Starting and Ending Conversations

Use a simple formula to start and end small talk at work and around town. Work alone or with a partner.

Name _____ · Date _____

Small talk is a friendly, casual conversation about everyday topics. Read each example out loud. Then write your own.

Starting a conversation

Formula	Example	Your example
Comment + Question	"This game is intense! Which team are you cheering for?"	
Compliment + Question	"That is a cool car! Where did you find such a classic?"	
Experience + Question	"That training was tough! What did you think about it?"	

Ending a conversation

Formula	Example	Your example
Reason + Goodbye	"I have to get back to work. Talk to you later!"	
Future Plans + Goodbye	"Let's catch up for dinner later! See you then!"	
Positive Comment + Goodbye	"It was so nice to see you. Hope to see you again soon!"	

Model script: starting at work

Person 1: I always like working the late shift. What's your favorite shift?

Person 2: I love the late shift too; it means I can go to class in the morning.

Person 1: I didn't know you were in school. What are you studying?

Person 2: I'm studying math. I graduate next month.

Person 1: That must be why you are so quick on the register. Do you think your studies help you with the job?

Model script: ending

Person 1: Whoa, look at the time! I have to get back to work!

Person 2: It was so nice to see you!

Person 1: It was great to see you too!

Person 2: See you later.

Person 1: Bye!

Read both scripts out loud. Which formula does Person 1 use to start? Which one does Person 1 use to end?

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Small Talk Practice

Follow the five steps. Then write a short script for each scenario: what you say and what they say back.

5 steps for making small talk				
1 Find things you have in common.	**2** Reveal something about yourself.	**3** Find out about the other person.	**4** Ask questions to keep the conversation going.	**5** End the conversation at the right time.

Scenario 1: You and your coworker are taking the same bus home.

Me: _____

Them: _____

Me: _____

Scenario 2: You are walking your dog and see another person who is also walking their dog.

Me: _____

Them: _____

Me: _____

Scenario 3: You and a classmate are both eating lunch at the same table.

Me: _____

Them: _____

Me: _____

Scenario 4: It's your first day, and you meet a coworker in the break room.

Me: _____

Them: _____

Me: _____

What to talk about at work

Good topics	Skip at work
The weather, weekend plans, food, music, sports, pets, and the work you are doing together.	Gossip about other people, and topics that often cause arguments.

Tip: Practice your scripts out loud. Then ask, "What can I do better or differently?" Listen to the answer and try again.

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