**UNIT 3.SMALL TALK IN BUSINESS**

**Task 1. Match the words with their definitions**

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| --- | --- |
| 1. career ladder | a) allowing the formulation of any answer, rather than a selection from a set of possible answers |
| 2. charismatic | b) brief but comprehensive |
| 3. count on | c) brief story |
| 4. cultivate | d) charming, friendly |
| 5. social butterflies | e) communication or direct involvement with someone or something |
| 6. strike up | f) job promotion, the progression from entry level positions to higher level of skills, pay, responsibility or authority |
| 7. anecdote | g) people who are great at social situations |
| 8. open-ended | h) seeking to generate financial support for a charity, cause, or other enterprise |
| 9. fundraising | i) start, initiate |
| 10. concise | j) trust, rely on |
| 11. interaction | k) try to improve or develop |

**Answers:** 1 - \_\_\_, 2 - \_\_\_, 3 - \_\_\_, 4 - \_\_\_, 5 - \_\_\_,

6 - \_\_\_, 7 - \_\_\_, 8 - \_\_\_, 9 - \_\_\_, 10 - \_\_\_, 11 - \_\_\_,

**Task 2. Answer the questions.**

* Who are some people you have to socialize with in a workplace?
* Is it easy for you?
* What are some socializing problems? Make a list.
* How can you solve these problems?

**Task 3. Read the text. Match the strategies (a – e) with the paragraphs (1 – 5).**

*1. Ask intelligent questions*

*2. Cultivate your workplace personality*

*3. Exchange contact details for long-term social connections*

*4. Make sure you have what to talk about*

*5. Offer to help your colleagues whenever you can*

**TEXT 1**

At work, you’re probably expected to socialize a lot. You have to befriend your colleagues, impress industry experts and make important connections as you work your way up the career ladder. If you’re naturally shy or introverted, or if you’re not comfortable in business English yet, you may be nervous to socialize.

There are some strategies to help you overcome those fears and **start having enjoyable, impressive business English conversations** in any social setting.

### a. ...........................................................................................................................................................

We act differently around different people, be it family, friends or colleagues. Creating a specific “workplace personality” is crucial to socializing appropriately in English-language workplaces.

Think about how you want to be seen by other professionals. Do you want to be the charismaticteam leader everyone looks up to? Do you want to be the quiet thinker who everyone knows they can count on? Do you have a forward-facing position, where you’ll need to attract the attention and trust of clients?

Figure out the kind of person you want to be at work and make a list of qualities that you’d like to cultivate.

Now that you know what your ideal “office” personality is, you can start by taking baby steps to achieve it. For example, let’s say you want to be seen as the friendly person with leadership potential. You can memorize some positive English phrases, and then make it a point to compliment one of your colleagues on their work every day.

### b ............................................................................................................................................................

Social butterflies always make meaningful conversations look effortless. But the truth is that it takes skill and practice to be a great conversationalist.

You want to get to a place where you can strike up conversations with anyone in English. You don’t want to be shy or embarrassed about interacting with your boss, an industry professional or a future client.

The easiest way to get over this fear is to prepare English conversation topics **before** your next social situation. That way, rather than waiting for someone else to keep the conversation interesting, you can do it yourself by already having a few anecdotes in mind as conversation starters. They can be funny things that happened at work, successes or failures with recent projects, background information about yourself, etc.

Don’t love chatting about yourself? Another great option is to keep up with the latest business news and current affairs and talk about them in an open-ended way. This will also make you come across as a well-informed, knowledgeable and approachable person.

### c. ...........................................................................................................................................................

This is a great way to **practice socializing in a productive** way.Simply try to be more alert and observant of opportunities to help your colleagues. If you see someone having trouble with a computer or the coffee machine, go up to them and see if you can sort it out. Volunteer for fundraising campaigns. When there’s a group discussion about something, be the person who comes up with solutions.

Show your enthusiasm and support for your colleagues as often as you can. If you’re someone who’s nice, kind and responsible, you’ll automatically be well-liked and sought-after by your colleagues.

You can simply say, “I noticed you were having trouble with [issue]. Can I help out somehow?” And go from there.

### d. ...........................................................................................................................................................

