

## Video 1.2 Small Talk

Hi, how are you doing? Are you enjoying the weather today? It's nice and sunny here. Great weather for spending time outdoors.

Did you notice what I've just done? Actually, that was an example of small talk. Small talk is a short informal conversation at the beginning of a meeting to break the ice, make people feel relaxed and set a positive atmosphere. It's common practice for interviewers to start the interview with small talk. Let's look at some useful things you need to remember about small talk so that you feel more comfortable with it.

**The first thing you need to remember is to be engaged!** The interviewer might make small talk with a question about your day *How are you doing today?* or a short comment about the weather. Make sure you know how to respond to the most common conversation starters. Even if you don't actually have any news or any opinion on today's weather, do your best to continue the conversation. Speak in a friendly manner and make sure your replies are not too short. In the audio, which you listened to, the interviewer is trying to be friendly. The candidate, however, is extremely reserved, gives short answers and acts as if she doesn't wish to communicate. This seems really rude and may leave a bad impression.

**The second important thing - ask back!** Your conversation should **not** be one-sided. Remember: it's a **talk**, and each talk requires minimum two sides. You need to react, share experiences, demonstrate interest and ask follow-up questions. Avoid a situation when you just answer the interviewer's question and stop speaking once you've replied to it. If the interviewer asks a 'How are you' question, give an answer about your day **and** ask about the interviewer's day.

**Another useful point to remember is it's small talk, not big talk!** Don't tell the interviewer the story of your life. Small talk is normally not longer than a couple of minutes.

**Which are typical small talk topics?** Do you remember the topics the interviewer mentioned in the audio? He asked questions about the candidate's day and made some comments on the weather. Other safe topics include holiday and weekend plans or some recent positive news. Stay away from taboo topics, such as religion, health and politics.

**Active listening is the next key to successful communication.** When the interviewer is talking about something for more than 30 seconds, it's a good idea to show that you are following along. This technique is called active listening. The most common active listening phrases are *Right, I see, Sure, Uhuh*. This way you'll demonstrate that you understand what the interviewer is saying and are actively involved in the conversation.

**And finally, remember: preparation is the key.** Think of some comments and answers to typical small talk questions and practice them with your colleagues/friends. You can find some examples of typical small talk questions/comments and responses in the phrase bank in this lesson. I'm pretty sure with a bit of practice it shouldn't take too long to improve your small talk skills.