Describe small talk in your first country

The term 'small talk' is defined as

- polite conversation about unimportant or uncontroversial matters, especially as engaged in on social occasions

The purpose of small talk is to build and maintain harmonious relationships in social life - and in the workplace. **How do people make small talk in your first country?**

In your response, answer the following questions:

1. What topics are used in small talk in your first country?
2. What do people say? CHOOSE ONE situation:

   If you met a neighbour on the street and stopped to talk, what would you say in your first language? What would the neighbour say?

   If you met a coworker at coffee break, what would you say in your first language? What would the coworker say?

Write up to 500 words.

- Use paragraph form.
- Use the subject line: Small talk in name of country or town
1.b Survey people from the community about small talk at work

Ask 3 people about what they talk about on breaks or social events in the workplace. “Could you answer three quick questions about small talk at work?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>LANGUAGE NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 What do you talk about on coffee breaks?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 What do you talk about at work social events like retirement parties?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Do you talk about work on Facebook or other social media? What things do you talk about?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Do you have advice or suggestions about what to talk about at work?</td>
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</table>

“Thanks for sharing your experience.”
Key phrases

Kick-starting small talk
Did you have a good weekend? / How was your weekend?
What are your plans for the festive season?
I see your team won/lost/played last night.
That’s a lovely/an unusual photo. Where was it taken?
That’s a lovely/an unusual painting. Where was it painted?
I hear/understand you sail/you’re into sailing. Is that right?

Sharing information about yourself
I’m going to the theatre/cinema tonight.
I saw a great play/movie last night/on Saturday.
I (don’t) really enjoy sports. / I’m (not) really into sports.

Using follow-up questions or comments
(Are) you doing anything special this weekend?
(Have you got) anything planned/any plans for tonight?
How often do you go to concerts? / (Do you) go to concerts a lot?
Are you into sports at all? / Do you get much time to do sports?
(Have you) read any good books/seen any good movies lately?
(Was it) any good? / What did you think of it? / And?

Finding a connection
What about you? / Really? That’s a coincidence! I also ...
(No way!) So am/do/did/have I. / 
(No way!) Me too. / (No way!) I am as well.
Me neither. / Neither am/do/did/have I.
I’m more of a pop fan/movie fan myself.
I’ve never tried it/done it myself (but I’d like to).
I’ve never been there myself (but I’d like to go).
I’m not really into sports/movies, but I read a lot/enjoy music.

Go to www.collinselt.com/businessresources to listen to the key phrases.
### Key phrases

**Bringing the conversation to a close**
- Anyway, I'd better be going (if I want to catch my flight).
- Is that the time? I'm afraid I really should get going.
- If you'll excuse me, I have to rush/I should make a move.

**Saying goodbye**
- It was great/good/nice/a pleasure to meet you.
- (You have my card, so) feel free to contact me any time.
- Give me a call the next time you're in London.
- I hope to see you at next year’s conference. Are you going?
- It’s been really nice/great/fun talking to you again/in person.
- Well, it was great/good/nice to see you again.

**Getting out of a difficult conversation**
- Please excuse me (for a moment). I have to make a phone call.
- Would you excuse me? I have to take care of something.

**Looking to the future**
- So, we'll see each other next week.
- Right then, we'll/I'll be in touch soon.
- Keep in touch! / Keep me posted!
- I look forward to seeing you (again).

**Thanking the host and guest**
- Thank you for everything. It's been really great/useful.
- Thanks (again) for your hospitality. / Thanks for coming.

**Saying a final goodbye**
- (Have a) safe trip back/home.
- Goodbye. / All the best. / Take care. / Bye (for) now. / See you soon.
### Activity A: MOSAIC Online Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOW POWER DISTANCE What leaders do:</th>
<th>HIGH POWER DISTANCE What leaders do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Suggest or ask subordinates</td>
<td>• Tell subordinates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>They use softeners, indirect speech</em></td>
<td><em>They use direct language, imperatives</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Called by first names</td>
<td>• Called by titles</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Informal register</em></td>
<td><em>Formal register</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expect collaboration</td>
<td>• Make the decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Use softeners and consensus language</em></td>
<td><em>Give directions</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enable workers</td>
<td>• Manage workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Seek opinion, inclusive language</em></td>
<td><em>Do not seek communication from workers</em></td>
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<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2.b

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice using language register. Choose language according to formality, power distance, social distance and directness.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situation 1: What would you say? Make a dialogue with a partner.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| You work in a hospital. Your coworkers are treating you in a way that you think is disrespectful. They don’t ask for your opinion in team meetings; they don’t ask you if you want a coffee when they go on breaks; they never include you in small talk conversations.
One day, one of the team says, “You seem really quiet. Why don’t you say anything in meetings, come for coffee with us or talk to us about yourself?”
*What do you say?*