Good questions inspire everyone in the conversation to think and participate. Basically, they prevent boring conversations!

K**eep your questions clear and concise**.Don’t interrupt anyone and when it’s your turn to speak, be straightforward and positive.

If you’ll be attending a conference or industry event, do some background research beforehand. Think about what topics will be discussed and what questions will add value to your conversations.

For example, after a presentation is over, you can ask a question about an issue that you felt was relevant but wasn’t discussed, or suggest a way of improving a proposed business strategy.

### e. ............................................................................................................................................................

Don’t think of every social interaction as a one-time event. One of the best ways to develop your social skills for work is to maintain contact with other professionals, even if you won’t necessarily be doing work together.

Don’t ask for someone’s number as soon as you meet them. Talk to them for a while before bringing up the issue of contact details, to make sure you actually enjoy socializing with this person! Also, it’s always safer to ask for an email address or a website rather than a phone number or Facebook page, which may seem too personal. Make sure you carry 10 to 20 business cards with you always, so you can easily give out your contact information.

You can tell them, for example, “This has been a very interesting conversation. If it’s okay with you, I’d like to keep in touch”.

**Remember to follow up afterward!** Wait a few days, typically a week, before shooting them an email.

Make sure your language is polite and formal in the email. If you wish to meet them over lunch or coffee, make sure you state the reason for meeting them in the subject line itself. Start the email by introducing yourself and reminding them where and when you met. Then outline your proposal for a meeting. You can add a date or place for the meeting, but also add that they’re free to change it per their convenience.

 If you want to be better at socializing, the only way forward is to just talk to people. Speak up more in the office and go to networking events. It may seem difficult at first, and you’re sure to make mistakes, but it’s important to learn from them and grow intellectually. Remember that not everyone you try to talk to will be eager to connect and you shouldn’t take that personally. Set small goals and reward yourself for achieving them and pretty soon, socializing in business English will be second nature to you.

www.fluentu.com (abridged)

**Task 4. Jigsaw reading.**

**Step 1.**

Student A. Read text 1.

Student B. Read text 2. (How to Master the Art of Small Talk)

Student C. Read text 3. (How to Socialize in English – Your Guide to Small Talk)

**Step 2. Work in groups of three (Students A, B, C)**

Take turns retelling the texts to your group in as many details as possible in 2-3 minutes. Group mates can ask questions to understand the topic better.

**Step 3. Answer the following questions:**

Why is socialization important?

What is small talk?

Why do we need small talk?

What is the role of small talk at work?

**Prepare a list of recommendations for small talk.**

**TEXT 2. How to Master the Art of Small Talk**

Small talk is designed to give people a chance to network, creating a bridge to conversations about opportunities. When aiming to network, small talk puts people at ease, draws them into conversation, and creates a comfort zone so that you can build a relationship with them:

* **Create a small-talk Top 10 list.** Identify five things that you enjoy talking about and can talk about easily. List five subjects that you don’t know much about but would enjoy learning about from others.
* **Listen to what people say and how they respond.** Attentive listening is critical to small talk. Through listening, you know what to say to generate connection and rapport.
* **Be curious.** Curiosity keeps you attentive. Be curious about who people are both as individuals and as business people.
* **Look for common interests.** Sharing experiences or interests with a person gives you a bond and fuels your conversation.
* **Be interested.**Your interest encourages other people to talk openly with you. Being interested in other people is often the key that unlocks their personality.
* **Remember that small talk can lead to a connection.**Small talk lays the groundwork for a connection. Through eye contact, a friendly tone of voice, and topics that are appealing, you can develop an ever-deepening sense of relatedness and connection.
* **Keep throwing out topics until something clicks.** If someone doesn’t respond to your conversation right away, don’t assume that he or she isn’t interested. Keep trying! When a topic clicks, it triggers a connection within the other person.
* **Participate in the conversation.** When people are attempting to talk with you, respond with more than one or two words.
* **Put people at ease.** Make people feel comfortable, allow them to relax and enjoy a casual conversation with you. Don’t attempt to teach, preach, or impress.

www.dummies.com

# TEXT 3. How to Socialise in English – Your Guide to Small Talk

*After T.J. Taylor(abridged)*

**The key to socialising with confidence is small talk.**With a few tips and a little knowledge, you can stop the feelings of anxiety the next time you need to socialise in English.

