

1

Introductions and Small Talk

Dialogue 1-1: Formal Greetings

JAMES: **Good morning**, Professor Austin, how are you doing?

PROFESSOR AUSTIN: Good morning, James. I am doing well. And you?

JAMES: I'm great, thank you. This is my friend Emma. She is thinking about applying to this college. She has a few questions. Would you mind telling us about the process, please?

PROFESSOR AUSTIN: Hello, Emma! It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm more than happy to speak with you. Please stop by my office next week.

EMMA: It's a pleasure to meet you, professor. Thank you so much for helping us.

PROFESSOR AUSTIN: **Don't mention it.** Hopefully, I will be able to answer your questions!



LANGUAGE NOTES

- The greetings **good morning**/*good afternoon*/*good evening* are used at different times of the day to greet people. “Good evening” is often used after 6 p.m. or generally when the sun has set.
- “Good night” is not a greeting: It is used when leaving a place or group of people. *Thank you and good night! / Good night, and see you tomorrow.*
- When people meet in the United States, it is customary for them to shake hands. A handshake should be firm and usually lasts for about two to three seconds — which allows enough time to say “Nice to meet you.”
- “**Don’t mention it**” is another way of saying “You’re welcome.” The phrase “You are welcome” is more formal. However, responses such as *Don’t mention it. / No problem. / Happy to help.* are informal ways of responding to a thank you.

Dialogue 1-2: Informal Greetings and Farewells



- JANE:** Hi, Helen! **How's it going?**
- HELEN:** Fine, thanks — and you?
- JANE:** Just fine. **Where are you off to?**
- HELEN:** **To the library.** I've got a history exam next week and need to start studying. Ugh.
- JANE:** Oh, no. Well, I'll see you later then. Good luck!
- HELEN:** Thanks. **See you later.**

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **"Hi"** is an informal way of saying "hello." Notice that the "i" sound in "hi" is extended, to show that Jane is very pleased to see Helen.
- **"How's it going?"** is an informal way of saying "How are you?"
- **"Fine, thanks—and you?"** Notice the rising intonation on "and you?" This shows that Helen is interested in what Jane has to say.
- **"Where are you off to?"** is an informal way of saying "Where are you going?" Notice the falling intonation since this is an information question, not a "yes/no" question.
- **"To the library."** Notice that Helen does not say "I'm going" here because that information was already established in the question "Where are you off to?"
- **"Oh, no"** is a way of saying "I sympathize with you" or "I understand you are not happy."
- **"See you later"** is an informal way of saying "goodbye."

Dialogue 1-3: Formal Introductions

MARGARET:

Mr. Wilson, I'd like you to meet Dr. Edward Smith.

MR. WILSON:

It's nice to meet you, Dr. Smith.

DR. SMITH:

Pleasure to meet you, too.

MARGARET:

Dr. Smith is an economist. He just finished writing a book on international trade.

MR. WILSON:

Oh? That's my field, too. I work for the United Nations.

DR. SMITH:

In the **Development Program, by any chance?**

MR. WILSON:

Yes. How did you guess?

DR. SMITH:

I've read your articles on technical assistance. They're excellent.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Mr. Wilson, I'd like you ...** Notice the rising intonation on "Mr. Wilson," which is used to address someone. Listen for the "d" in "I'd like." This means I would like, which is very different from I like. ("I'd like" means the same as "I would like" or "I want.")
- **Dr. Smith is an economist.** Notice the stress on "economist." This content word has new information, so it is emphasized. There are four syllables in "economist," with the stress on the second syllable (e-CON-o-mist).
- **He just finished writing ...** "just" means the very recent past. "Just" is usually used with a simple past verb because the action is complete. However, it can also be used with the present perfect (He's just finished writing ...).
- **Development program.** Since these two words make a compound noun, the main stress falls on "development."
- **By any chance?** Means the same as "possibly." Notice the rising intonation, which is used in yes/no questions to confirm that something is true.

Dialogue 1-4: Informal Introductions

- JIM:** **Who's** the tall woman next to Barbara?
- CHARLES:** That's her friend Mary. **Didn't you meet her** at Steve's party?
- JIM:** No, **I wasn't at Steve's party.**
- CHARLES:** Oh! Then let me introduce you to her now. **Mary, this is my friend Jim.**
- MARY:** Hi, Jim. **Nice to meet you.**
- JIM:** You, too. Would you like a drink?
- MARY:** **Sure,** let's go get one.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **“Who’s”** is the contracted form of who is. It is pronounced the same way as “whose” (/huwz/), but the meaning is different.
- **Didn’t you meet her ...?** Notice that this is a negative question. Charles thought that Jim had met Mary before. He is now surprised that Jim does not know Mary, and so he uses a negative question to show his surprise.
- **I wasn’t at Steve’s party.** Notice that the emphasis here is on “at” although prepositions normally have weak stress. In this case, “at” means “there” (I wasn’t there).
- **Mary, this is my friend Jim.** This is a friendly way to introduce two people. It’s common to follow this with “Jim, this is Mary.” In this case, Mary says “Hi, Jim” first.
- **Nice to meet you.** This is a typical response after you’ve been introduced to someone.
- **“Sure”** is often used in informal conversation to mean “yes.”