Keep a few exit lines in mind so you can close the conversation smoothly. For example, "Thanks for chatting, I'd better get back to work now," or "Well I guess it's time to get back to work."

Now, what about those times when you want to start the conversation yourself? Here are some great conversation starters to get you going:



Current events	So did you catch the news today? I read in the newspaper that... What do you think about...? I saw on the news that... Did you hear about...?
Office	Are you looking forward to the weekend? I can't believe how busy/quiet it's been today, can you? Has it been a long week for you? What do you think about...? How's your work going today?
Weather	It's such a beautiful day, isn't it? Wow! When's the last time we had weather like this? The heat/cold makes me.... How do you like the hot/cold weather?
New colleague	Hi, I haven't seen you before. Have you worked here long? So which department do you work for? My name's..... What's yours? So what's your background in this industry?
Holiday party	How does this season impact your work? Bring me up to date on your work/life/family since the last time we got together. Tell me about your plans for the holiday. What challenges do you face at this time of year? What do you enjoy most about this time of year?

With these tips and conversation starters in mind, you're sure to chat confidently the next time you join in a conversation at the office. Just lift your head and smile, because you know you can speak English with confidence.