



## MAKING SMALL TALK



**Small talk** is casual conversation about such topics as the weather or sports. It's also sometimes called chitchat. We make small talk when we are waiting for an important guest to arrive, or when we are socializing with friends and acquaintances. With the holiday season coming soon, you will be invited to attend parties and dinners and other celebrations, and you will be meeting many new people. What will you say to them?

Practice making small talk with your conversation partner. Do a role-play where you are the guest and your partner is the host (or hostess) then switch roles. Then pretend you and your conversation partner are both guests at a party, waiting for the guest of honor to arrive. This exercise will help you to feel more comfortable having conversations with people you have just met. Here are some hints to get you started:

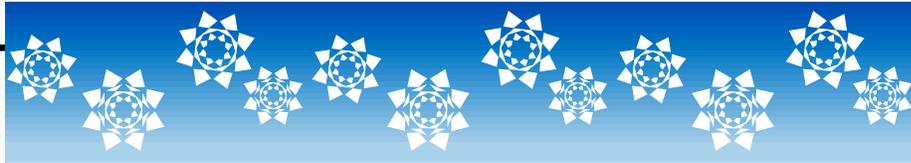
Introduce yourself. Hold out your hand to show that you are ready to shake hands and say: "Hi, I'm Lee. I'm a friend of Anton's" (name your host here) or "I work with Anton at English in Action." The response might be: "A pleasure to meet you, Lee. I'm Yuko." Then you might say, "How do you know Anton?" The response might be "Anton is my cousin's friend" or "Anton and I are on the same soccer team." Note that you can be very informal when making small talk.

Offer some food or drink to someone by saying, "Can I get you something to drink?" or "Can I get you something to eat?" You could also say, "Would you like something to drink/eat?" Or you could say, "I'm going over to the bar to get a glass of wine. Can I get you something?" If you are sitting at a dining table, you could offer to pass or serve some food or drink, "Would you like some mashed potatoes?" or "Can I pass you the turkey?" You can ask, "Would you mind passing me the cranberry relish?" or "May I have some apple cider?" Always remember to say thank you.

After you have introduced yourselves, you might ask, "So, what kind of work do you do?" Or you could make a comment about the weather, "That was some snow storm we had last week! We had no power for three days!" Or you could ask about a recent sports event, for instance, "Did you watch the football game last Sunday?" You could say, "I just saw a really great film last week. Have you seen 'The Life of Pi'?" When it's time to move on, just say, "Please excuse me. I have to find my wife/husband/cousin. It was nice to meet you." Then walk away.

Remember that small talk is just that: small talk. You don't need to give an in-depth opinion about world affairs or get into a deep discussion about the stock market. You don't have to make a plan to meet again (unless you want to. Then you might say, "I really enjoyed talking to you. I hope we'll run into each other again sometime.") Small talk is for passing the time and feeling comfortable getting to know someone just a little bit.





## Grammar Exercise

### *To, Too and Two*

The word "to" can be used as a preposition before a noun or as part of the infinitive of a verb.

Examples:

Used as a preposition: Please take me **to** the store.

Used in an infinitive: I want **to** go to the movies.

The word "too" can be used as a synonym for the word "also" or it can indicate excessiveness.

Examples:

Used as a synonym for "also": I am going to the park, **too**.

Used to show excessiveness: I have **too** many shoes!

The word "two" spells out the number 2.

*Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words.*

1. Are you going to Chinatown? I would like to go, \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Kids go \_\_\_\_\_ the doctor for a checkup.
3. Do you like \_\_\_\_\_ go to the doctor?
4. I have \_\_\_\_\_ dogs and a cat.
5. Ellen bought three tickets \_\_\_\_\_ the opera. Would you like to come, \_\_\_\_\_?
6. He works very hard and likes \_\_\_\_\_ help others. He has \_\_\_\_\_ jobs and volunteers, \_\_\_\_\_.
7. This grammar exercise is much \_\_\_\_\_ difficult!

*(Answers are below.)*

## Culture Corner

### *New Year's Resolutions*

Each year at the end of December, people in the United States typically look back at the past year and think about what they would like to do differently in the coming year. The intentions they express are called New Year's Resolutions. This is a very old tradition. Historians believe that the custom dates back to Ancient Rome.

There are some resolutions that are popular every year. Many people decide that they would like to:

- Lose weight
- Spend more time with family and friends
- Quit smoking
- Get out of debt
- Be more organized
- Eat more healthy food
- Learn something new
- Get a better job
- Save more money
- Keep to a budget

While most people are quite genuine in their intention, New Year's Resolutions are famous for lasting only a short time. Many people forget or give up on their goal by the end of January. In fact, many people make the same resolution over again every year!



1. too 2. to 3. to 4. two 5. to; too 6. to; two; too 7. too

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