

Small Talk: Where're You From?

For better or for worse, people from the US *love* to ask other people where they're from. You might have heard people ask:

- So where're you from?
- What's [Japan, Colombia, Lebanon, etc.] like? How's it compare to the US?
- Do you feel any different here than you do at home?
- What's school like in [Japan, Colombia, Lebanon, etc.]?
- How's your experience here been so far?

It's up to you whether you want to talk about any of these things on a given day, and you can always stop the conversation if it gets a little too personal or you feel uncomfortable for any reason. Today, though, let's practice having a conversation with someone about our cultures. Take some time to think of things, and then we'll practice together.

To prepare, consider:

- Three **general** things that are different from your home country here in the US, and three things that are similar to your home country in the US (notes)

Differences	Similarities
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

- Think about how you feel when you speak English. Do you ever surprise yourself by the way you act in English, or say things that you maybe wouldn't say in your language at home? Write down any notes you think of below.

- What's school like for you here in the US? How's it different from back home? Let's do 2 similarities and differences this time.

Differences	Similarities
1.	1.
2.	2.

- Lastly, how're you enjoying your time in the US so far? Has anyone said anything to you that you haven't liked?

Let's take a look at what I said about studying in Germany:

- Three **general** things that are different from your home country here in the US, and three things that are similar to your home country in the US (notes)

Differences	Similarities
1. Lots of Germans live at home while they go to college, not in dorms	1. People don't like to be touched very much! Germans aren't very touchy people
2. Germans aren't as friendly at first as people in the US... They're not as open to new people	2. Young people in Germany also like to go out with their friends and party as a group on weekends
3. The work day is a lot shorter in Germany! It's hard to make an appointment when every office is closed at 3:00 PM	3. Germans have a pretty close relationship with their family members, including extended family

- Think about how you feel when you speak ~~English~~ German. Do you ever surprise yourself by the way you act in ~~English~~ German, or say things that you maybe wouldn't say in your language at home? Write down any notes you think of below.
 - I definitely feel a little more "sharp" in German, if that makes sense? More direct, more "to the point."
 - Sometimes I feel like I say things in German that would be rude if I said them in English because we're not as blunt as people are in Germany.

- What's school like for you here in the US? How's it different from back home? Let's do 2 similarities and differences this time.

Differences	Similarities
1. There's a lot more distance between instructors in Germany than there is in the US! People are way more formal in email communications and in person	1. Classes are made up of people from different ages and genders
2. Lectures feel like lectures: teacher talks, students take notes, not a lot of back-and-forth or student-student talk	2. People dress however they want to for school/college, there's not really a dress code

Lastly, how're you enjoying your time in the ~~US~~ Germany so far? Has anyone said anything to you that you haven't liked?

One guy in one of my classes assumed that because I was from the US, I wouldn't be able to speak German--there's a stereotype that people in the US can't speak other languages, and a lot of the time it *is* true. But he always tried to talk to me in English, even when I was talking to him in German. I really didn't like that, because the whole reason I went there was to practice my German. 😞 Otherwise things were great!