

Small talk can be defined as:

Light, informal conversation for social occasions.

Casual or trivial conversation...chitchat.

Conversation for its own sake.

Some people avoid social situations because the thought of making small talk makes them uncomfortable. It can be a big challenge, but a little preparation and confidence is all you need.

The ability to develop relationships with people through small talk is an acquired skill so here are a few tips for **starting- and ending conversations:**

1. Prepare three things to talk about before attending a function. These could include: current events, movies, books, seminars, etc.
2. Be the first to say "hello." If you're not sure the other person will remember you, say your name. For example, "Phebe? It's Lori-Ann... good to see you again." Smile first and always shake hands when you meet someone.
3. Introduce others who join the group or enter the conversation.
4. Get another person talking by leading with a common ground statement regarding the occasion or location and then asking a related open-ended question. For example, "I love the food at this restaurant" and then "Who invited you to BNI this morning?"
5. Show interest in your conversational partner by actively listening and giving verbal feedback. Maintain eye contact and never glance around the room while they are talking to you.
6. Have a few exit lines ready, so that you can both gracefully move on. For example, "I need to check in with a client over there," "I skipped lunch today, so I need to visit the buffet," or "Who do you know at this meeting that could help me with...?"

The key is to practice. Start today by saying hello to someone in the elevator or in line for a coffee. You'll be surprised to find that most people are more than happy to engage in some small talk.