– MOSAIC Online Resource Adapted from Norquest College, *Workplace Pragmatics*, Edmonton 2014 |
| **Situation 2: What would you say? Make a dialogue with a partner.** |
| You work in a hospital. Your supervisor is treating you in a way that you think is disrespectful. He doesn’t ask for your opinion in team meetings; he doesn’t ask you if you want a coffee when he goes on breaks; he never includes you in small talk conversations.
One day, he says, “You seem really quiet. Why don’t you say anything in meetings, come for coffee with me or talk to me about yourself?”
*What do you say?*

– MOSAIC Online Resource Adapted from Norquest College, *Workplace Pragmatics*, Edmonton 2014 |
| **Situation 3: What would you say? Make a dialogue with a partner.** |
| You work as a store manager at a service counter.
Your customers fill out feedback forms when they have some comments to make.
You constantly receive negative feedback on your frontline staff member who doesn’t greet customers or smile at them.
You need to talk to the staff about performance.
*What do you say to the staff member?* |
Making requests using SOFTENERS


Communication & Soft Skills

Kenji Matsushita

Michelle Price

Interviewer: So we’re here with Michelle Price, who is a Vice President with one of Alberta’s leading Oil and Gas companies, and she’s agreed to talk to us a little bit about communication and leadership today so thank you for coming, Michelle.
### Using language softeners in everyday workplace communication

In small groups, take it in turns picking up a card and making the request on the card using softeners. Remember to start the conversation with an appropriate greeting and some small talk, if appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Softened Requests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You need to go home early today because you have a repair person coming to fix your dishwasher.</td>
<td>Ask your co-worker to get you a coffee when he goes out at lunchtime. You’re too busy to leave the office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You read your co-worker’s report and you think the introduction needs to be changed. Ask him/her to make the changes.</td>
<td>Ask your co-worker to read a report you’ve prepared and give you some feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask your co-worker if she will change shifts with you on Friday.</td>
<td>Your co-worker listens to music on his earphones but you can still hear it. Ask him to turn it down.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You have a problem with a co-worker and need to request a meeting with your manager to discuss it.</td>
<td>Ask your previous manager for a reference letter. You are applying for a new job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask your co-worker for a ride to the meeting at the head office next Monday.</td>
<td>Your family are visiting you this summer. Ask your manager if you can book your vacation time now so you can make some plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have a problem with an angry customer. Ask your manager to come and help you resolve it.</td>
<td>You are allergic to perfume and one of your co-workers wears it to work. Ask her to stop wearing perfume at work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Developed by Sue Howard, MOSAIC
3.c

**Task: Asking for a Leave Of Absence (LOA)**

**Instructions:** Your family are visiting you next month so you would like to take 2 days off to take them to Victoria. However, you know that the company is very busy right now so you’re not sure if will be possible.

**Open the conversation:**
Greet your supervisor
Brief small talk

**Make the request** – using softeners

**Clarify** what your supervisor said

**Close the conversation**

**Task Criteria:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Completing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opens the conversation with an appropriate greeting</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make brief small talk</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarify what your supervisor said</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Close the conversation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear pronunciation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**General Comments:**

PBLT: Module 1 Communication CLB Sp 7.1   Topic: Asking for An LOA   Developed by Sue Howard, MOSAIC
1) Describe the 4 steps to an effective handshake.
2) Give three tips for maintaining good posture.
3) Give three tips for making good eye contact.
4) Give three tips for making your handshake firmer and more effective.
5) Give two examples of an annoying mannerism.
6) Give two examples of how you can show open body language.
7) How are people you avoid eye contact perceived by Canadians? (3 ways)
8) How do Canadians perceive a person who smiles (4 ways)?
9) How do you know whether you are making someone uncomfortable when you meet them?
10) How much interpersonal space do Canadians want when “interacting with family or friends”?
11) Today many offices in Canada are scent free? Why is this so?
12) What are four ways use non-verbal communication in the workplace?
13) What are the six facial expressions found everywhere in the world?
14) What are three benefits of a good posture?
15) What does a firm handshake show to a Canadian (3 things)?
### Body language behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>It makes you look...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jiggling your foot</td>
<td>nervous, distracted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drumming your fingers</td>
<td>nervous, distracted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slumping your shoulders</td>
<td>tired, bored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking with your hands</td>
<td>over-excited, nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiddling with your hair</td>
<td>distracted, bored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>folding your hands</td>
<td>engaged, decisive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shaking hands firmly</td>
<td>confident, engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking with your hands in front of your mouth</td>
<td>nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking around the room</td>
<td>restless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking directly at the person addressing you</td>
<td>honest, interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crossing your arms</td>
<td>defensive, hostile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crossing and uncrossing your legs</td>
<td>restless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Audio: Howcast.com

**How to perfect the elevator pitch**

Listen to seven steps of how to prepare an effective elevator pitch. Discuss the following questions with a partner or in a small group.

