Small Talk That Goes Somewhere

LESSON SUMMARY | One-page reference • Business conversations

THE GOAL

Make small talk feel natural. Open warmly, react to what you hear, ask a useful follow-up, and share something real about yourself.

The four moves

MOVE	LANGUAGE FRAME	WHY IT WORKS
1 OPEN	How's your week going?	A friendly question that is easy to answer.
2 REACT	That sounds + adjective.	Shows you noticed the other person's situation.
3 FOLLOW UP	How did that go?	Invites a fuller answer, not just yes/no.
4 SHARE	I've been working on …	Keeps the exchange balanced and genuine.

Watch how the conversation moves

BEFORE A VIDEO MEETING

A: Hey, how's your week been?
B: Pretty good. We've just finished a big project.
A: Nice! How did it go?
B: Better than expected. What about you?
A: I've been preparing a new workshop.

Choose your reaction carefully

Good news: "We're opening a second office." → "That sounds exciting!"

Difficult news: "It's been a tough week. We're restructuring." → "That sounds challenging."

Tip: "That sounds …" can be exciting, interesting, challenging or stressful. Choose what fits; avoid assuming how someone feels.

One-minute challenge

In your next English conversation: (1) ask an easy question, (2) react to the answer, and (3) ask a follow-up or share a short update.

Remember: The goal is connection, not perfect grammar.

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STUDENT WORKSHEET | 10 checks + a short speaking mission

Name: _____ Date: _____

A Choose the most natural response (4 points)

1. A client says: “We’re opening a second office next month.”
   a) That sounds exciting! b) How old are you? c) Too bad.

2. A colleague says: “It’s been tough. We’re restructuring.”
   a) That sounds fun! b) That sounds challenging. c) Who cares?

3. A new contact says: “We hosted our first event last Friday.”
   a) How did it go? b) Are you busy? c) What time is it?

4. Someone asks: “And what about you?”
   a) How did it go? b) I’ve been working on a new project. c) That sounds stressful.

B Complete the useful expressions (4 points)

Use each word once: been • sounds • did • working

5. “How’s your week _____ so far?”

6. “That _____ challenging.”

7. “How _____ it go?”

8. “I’ve been _____ on a presentation.”

C Make the conversation better (2 points)

9. “I ran my first workshop yesterday.” / “Okay.”
   Write a warmer reaction OR a useful follow-up:

   _____

10. “We have a tight deadline this week.” / “That sounds exciting!”
    Rewrite the response to suit the situation:

    _____

D Speak: your 30-second small-talk challenge (not scored)

BEFORE A TEAM MEETING

Ask how someone’s week is going. Imagine they say: “We’ve just finished a difficult project.” Respond naturally, ask one follow-up, then share what you’ve been working on.

Self-check: ☐ I opened warmly ☐ I reacted appropriately ☐ I followed up ☐ I shared something

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EXTRA PHRASE BANK | 15 useful expressions by function

USE THESE AS BUILDING BLOCKS

Pick one phrase for the situation. Listen carefully and respond naturally - don't try to say every phrase in one conversation.

OPEN | Start naturally

PHRASE	WHEN TO USE IT
How's your week going?	Friendly, neutral opener.
How's your week been so far?	Ask about the week up to now.
How have things been?	Reconnect with someone you already know.
How are things on your side?	Useful with colleagues in other teams.

REACT | Show you listened

PHRASE	WHEN TO USE IT
That sounds exciting.	Positive developments.
That sounds interesting.	Curiosity without overreacting.
That sounds challenging.	Difficult or demanding news.
That sounds stressful.	Acknowledge pressure sensitively.

FOLLOW UP | Keep it moving

PHRASE	WHEN TO USE IT
How did that go?	Ask about a completed event.
What was the best part?	Invite a more interesting story.
How did the team respond?	Discuss a workplace result.
What happens next?	Ask about a future step.

SHARE | Offer something of your own

PHRASE	WHEN TO USE IT
I've been working on ...	Describe a current ongoing activity.
We've just finished ...	Share something recently completed.
I'm getting ready for ...	Mention an upcoming event or task.

Try it: OPEN → REACT → FOLLOW UP → SHARE. You only need one good line at each stage.