

Talking to strangers is something Americans, especially those in the southern and western United States do. So today we'll practice some "small talk". Small talk is the language used in brief conversations with strangers or people we don't know well. Maybe you are standing in a long line at the grocery store or waiting to buy tickets. Perhaps you are at a party where you don't know anyone. Don't stand in the corner. Use "small talk".

PARTY

If you are at a party, you will want to start with an introduction. Stick out your right hand and say, "I don't think we've met. I'm _____." You can add some information if it is relevant. "I don't think we've met. I'm _____. My wife and I live next door to the hosts."

The usual response will be: "Nice to meet you, _____." You may or not get more information than that. If you are at a party, you can then ask, "How do you know (the hosts) Lyn and Jeff?" Response-- "I work with Jeff. I actually just met Lyn tonight. I've heard Jeff talk about her, so it's nice to meet her. She's a lovely person."

Now you are off and running. You can keep the conversation going by asking more questions (careful not to get too personal). Possible questions to ask: "Where do you work?" or "What do you do?" "Have you worked their long?"

"I hear they are a good company to work for." Technically this is not a question, but it will probably be treated as one. They will probably respond-- "Yes, I enjoy working there" or "Yes, they promote within, so it's easy to move up." or "It's alright. They do have great benefits." Benefits refers to the benefits package meaning vacation time, insurance, paid parking, pension, gym, free day care, etc.

If you get one word answers in response to your questions, after a few, move on to another guest. You've probably introduced yourself to someone as uncomfortable as you are. You can move on by saying, "I think I'll refresh my drink." or "Excuse me, I'd better check in with my wife." Or you can simply say, "Well it was nice talking to you, _____." and walk away.

If you see someone you've met before, you can ask a different set of questions: How is your daughter doing? Did you get your son off to school? It was really hot today wasn't it? Rush hour was awful this morning wasn't it? I hope your wife is feeling better.

Forget their name? "I'm sorry, I don't remember your name." "Remind me of your name, again." "Oh yes, Charlie. How could I forget that? I've met so many new people since I arrived here that it's hard for me to keep them all straight." "Pronounce your name for me again."

Practice small talk. Talk a few minutes with a person. Find out a little bit about them, then move on.

IN A LINE

This situation is tricky because it makes some people uncomfortable. It's fine to just smile and remain silent. But if starts a conversation, you can make small talk.

Stranger: Boy it's crowded in here. I wonder why so many people are shopping today?

You: I'm not sure why it's so crowded.

Stranger: You have an accent. Where are you from?

You: I'm from Iran.

Stranger: Oh, what are you doing here?

You: (This is kind of personal, but Americans are nosy.) Possible answers- "Just visiting." "I'm doing post-doc work at UT." "I have relatives here."

Stranger: How long have you been here?

You: A couple of weeks.

Stranger: When are you going back?

You: I'm not sure of the exact date. Perhaps in a few weeks.

Stranger: How do you like it here?

You: (Everyone thinks their area is the best and they want you to like it too.) Oh, it's great. I am really enjoying my visit.

Stranger: Iran. Now is that close to Afghanistan?

You: (Americans are horrible with geography.) Yes. We share a border with Afghanistan.

Stranger: Well, hope you enjoy your visit.

OPD Pg 84-85

Look at the picture on pages 84-85.

Tell if these sentences are true or false. If they are false, correct them.

1. Three men are playing music.
2. A woman is putting purple flowers in a vase.
3. A woman is buying strawberries.
4. A man is drinking water.
5. The children are choosing some samples.
6. The blueberries are next to the strawberries.
7. The woman is counting avocados.
8. There are three herbs on the table.
9. The child in the stroller is crying.
10. The man is selling lemonade.
11. The man is holding a cane.
12. One of the vendors is selling avocados.
13. The vendor is choosing a sweet.
14. A woman is eating a cookie.

Talk in class:

1. Offer me a "sample" of something.
2. Name something sour and something sweet.
3. Name some sweets you like.
4. Name some herbs you cook with.
5. Explain the difference between "live music" and "canned music".
6. How often do you shop at a farmer's market? What do you buy there?
7. What are the good and bad points about farmer's markets?

Read in your group. Each person read one sentence.

At the farmer's market, Cathy looked for a vendor selling eggs. There were vendors selling vegetables. There were vendors selling home baked bread. But there were no vendors selling eggs. Finally, Cathy decided to leave the market. She was disappointed that there were no egg vendors. Then, just as she was leaving, she saw a small truck at the side of the market. The sign on the truck said, "Fresh, free range chickens and eggs". Cathy ran to the truck. She bought eggs. The farmer said he also made yogurt from the milk of his cows. He asked Cathy to taste a sample. It was mango flavored yogurt. It was delicious. So Cathy bought eggs and yogurt. She will look for the same vendor next week.

Paraphrase the paragraph.