

Small Talk

Quick Mastery Guide



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About Me

My skills are unique.

I have 20 years experience in the technology industry leading a team of software developers, engineers, product managers, and project managers.

I have 13 years experience at a university teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). This combination positions me to help you achieve that next step in your career– whatever that is.

My company, ESLProOnline, helps High Tech Executives and Managers get promotions & secure high visibility projects by advancing their spoken & written English communication skills.

It's essential to have relationships to achieving your career goal and, believe it or not, Small Talk is an integral part to building relationships. Plus, it's a U.S. cultural thing, so Small Talk doesn't come naturally to non-native speakers.

An executive from Germany asked "What is small talk - using little words?" This guide will answer that question and help you master Small Talk.



What is 'small talk'

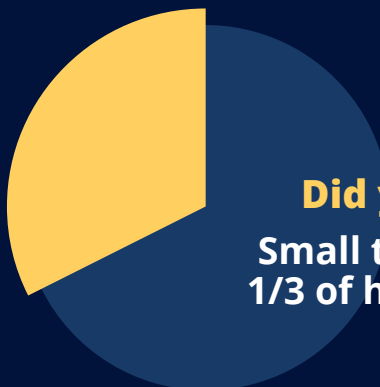
and how can it help you in your career?

Small talk is short conversations about everyday topics, such as the weather, news and sports.

In business, being able to **make small talk comfortably and confidently** is a **key skill** that can **lead to great opportunities** in your career.

This is because **small talk helps you build relationships with people**, and often **leads to longer and more important conversations**.

Let's focus on some **key phrases and strategies** we can use to make small talk in English simple and enjoyable.



Did you know?
Small talk makes up
1/3 of human speech.



7 Strategies

to become a pro at making small talk

1 Be the **first** to say hello and introduce yourself. **Take the initiative and break the ice.** Others will be thankful you did.

(Break the ice = doing or saying something in a social situation that makes other people feel comfortable.)

2 **Ask questions** about the other person and what you perceive their interests and passions to be. The more the other person talks about what they are interested in, the more they will enjoy the conversation with you.

3 Use **'open' questions** instead of 'closed' questions.

"Is everything ok?" = closed

"How are things going with you?" = open

"Do you enjoy your job?" = closed

"How do you feel about your job?" = open

4 **Be a good listener.**

5 **Show your interest.** (we'll take a look at some phrases in the next section you can use to do this).

6 **Find out** what you and the other person **have in common.**

7 **Extend the conversation.** Once you know someone's interests and what you have in common, it will be easy to keep the conversation going. Remember to use 'open' questions ;)

Introducing yourself

Introducing yourself in English is very simple;

"Hi, I'm ____"

Usually the other person will share their name, and you can respond with: **"It's great to meet you, (name)"**



Extra tip: Use a **strong adjective** to create a **better first impression**, e.g. nice -> great

If the other person doesn't tell you their name (or you met them earlier and forgot it), you can say: "I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name (earlier)"



Top Tip: Once you know a person's name, **use it immediately**. This will make the other person feel more comfortable in your presence. It will also make it easier for you to remember that person's name the next time you meet them.

"A person's name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language."

– Dale Carnegie.

Showing interest

when making small talk

When we are **very interested or surprised** our voice is higher and louder. Use a **rising intonation** ↗ to communicate this.

Here are some English phrases you can practise using.

Normal Response

- Uh-huh.
- Got it.
- That's interesting.
- Oh, I see.
- Right.

Stronger Response (higher intonation)

- Really? ↗
- Wow! That's amazing! ↗
- That's incredible! ↗
- No way! ↗
- You're joking! ↗

What to say

when there's a misunderstanding

If a misunderstanding happens, don't worry! **It's totally normal.** **The most important thing** is that you know how to deal with them when they do.

Here are some **useful English phrases** you can use to get the conversation back on track.

When you don't understand the other person

1. What do you mean exactly?
2. I'm sorry, I'm not sure what you mean.
3. I'm sorry, I'm not sure I follow.
4. I'm afraid I don't follow.

When the other person doesn't understand you

1. What I mean is ... (summarize your main point)
2. In other words... (summarize your main point)
3. Basically, (summarize your main point)



Client case study

Marcio said

"It's my pleasure to strongly recommend Janine's Business Communication program. She is a second-to-none coach who brings energy to business debates and connects with her students. She is always on top of things and is very professional. Her passion for teaching and seeing her students thrive makes Janine unique. Also, she is excellent at managing her classroom, bringing current topics to be discussed, developing superior materials, and motivating students due to her extensive experience in teaching ESL. She connects students to the business world by bringing enlightening topics that interest her class. I highly recommend Janine's program."

Ken said

"As a technology professional who recently moved to the U.S., Janine was very helpful in advancing my English. She is a driven, professional coach who develops inspiring relationships with her students..One thing I appreciate the most is that she is eager to help you, even though it's unrelated to her task/topic. I highly recommend Janine if you are looking to advance your English."

*Being able to make small talk effectively is a powerful skill, **but it's just the first step in improving your verbal communication skills!***

Here's what you need to do!

- 🎯 **Expand** your key vocabulary and practice regularly so you can feel more confident expressing yourself in English with your colleagues, bosses and clients at work.
- 🎯 **Focus** on your pronunciation so you can avoid embarrassing misunderstandings when speaking up in meetings or on calls.
- 🎯 **Learn** how to write professional emails and messages in English which means you'll save time and feel less anxious the next time you need to hit that send button.

It's taken me years of blood, sweat, and tears to develop the **most effective strategies** to help you achieve all of the above. I share these exact **proven strategies** on my "ESL Pro Online".



*If you're interested in learning more, send me a private message on LinkedIn saying **"SMALL TALK!"** and we can figure out how I can help you.*

Thank you!

I look forward to working with you on

- enhancing your understanding of U.S. culture
- improving your written communication skills
- improving your verbal communication skills

It's important to invest in yourself!

Take that first step and set up a 15 minute introductory session where we will determine together if my program can enhance your skills.



Janine O'Shea



Making small talk confidently and comfortably is a *key skill that can lead to great opportunities.*

The more you practice, the more confident you'll become, and the more *you'll start to enjoy it.*