1. What are the steps? Describe each step in one sentence.

2. Which step do you need to perfect? Please explain your answer.

3. What aspects of preparing and delivering an elevator pitch are you confident about?

4. Have you had an opportunity to deliver an elevator pitch?

5. In what situations, could you use an elevator pitch?
Perfect Your 30-Second Elevator Speech by Murali Murthy

Source: Canadian Immigrant September 16, 2014

**Introduction:** While looking for employment, have you ever needed to present your skills, qualifications and experience in a very short time? Was it challenging? Did you feel nervous? Perhaps, you missed an opportunity because you were not sure what to say? This article will help you to perfect your short speech commonly known as an elevator speech.

**Vocabulary:**
- arsenal
- elucidate
- jargon
- point of differentiation
- memorable
- perception
- generic
- delivery
- blank canvas
- upbeat
- nail it
- on the spot

The perfect 30-second elevator speech. Everyone needs to have one. It is as essential for the CEO of a corporation as it is for the jobseeker.

**Do you have yours ready?**

Whether you are at a job interview, at a networking event, at your friend’s barbecue or literally in an elevator — once you state your name, you need to be able to explain who you are, what you do and how you can add value — clearly and quickly.

A beautifully tuned elevator pitch is a must-have in the jobseeker’s arsenal and vital to networking success. Think of it as your verbal cover letter. It can open more doors and eventually land you the job you desire.

**Pitch in four steps**

Here are four steps to keep in mind when crafting your speech.

1. **Express** your strengths as you define who you are. Keep it short.
2. **Elucidate** what you do. This is when you reveal the benefits that you bring.
3. **Explain** what sets you apart. Demonstrate some personality to stand out.
4. **Ensure** a definite call to action. This is the final step and it should lead the listener to want to set up another meeting or further the relationship.
Now comes time to sit down and write it out. To create your speech, you should:

- Write down all that comes to mind. Try writing in a bullet points’ format or as short tweets. Now cut the jargon and unnecessary words and create crisp, powerful sentences. Finally, connect the phrases to each other so your pitch flows smoothly.
- Highlight key points and a unique point of differentiation. Check if you have really answered the key WIFM (what’s in it for me?) question of your listener. Insert a figure or a quote or a memorable phrase that will leave them wanting more.
- Practise a lot. Then practise a few more times. It is important to have your speech written down, memorized and practised. The more you speak it, the easier and more natural it will get. Rehearse with someone or in front of a mirror. The important thing is to practise it out loud.
- Focus on the delivery. Breathe, smile, relax and look your target in the eye. The more natural your delivery, the greater your chance of success. Words change perceptions. Instead of a generic statement like “I have great accountability skills,” perhaps you could say something like “Accountability is very important to me.”

Sample elevator speech

Here is an example of a good elevator pitch that follows the above steps.

“Hi. Nice to meet you. My name is Miriam Fernandez. I am a human resources specialist with 10 years’ experience in diverse industries and markets.”

Those three lines would take about 10 to 15 seconds. She can then use her next 15 seconds to add details about her skills, unique value proposition and specific ways she could help a potential employer. This is her chance to tailor her pitch to focus on their needs and deliver benefits they can visualize.

“I have successfully worked with clients of all sizes from small startups to Fortune 500 organizations. Clients have acknowledged my expertise in consistently helping them identify and recruit top-level talent into their companies. It would be my pleasure to get in touch with you soon.”

At this point, she can exchange cards and ensure her card features either her LinkedIn URL or a QR Code that will take the target to her online profile, where her summary and testimonials
corroborate what she just said.

**Give it a try**

Keep in mind that when you meet someone for the first time, you have a blank canvas and you can paint any picture you want. But once it is painted, it stays forever. You now have 30 seconds to deliver a confident, upbeat message and nail it with confidence.

A good pitch takes planning and practice to deliver quickly and on the spot. Get started, have fun, believe in yourself and speak with pride. And soon, you may find yourself riding an elevator going in to your new job!

**Questions:**

1. What is the purpose of an elevator speech?
2. How effective can a well-crafted elevator be?
3. Why is it important that your speech not be robotic?
4. What should be an outcome of a well-delivered elevator speech?
5. How do you understand the phrase *a unique point of differentiation*?
6. Apart from memorizing and practicing your speech, what should you not forget to focus on?
7. What, do you think, may happen if you do not include the LinkedIn information on your business card?
8. Why is it crucial to make your speech impressive and memorable?
9. How could an upbeat personality help deliver an effective speech?
10. How confident are you to present your speech to a potential employer?
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