

# The ABC of communication skills: Making small talk

There is nothing wrong with unsophisticated, casual conversation. The aim is to make contact with people and to make new acquaintances. Small talk can signal to the other person that you are interested in them. Innocuous subjects are best suited for this, as they avoid the possibility of disagreements that would make it more difficult to make friends.

## General information you should consider:

- Trust in yourself and start the conversation.
- The discussion topics should be general, rather superficial and not personal.
- Talk about positive things, avoid criticism, and do not discriminate against or gossip about anyone.
- Ask open questions (“What did you think of the lecture today?” instead of “The lecture today was fascinating, wasn't it?”).
- Listen carefully to the other person.
- Look out for facial expressions and gestures that express interest (e.g. eye contact, posture, distance)

## Possible discussion topics:

- Food and drink (“I've discovered a new café in Neustadt, do you know it?”)
- The current environment (in a seminar: “Have you attended a seminar with this lecturer before?” or at a party: “How do you know Max (whose birthday it is)?”)
- Sports (e.g. FIFA World Cup)
- Travel (“Are you going away anywhere during the semester break?” and if so: “Where?”)
- Studies (“Which semester are you in?” or “Do you already know which Master's degree you want to do and where?”)

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- Hobbies (“When I went to school, I played volleyball, do you know if there is a good club here?”)
- Music, concerts (“I’ve heard that bands always play at the AStA summer party. What did you think of the last the line-up?”).
- Movies, TV series or books (“I’m looking for inspiration for what to watch next, do you have any recommendations/are you watching anything good?”)

## Discussion topics to avoid:

- Politics
- Religion
- Illness
- Personal problems
- Rumors about others
- Money
- Criticism