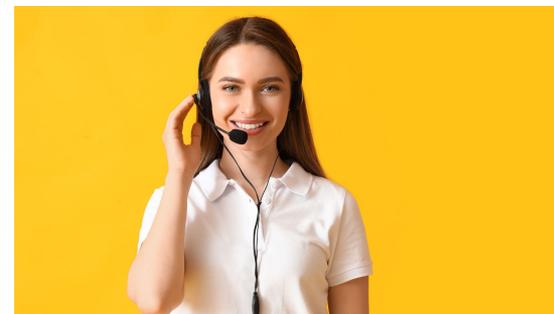


A photograph of two men in business suits shaking hands. The man on the left is Black and wearing a dark suit, while the man on the right is White and wearing a blue suit. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is a blurred office or cityscape.

# C1 - Greeting and meeting visitors

Make small talk in professional settings, use functional phrases to greet and host visitors, respond naturally in work-related conversations

# What could they be talking about?



# General discussion questions on small talk



1. Do you enjoy making small talk at work? Why or why not?
2. What are some topics you feel comfortable talking about with visitors?
3. What small talk topics should be avoided in a professional context?
4. Can you think of a time when small talk led to a meaningful conversation?
5. What are the cultural differences in small talk between your country and others?

# What are your go-to small talk topics?



# General and safe small talk topics — work and professional contexts

## The journey / travel



## The weather



## The location



## Work or industry



## Food and drink



## Events, conferences, meetings



## General interests (*if the mood is right*)



## Cultural curiosity



# General and safe small talk topics — work and professional contexts

The journey / travel	The weather	The location	Work or industry
<p>"Did you find the place okay?"</p> <p>"How was your flight/train/taxi ride?"</p> <p>"Have you been to this city before?"</p>	<p>"Lovely weather today, isn't it?"</p> <p>"It's been unusually hot/cold lately."</p>	<p>"Have you had a chance to explore the area?"</p> <p>"There are some great cafés just around the corner."</p>	<p>"How are things going at your branch?"</p> <p>"What projects have you been involved in lately?"</p>
Food and drink	Events, conferences, meetings	General interests (if the mood is right)	Cultural curiosity
<p>"Have you tried the local cuisine?"</p> <p>"There's a great spot for lunch nearby – do you have any preferences?"</p>	<p>"Have you attended many of these conferences before?"</p> <p>"What did you think of the last session?"</p>	<p>"Do you usually listen to music or podcasts during travel?"</p> <p>"Any weekend plans after your visit?"</p>	<p>"What's something unique about your office culture?"</p> <p>"Are there big differences between working here and at your branch?"</p>

# What do you think are topics to avoid?



# Topics to avoid in small talk at work:

1. Politics
2. Religion
3. Salaries or personal finances
4. Personal relationships (e.g., “Are you married?”)
5. Health issues
6. Gossip about colleagues



# Useful small talk phrases at work

## Starting a conversation:

1. “How was your journey here?”
2. “Is this your first time visiting our office?”
3. “Did you find us okay?”
4. “How are things going at your branch lately?”

## Maintaining the convo:

1. I’ve heard great things about your team.”
2. “We’ve been quite busy this quarter — how about you?”
3. “The weather’s been all over the place lately, hasn’t it?”
4. “I saw your recent update on LinkedIn — impressive stuff!”

## Ending small talk politely:

1. “Let me show you around before the meeting.”
2. “Shall we head over to the conference room?”
3. “If you need anything, don’t hesitate to ask.”

# Fill in the missing words from the boxes

1. How was your \_\_\_\_\_ here?
2. Did you \_\_\_\_\_ us okay?
3. Is this your \_\_\_\_\_ time visiting our office?
4. I've \_\_\_\_\_ great things about your work on the project.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ has been quite unpredictable lately!
6. Let me show you \_\_\_\_\_ before we begin.
7. We've been quite \_\_\_\_\_ lately—how's it on your side?
8. If you \_\_\_\_\_ anything, feel free to let me know.

find

around

weather

heard

journey

first

need

busy

# Choose the most appropriate response

1. **“Did you have any trouble finding the building?”**

- a. “No, Google Maps was spot on.”
- b. “Yes, I found the coffee quite strong.”

2. **“So, how’s your week been so far?”**

- a. “Very productive, actually. We’re prepping for a launch.”
- b. “My cat has been acting weird.”

3. **“Is this your first visit to Cape Town?”**

- a. “No, I’ve been here twice for conferences.”
- b. “I think your desk is really messy.”

4. **“Lovely weather we’re having, isn’t it?”**

- a. “Yes, finally some sun after all that rain.”
- b. “I prefer dogs, honestly.”

5. **“What do you do at your branch?”**

- a. “I manage the HR team and oversee training.”
- b. “We had soup for lunch.”



# “A Shy Host Prepares”

Lara sat at her desk, nervously sipping her lukewarm coffee. She had been asked to welcome a visiting colleague from the Durban branch—Michael—someone she had only exchanged emails with. She wasn't naturally outgoing, and the thought of making conversation over lunch was making her palms sweat.

“Okay,” she whispered to herself, rehearsing lines. ‘How was your flight?’... ‘Did you find the building easily?’... ‘Mention the weather. Everyone talks about the weather.’ She rehearsed responses too, imagining how to nod and smile without seeming robotic. Just then, her office phone buzzed. Reception called to say Michael had arrived. Moments later, a tall man with a friendly smile walked in.

“Hi! You must be Lara. I’m Michael—it’s great to finally meet you.” “Hi, yes, welcome! Did you find the building okay?” “Yes, no trouble at all. The directions were very clear.” “I’m glad to hear that. How was your flight from Durban?” “Pretty smooth, actually. Just a bit of turbulence over the coast.”

“That’s good. The weather’s been a bit temperamental today—sun one moment, clouds the next.” Michael chuckled. “Sounds like Durban too. Always keeping us on our toes.” Lara smiled. Maybe this wasn’t going to be so hard after all.

# Comprehension question based on the text

1. Why was Lara nervous about the meeting?
2. What strategies did she use to prepare for the conversation?
3. What impression did Michael make on Lara?
4. What did they talk about during their first few minutes?
5. How did Lara feel by the end of the text?



# Match the words with their definitions

1. lukewarm

a. ... to practise in advance

2. rehearse

b. ... made a short sound (phone or bell)

3. robotic

c. ... changing mood or conditions suddenly

4. temperamental

d. ... slightly warm (often used negatively)

5. buzzed

e. ... mechanical, without emotion

# Practise using polite, professional small talk

## Role A: The host

1. You work at the head office.
2. You've never met this visitor in person.
3. You've been asked to greet them and show them around before a short meeting.
4. You're a bit shy but want to make a good impression.

## Your goals:

1. Make the visitor feel welcome.
2. Start a natural conversation.
3. Ask at least three small talk questions from today's lesson.
4. Respond to the visitor's replies in a friendly, engaged way.

## Role B: The visitor

1. You're visiting this office from another branch for the first time.
2. You're here for a brief meeting and possibly a tour of the premises.
3. You've heard positive things about the team here.
4. You're a little tired but in a good mood.

## Your goals:

1. Be polite and responsive.
2. Answer small talk questions naturally.
3. Volunteer extra details when appropriate.
4. Ask one small talk question back to your host.



**Thank you for your support.**

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