



Small talk

Lesson code: 117J-16CB-I5H7

UPPER INTERMEDIATE +

 American English

1 Warm-up

What typical topics of conversation do people in your country talk about with strangers to be polite?

2 Social exchanges

Match the expressions on the left with the definitions on the right:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. make small talk | a. to have a conversation about unimportant things with someone you don't know very well |
| 2. talk shop | b. to start to talk with someone you don't know |
| 3. have a chat | c. to talk about business with people you work with when you are not at work |
| 4. exchange words | d. to talk to someone in a friendly, informal way |
| 5. strike up a conversation | e. to talk with someone for a very short time |

In pairs, describe when you last engaged in the activities above, e.g. *I exchanged words with our sales director after the meeting last Monday.*

3 Making conversation

Match the following conversation openers with the responses on the right:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Haven't we met somewhere before? | a. I've found it very practical so far. I can't wait to implement some of the ideas that have been discussed. |
| 2. Mind if I join you? | b. Not at all. Be my guest. |
| 3. How do you like our new location? | c. That's right. It's good to see you again. You haven't changed a bit. |
| 4. How are you enjoying the conference? | d. Well, it's certainly a nice change. I see you have a splendid view of the cathedral from your conference room. |
| 5. What are you having? | e. Whatever you're having is fine. |
| 6. Daniel, long time no see. It must be 6 years or so. | f. Yes, I think so. I can't quite remember where though. |
| 7. Do you two know each other? | g. Yes, we're old friends. We go back about seven years. |



Match the openers and responses to the situations below. Listen to check your answers.

- introducing yourself to someone you think you have met before
- greeting someone you already know
- asking if you can sit with someone
- making small talk (x3)
- offering someone a drink at a bar or restaurant



Now listen again and complete the rest of the mini dialogues:

Dialogue 1

- A:** A _____, my name's Helen Rice, from Global Training Solutions.
B: Oh r _____, it was probably at the management skills development conference in London last year. Nice to meet you, I'm Sam Clarke.

Dialogue 2

- A:** Wonderful cafeteria you have here.
B: Yes, we just remodeled. I s _____ you've ordered the mushroom soup. G _____
 c _____ !

Dialogue 3

- A:** Yes, it c _____ b _____ all those gray apartment blocks that surrounded our previous headquarters. W _____ are you located?

Dialogue 4

- A:** Yes, we've c _____ had our f _____ share of marketing experts today. T _____ of marketing, how's your new campaign c _____ along?

Dialogue 5

- A:** Right, two beers i _____ is t _____ .

Dialogue 6

- A:** Neither h _____ you. I'm t _____ that you are now the regional manager.
B: Yes, that's right. It's quite a challenge, you know.
A: I bet!

Dialogue 7

- C:** Actually it's m _____ l _____ eight. We first started working together during the company merger.



4 Making small talk

Complete the table below with words and expressions from the dialogue extracts on Page 2:

Asking questions: Whereabouts are you located?

Changing the topic: anyway

Using background knowledge: I'm told that

Which categories do the following expressions belong to?

By the way,

I understand that

What are your plans for the summer break?

I hear that

When was the last time you visited this city?

5 Role play

Imagine you are at a conference. Go around the class greeting and making small talk with other people using language from this lesson.

