

# Teaching Small Talk

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## APPENDIX A: *Sample Dialogues*

### Conversation 1

*Michael and Lynn are coworkers who know each other fairly well. They are entering the office on a cold winter morning. Michael is wearing a new winter jacket he purchased that weekend.*

*Lynn:* Hi Michael, I like your jacket. Is it new?

*Michael:* Yeah, I bought it this weekend.

*Lynn:* Looks warm, where did you get it?

*Michael:* At Macy's. It was on sale.

*Lynn:* I'll have to go check it out then.

### Conversation 2

*Michael and his boss, Jim, are in the break room. Jim is eating a big sandwich.*

*Michael:* That's a big sandwich.

*Jim:* Yes, it is.

*Michael:* Where did you get it?

*Jim:* This place called Joe's off 355.

*Michael:* Are they any good?

*Jim:* Oh yeah, the best sandwiches in town.

### Conversation 3

*Michael runs into his neighbor, Matt, while stopping in at the grocery store on his way home.*

*Michael:* Hey Matt! I see you're back from Utah.

*Matt:* Hey! Yeah, I just got back yesterday.

*Michael:* Did you take lots of pictures?

*Matt:* I did, but I haven't uploaded them yet.

*Michael:* Cool. I'd love to see them when you do.

*Matt:* I'll send you the link!

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### Conversation 4

*Michael and another customer are waiting in line at the checkout lane of a grocery store. There are lots of people in line and it is moving slowly.*

*Customer:* It gets like this every time it threatens to snow.

*Michael:* If I stand here any longer, my milk's going to spoil.

*Customer:* I'd say that people shouldn't wait until the last minute to buy things, but here I am waiting until the last minute.

*Michael:* (chuckles) Here we are waiting until the last minute.

*Customer:* Hopefully someday it will get warmer.

### Conversation 5

*Michael is riding the Metro to Georgetown to meet a friend, but is unsure which stop he needs to get off at. He asks a fellow passenger for information.*

*Michael:* Excuse me, which stop is near the Georgetown Theatres on K Street?

*Passenger:* You need to get off at Foggy Bottom, which is either the Orange Line towards Vienna-Fairfax or the Blue Line towards Franconia-Springfield.

*Michael:* Thanks.

**APPENDIX B: Initiating Small Talk**

**Breaking the Ice**

- Listen to the five taped dialogues. Listen for who initiates the conversation, or who “breaks the ice,” and the topic of the conversation
- Read each dialogue silently to yourself. Ask about anything you do not understand
- Practice each dialogue, switching roles for each dialogue.
- Underline the speaker who breaks the ice and what he or she says.
- Fill in the grid with the required information

Ice Breakers			
Expression/Phrase	Situation And Speakers	Relationship Between Speakers	Topic of Small Talk Conversation
I like your new jacket. Is it new?	2 coworkers entering the office	Know each other	Michael’s new jacket.

**What did they say?**

- Read each dialogue again.
- What is the relationship between the topic and the subject?
- With whom can small talk occur?

## APPENDIX C: Ice Breakers

**Directions:** Read through the list of ice breakers and each short dialogue. Select the appropriate icebreaker for each dialogue. Give a reason why you chose the answers you did. There are more phrases than exercises.

### List of Phrases

- That sandwich looks really good.
- Have you been to the Air & Space Museum before?
- I like your coat, is it new?
- There sure are a lot of people in line for this movie.
- I hear it is going to be a nice weekend.
- Hey, it looks like you got a tan.
- I like your shirt.
- It is really, really cold out there!
- I wish it would stop raining.
- Did you watch *The West Wing* last night?
- I was bored to death in there.

1. *Two coworkers, Matt and Lynn, are getting ready to leave the office to go home. It is snowing.*

Lynn: \_\_\_\_\_

Matt: "I know. I can't wait for summer."

Lynn: "Me neither. I don't like snow at all!"

**What is the situation?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the topic?** \_\_\_\_\_

2. *Jon is waiting in a long line to buy a ticket to a movie.*

Jon: \_\_\_\_\_

Moviegoer: "Yeah, there sure are a lot of people who want to see this movie."

Jon: "I hear it's worth the wait, though."

**What is the situation?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the topic?** \_\_\_\_\_

3. *Amie is waiting in line at the grocery store. She likes the outfit the person in front of her is wearing.*

Amie: \_\_\_\_\_

Person: "Thank you. I just bought it."

Amie: "Where did you get it?"

**What is the situation?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the topic?** \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Zack has just helped a tourist find his way around Washington.

Zack: \_\_\_\_\_

Tourist: "No I haven't. What's worth seeing there?"

Zack: "Right now they have an exhibit on Aerobatic planes."

**What is the situation?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the topic?** \_\_\_\_\_

5. Two coworkers, Michael and Shalan, are on their way to a meeting

Shalan: \_\_\_\_\_

Michael: "No I missed the last 15 minutes. The phone rang."

Shalan: "Oh, you missed a lot then."

**What is the situation?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the topic?** \_\_\_\_\_

6. Dave, who just came back from a trip to Florida, runs into his neighbor Jenn while walking the dog.

Dave: "Hey, Jenn."

Jenn: \_\_\_\_\_

Dave: "Yeah I did. It was so nice there. I wish I didn't have to leave."

**What is the situation?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the topic?** \_\_\_\_\_

7. Alex and another person are leaving a presentation that has just ended.

Alex: \_\_\_\_\_

Person: "Me too. I almost fell asleep."

Alex: "It would have been interesting if he hadn't talked so slowly."

**What is the situation?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the topic?** \_\_\_\_\_

8. Steve and Martin are in the break room getting coffee.

Steve: \_\_\_\_\_

Martin: "Finally. I'm tired of this lousy weather."

Steve: "Me, too. I'm thinking of playing a round of golf on Saturday. Care to join me?"

**What is the situation?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the topic?** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D: *Break the Ice Scenarios*

### Break the Ice

**Directions:** Read each scenario and look at the accompanying picture. Come up with some small talk topics and icebreakers to introduce those topics. Try and to come up with three things.

1. You and a coworker are eating lunch in the break room.
2. It's a nice day and you are at the bus stop with one other person. The bus is running late.
3. You arrive early to a meeting to find only one other coworker there. The meeting does not start for another 15 minutes.
4. You arrive early to a meeting to find a client there. The meeting does not start for another 15 minutes.
5. You meet a friend while in line at the grocery store cashier.
6. You have just helped some tourists from New York. Because both of you are walking in the direction of the Smithsonian, you tell them to follow you.

### Break the Ice

**Directions:** Choose two scenarios from the last activity to role-play for approximately 5–10 minutes each. Use the icebreakers to introduce the topics you came up with. Next, pick any situation from the rest of the lesson to role-play.

### Homework

**Directions:** Keep a log of small talk conversations you have or could have had. Bring this log to the next session for discussion. Make sure you note the following:

- Where did the conversation take place?
- Who did you talk with?
- What did you talk about?
- What did you say to break the ice?
- If you had more time, what else could you have talked about?
- Why could you have talked about these new topics?