Small talk is the first step in socialising, to find some common interests and help you get comfortable with a new person.It’s usually viewed as ‘light or casual conversation’ about uninteresting topics. For this reason it’s often seen as useless, a way to fill time and avoid silence – but it is so much more than that!

Small talk allows us to create connections in our personal and professional lives.According to a study at the Midwestern University, when people do not progress in their jobs, 80% of the time it is not because of a lack of business knowledge or ability, but because of bad communication skills.Not only does it improve our opportunities at work, it also makes us more intelligent. Friendly conversation can improve our problem-solving skills.

Let’s start with 6 basics – 3 do’s and 3 don’ts:

## Make eye contact. This can feel difficult when you are shy, but constantly looking at the floor is unlikely to lead to great conversation. You need to look them in the eyes and speak to them directly.If you find this difficult, imagine a triangle on the person’s face. Move your focus to different points of the triangle at regular intervals.

It’s always a good idea to prepare a few topics before that you are confident talking about.

## Be aware of your body language. Although it can vary from culture to culture, non-verbal communication can be just as important as what you say.As a general rule try to stand up straight with your arms uncrossed, and don’t stand too close to the other person. Don’t gesticulate too much as it can be distracting.

Even if you are super eager to share your thoughts, don’t interrupt, wait for the right time.Speaking at the same time as someone else is speaking is never a good idea.

If life is not going great at that exact moment, it can be difficult to want to have an enthusiastic conversation about general topics.However, it is unlikely to make the conversation any easier by telling a complete stranger that your bills are overdue or that you hate your job.

## Don’t worry too much. The truth is everybody panics about what impression they make. While you’re panicking about the word you feel you’ve just mispronounced, or what to say next, the person you are talking to is probably panicking about something they said.We all want to make a good impression, and we all probably walk away thinking more about ourselves and what we said, rather than about the other person.

**Task 5. Discuss and mark safe topics:**

It is very important to find “safe” topics for small talk. Topics of sensitive (religion, politics, human rights) or private (marriage, body, income) matters are not appropriate.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * arts and entertainment | * food |
| * sports | * location of the venue |
| * news (not controversial topics) | * appearance |
| * family | * age |
| * illness | * hobbies |
| * work | * travel |
| * religious beliefs | * gossip |

**Task 6. Read the small talk below and find 8 mistakes. Comment and correct the mistakes.**

**Woman:** Hi there.

**Man:** Hi. I haven’t seen you around here before. Have you worked here long?

**Woman:** No, I’ve only been here a few months. I work in the Human Resources Department.

**Man:** Oh, you must make more money than I do then. I’m in Sales.

**Woman:** Sales sounds like an interesting job.

**Man:**  It’s okay. Hey, you look like you could really use a coffee.

**Woman:** Yes, it’s been a really hectic week.

**Man:** Tell me about it! At least it’s supposing to be a nice weekend.

**Woman:** Yes, I’ve listened that they are calling for blue skies.

**Man:** Say, did you happen to catch the game last night?

**Woman:** No, I was working late.

**Man:** It was a great game. We won in overtime.

**Woman:** Actually, I don’t even know who was playing. I don’t really follow sports.

**Man:** The Chiefs! Do you think they're going to make it to the finals this year?

**Woman:** I’m not sure. Well, I better get back to my desk.

**Man:** Speaking of desks, what do you think of the new office furniture?

**Woman:** It’s nice, but I would rather get paid for my overtime hours than have new furniture.

**Man:** Oh. Well, I think I’ll be heading home early today. It might be snow.  
**Woman:** I know. I can’t believe all of this cold weather. Hopefully spring will come soon.

**Man:** I can’t wait until spring.

**Woman:** Me neither! My divorce will finally come through by then!

**Task 7. Prepare questions and act out small talk in one of the following situations:**

1. You and your guest from Italy are having drinks at a cafe near your company.  
2. Two people make small talk in an elevator.

3. Small talk among 2 guests who do not know each other very well at a business lunch.