

Small talk cheat sheet - V1.2 - Techlecticism.com

Basic Principles

- Social skills and small talk are a skill you become better at by practice
- Small talk is a technique to get to know each other and get on the same level
- If you get on the same page, you can open up and connect more to create a relation
- Don't engage people for approval, validation or acceptance - but for a social experience
- A big part of communication is nonverbal - voice, posture, expressions

Qualities

- Be honest to yourself and others
- Be an energetic, optimistic, enthusiastic you
- Be curious and show empathy
- Don't take it all too serious

Right mindsets

- I can develop in a better me by taking action
- I'm the actor not the victim in my life
- I'm truly interested in other people
- Everybody likes me until proven otherwise
- I am a likable and interesting person

How to approach people

- Look if people are open to conversation
 - Open body language
 - Not busy or in another conversation
- Make eye contact and smile warmly
- Don't obsess about what to say
- Approach and just simply open with;
 - "Hi, how are you?"
- Assume the other person is more anxious
 - You can make them feel more at ease

How to start a conversation

- Comment on the context (Situations, news, setting, people)
 - *"This coffee place has a nice nostalgic interior, don't you agree?"*
- Give a real compliment
 - *"I really like those sneakers, where did you get them?"*

- Ask an opinion
 - *“So what do you think about velvet slacks?”*
- Ask about general information
 - *“Can you tell me what time it is?”*
- Talk about shared experiences:
 - *“That was an amazing game, that last goal! Wow, what did you like?”*
- Talk about the social context:
 - *“So who invited you to the party?”*
- Mention common interests
 - *“Are you going to watch the game tonight?”*

How to keep a conversation going

- Balance talking and listening to 2:3 ratio
- Show **genuine** interest,
 - Ask open-ended questions
 - Truly willing to listen and learn
 - *“What was/is your highlight this week?”*
 - *“What are you living towards?”*
 - Ask for the emotional layer
 - *“Why...”*
 - *“How come you chose...”*
- Avoid closed questions (limited answers; yes/no/...)
- Ask for opinions;
 - What do you think about
- Find common ground;
 - Agreement on an issue
 - Same interest [hobby / career / etc]
 - Knowing the same person
 - Enjoying a similar background
- Elaborate on common interest but keep the focus on them
- Show how you can relate to their experiences/interests
 - *“Interesting, I was as well in Paris last year, loved the croissants.”*
 - *“Myself I’m more into Dragonball, but One Piece is cool too!”*
- Approach subjects from a unique angle
 - Add emotion and quirk
 - *“What about cars? Wouldn’t they be much cooler with 6 wheels?”*
- Have your own opinion
 - But be open and respectful of others' opinion as well
 - *“I actually really like pineapple on my pizza”*
- Segue from the current subject by zooming in/out or move lateral
 - Dig into the details, see the bigger picture or mention related subjects
- Use “what-if” scenarios to get people thinking and talking
 - *“What if mobile phones were forbidden”*
- *Talks about your experiences/stories and ask how they can relate*
 - *What did you do this week*
 - *“I was just playing Starcraft with some friends, are you a gamer?”*

- *What are your plans*
 - *“Next weekend I’ll be home alone, love it! You have any plans?”*
- *What keeps you busy and why*
 - *“I’m trying to learn Chinese, preparing for our new overlords. Do you speak any second languages?”*

What to talk about

- Be prepared
 - Be informed, what is on people’s mind now? Latest meme, hype, news?
 - *“Did you guys see that pizza rat video?”*
 - *“Have you met the new girl in HR?”*
 - Prepare a few anecdotes you can use in conversation
 - *“This one time on bandcamp,...”*
 - *“So I was going to the police office,...”*
 - Prepare and share some interesting facts
 - *“Did you know this place was built in 1908?”*
 - *“So India just had its first moon mission.”*
- Safe subjects to ask about; FORD
 - Family
 - Occupation
 - Recreation
 - Dreams (aspirations)
- Other great general subjects
 - Pets
 - Music / movies / books
 - Travel
 - Food / drinks
- If people seem vague about a certain subject after a few questions
 - Let it go and move to the next
 - Some subjects are normal to you and can be sensitive to others
- Don’t just talk about yourself

How to talk and use your voice and body

- Look people in the eyes
- Stand up straight and relaxed
- Open body language, hands by your side
- Articulate clearly and speak loud enough

How to actively listen

- Listen with intent and true interest
- Use verbal acknowledgment that you listen
 - *“Interesting”*

- *“Sounds cool”*
 - *“Yes, go on”*
 - *“Seriously?”*
 - *“Tell me more”*
- Use nonverbal acknowledgment that you listen
 - *Nodding*
 - *“mmmm” / “uhuh”*
- Ask follow-up questions to keep people talking?
 - *“How did that make you feel?”*
 - *“And then what?”*
 - *“What were you thinking when that happened?”*
- Ask about what has been told, go with the flow
- Paraphrase what people said to show you listened

When and how to end a conversation

- If someone doesn't want to talk, don't force the conversation.
 - You'll get short closed answers
 - Someone doesn't look at you
 - They start/keep doing something else
- If conversations seem to be going nowhere
- Or if there seems to be no real interest feel free to leave
 - *“(Excuse me) I have to go ...”*
 - *“It was nice talking to you, but I have to ...”*
 - *“Alright, see you around”*
- If a conversation doesn't flow or just ends
 - Just let it go
 - Don't take this personally
 - There are numerous reasons beyond your influence why it doesn't work

How to overcome anxiety barrier

- 3 second rule - approach before you can think
- Take deep calming breaths to calm down and approach
- Boost confidence before social activity
 - Do what makes you feel good: work out / puzzles / cold shower etc.
- Share how you feel / clear the air
 - *“I'm a bit anxious about...”*
 - *“I usually don't step up to people, but you looked pretty interesting”*
- Practice, practice, practice

Stop!:

- Overanalyzing yourself and the situation
- Filtering your responses, say what you think/feel

- Focusing on yourself - instead focus (on the comfort of) the other

How to make others and yourself comfortable

- Become comfortable by making others comfortable
- Ask how people are doing
- Be curious and show interest
 - Show you are not judging
 - Show empathy
- Make easy eye contact and smile
- Ask and use their name
- Remember and bring up personal details
 - *"How is your wife/cat/boat doing?"*
- Paraphrase what people said to show you listened
- Show trust and some vulnerability
 - Say what you think and feel
- Remember: The more interesting/personal the conversation, the less effort it will take
- Don't take it all too seriously

Connecting to people

- Open up yourself, step by step share about you(r life)
 - Share information you'd ask of others as well
- Show you trust people
- Shared experiences

For questions, feedback and comments - mail met at timon@techlecticism.com