

Business English

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SMALL TALK

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Business English Language Guide Small Talk

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our newest portable¹ language guide. In this edition we become virtual² chatboxes³.

Small talk is probably the most common type of conversation people get engaged in⁴; still it often presents difficulties⁵ to non-native speakers. Therefore, in this booklet, we acquaint you with⁶ some popular phrases to use, as well as some common small talk topics.

We are certain that with the help of this booklet, you will be chatting⁷ away in no time⁸.

We wish you many a successful conversation.

¹ **portable** /'pɔ:təbl/ | przenośny

² **virtual** /'vɜ:tʃʊəl/ | dosłowny, praktyczny

³ **chatbox** /'tʃætəbɒks/ | gaduła, papla

⁴ **to engage in** /tu ɪn'geɪdʒ ɪn/ | zaangażować się (w coś)

⁵ **to present difficulty** /tə prɪ'zent 'dɪfɪkəlti/ | sprawiać trudność

⁶ **to acquaint sb with sth** /tu ə'kweɪnt 'sʌmbədi wɪð 'sʌmθɪŋ/ | zaznajomić kogoś z czymś, zapoznać kogoś z czymś

⁷ **to chat** /tə tʃæt/ | pogadać, gawędzić

⁸ **in no time** /ɪn nəʊ taɪm/ | bardzo szybko, błyskawicznie

Kieszonkowy poradnik biznesowo-językowy

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Why do people make small talk?

The most obvious reason is to break an uncomfortable silence or simply to fill time. Another is to show polite interest or not to appear rude in a social situation. You may also make small talk in order to get to know someone you haven't met before.

With whom to make small talk?

People are expected to say at least a few words in certain situations, even if they do not know each other at all. It is commonly used when the persons involved are only acquaintances or work together while not being close friends. Some professionals are expected to have short casual conversations with customers as part of their jobs; these include customer service reps, waitresses, hairdressers and receptionists.

When to use small talk?

Small talk will most commonly occur when you're getting to know someone or you see or meet somebody for the first time. Also, whenever people occupy the same space and aren't busy, it may be the right time to initiate a casual conversation. A break in between meetings or a prolonged wait, when there is nothing important going on, is a good time to make small talk. However, you should not interrupt people who are already otherwise engaged. It is also important to recognize when your interlocutor wants to disengage from the conversation.

Where to make small talk?

Small talk most often occurs where people are waiting for something. You may reel up to the person beside you when waiting for the train to arrive, in a dentist's waiting room or in a queue at the store. With co-workers, small talk happens in elevators, canteens and wherever there is a line-up for something. You are also expected to mingle with other people who take part in the same social event, such as a party or an organized trip.

What to make small talk about?

There are certain safe topics that people usually make small talk about. The weather and surroundings are the most common things to discuss. It is probably the safest subject to pick with persons whom you do not know well; most people share the same opinions here, without any emotional baggage attached. Even family members and friends sometimes discuss it upon meeting or to start a conversation.

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Wonderful day to be outside, isn't it?	Wspaniały dzień by spędzić czas na zewnątrz, nieprawdaż?
Can you believe all of this rain we've been having?	Ostatnio to cały czas leje, no nie?
It looks like it's going to snow.	Wygląda na to, że spadnie śnieg.

It sure would be nice to be in Hawaii right about now.	Jakże miło byłoby teraz być na Hawajach.
I hear they're forecasting thunderstorms all weekend.	Słyszałem, że na cały weekend zapowiadają burze z piorunami.
We couldn't ask for nicer weather, could we?	Pogoda jest wprost wymarzona, czyż nie?
The tulips are really beautiful at this time of year, aren't they?	Tulipany są takie piękne o tej porze roku, czyż nie?
I really like how green everything is around here, don't you?	Bardzo mi się podoba, że w tej okolicy jest tyle zieleni, a tobie?

Current events are a sure-fire way to get the conversation going. It is generally safe to discuss the news, as long as you do not touch upon controversial issues. If you happen to stumble upon a point your interlocutor has a strong and opposing opinion of, change the subject as soon as possible. Sports news is a very common topic, entertainment and celebrities are another good one.

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Did you watch the news today?	Oglądałeś dzisiaj wiadomości?
Did you hear about that fire on Main Street?	Czy słyszałeś o tym pożarze na ulicy Głównej?
What do you think about this dustman strike?	Co sądzisz o tym strajku śmieciarzy?
I've read on Twitter today that the old swimming pool is closing.	Przeczytałem dziś na Twitterze, że zamykają stary basen.
I heard on the radio that they are finally going to start building the new bridge.	Słyszałem w radio, że nareszcie rozpoczynają budowę nowego mostu.
How do you like the new park?	Jak Ci się podoba ten nowy park?
How about the Reds? Do you think they're going to win tonight?	Co myślisz o Redsach? Sądzisz, że dziś wygrają?
Did you catch the game last night?	Oglądałeś wczoraj mecz?
How about that last stunt that Brangelina pulled?	Co myślisz o ostatnich wyczynach Brangeliny?

It is common for strangers in the same situation to talk (or complain) about it. For example, if you are riding on an over-crowded bus, you might complain about the traffic. It is even sometimes okay to discuss unpleasant things. For example in a doctor's waiting room people might talk about their health-related experiences or complain about the intricacy of the procedures when queueing in the local registry office.