

# Business English

język angielski biznesowy

kieszonkowy  
**poradnik**  
biznesowo-  
językowy



SMALL TALK



# Business English

## kieszonkowy poradnik biznesowo-językowy

### Business English Language Guide Small Talk

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our newest portable<sup>1</sup> language guide. In this edition we become virtual<sup>2</sup> chatterboxes<sup>3</sup>.

Small talk is probably the most common type of conversation people get engaged in<sup>4</sup>; still it often presents difficulties<sup>5</sup> to non-native speakers. Therefore, in this booklet, we acquaint you with<sup>6</sup> some popular phrases to use, as well as some common small talk topics.

We are certain that with the help of this booklet, you will be chatting<sup>7</sup> away in no time<sup>8</sup>.

We wish you many a successful conversation.

1 **portable** /'pɔ:təbl/ | przenośny

2 **virtual** /'vɜ:tʃuəl/ | dosłowny, praktyczny

3 **chatterbox** /'tʃætəbɒks/ | gaduła, papla

4 **to engage in** /tu ɪn'geɪdʒ ɪn/ | zaangażować się (w coś)

5 **to present difficulty** /tə pri'zent 'dɪfɪkəlti/ | sprawiać trudność

6 **to acquaint sb with sth** /tu ə 'kweɪnt 'sʌmbədi wɪð 'sʌmθɪŋ/ | zaznajomić kogoś z czymś, zapoznać kogoś z czymś

7 **to chat** /tə tʃæt/ | pogadać, gawędzić

8 **in no time** /ɪn nəʊ taɪm/ | bardzo szybko, błyskawicznie

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## **Why do people make small talk?**

The most obvious reason is to break an uncomfortable silence or simply to fill time. Another is to show polite interest or not to appear rude in a social situation. You may also make small talk in order to get to know someone you haven't met before.

## **With whom to make small talk?**

People are expected to say at least a few words in certain situations, even if they do not know each other at all. It is commonly used when the persons involved are only acquaintances or work together while not being close friends. Some professionals are expected to have short casual conversations with customers as part of their jobs; these include customer service reps, waitresses, hairdressers and receptionists.

## **When to use small talk?**

Small talk will most commonly occur when you're getting to know someone or you see or meet somebody for the first time. Also, whenever people occupy the same space and aren't busy, it may be the right time to initiate a casual conversation. A break in between meetings or a prolonged wait, when there is nothing important going on, is a good time to make small talk. However, you should not interrupt people who are already otherwise engaged. It is also important to recognize when your interlocutor wants to disengage from the conversation.



## **Where to make small talk?**

Small talk most often occurs where people are waiting for something. You may reel up to the person beside you when waiting for the train to arrive, in a dentist's waiting room or in a queue at the store. With co-workers, small talk happens in elevators, canteens and wherever there is a line-up for something. You are also expected to mingle with other people who take part in the same social event, such as a party or an organized trip.

## What to make small talk about?

There are certain safe topics that people usually make small talk about.

The weather and surroundings are the most common things to discuss. It is probably the safest subject to pick with persons whom you do not know well; most people share the same opinions here, without any emotional baggage attached. Even family members and friends sometimes discuss it upon meeting or to start a conversation.

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Wonderful day to be outside, isn't it?	Wspaniały dzień by spędzić czas na zewnątrz, nieprawdaż?
Can you believe all of this rain we've been having?	Ostatnio to cały czas leje, no nie?
It looks like it's going to snow. It sure would be nice to be in Hawaii right about now	Wygląda na to, że spadnie śnieg Jakże miło byłoby teraz być na Hawajach
I hear they're forecasting thunderstorms all weekend	Słyszałem, że na cały weekend zapowiadają burze z piorunami.
We couldn't ask for nicer weather, could we?	Pogoda jest wprost wymarzona, czyż nie?
The tulips are really beautiful at this time of year, aren't they?	Tulipany są takie piękne o tej porze roku, czyż nie?
I really like how green everything is around here, don't you?	Bardzo mi się podoba, że w tej okolicy jest tyle zieleni, a tobie?

Current events are a sure-fire way to get the conversation going. It is generally safe to discuss the news, as long as you do not touch upon controversial issues. If you happen to stumble upon a point your interlocutor has a strong and opposing opinion of, change the

subject as soon as possible. Sports news is a very common topic, entertainment and celebrities are another good one.

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Did you watch the news today?	Oglądałeś dzisiaj wiadomości?
Did you hear about that fire on Main Street?	Czy słyszałeś o tym pożarze na ulicy Głównej?
What do you think about this dustman strike?	Co sądzisz o tym strajku śmieciarzy?
I've read on Twitter today that the old swimming pool is closing.	Przeczytałem dziś na Twitterze, że zamykają stary basen.
I heard on the radio that they are finally going to start building the new bridge	Słyszałem w radio, że nareszcie rozpoczynają budowę nowego mostu.
How do you like the new park?	Jak Ci się podoba ten nowy park?
How about the Reds? Do you think they're going to win tonight?	Co myślisz o Redsach? Sądzisz, że dziś wygrają?
Did you catch the game last night?	Oglądałeś wczoraj mecz?
How about that last stunt that Brangelina pulled?	Co myślisz o ostatnich wyczynach Brangeliny?

It is common for strangers in the same situation to talk (or complain) about it. For ex-ample, if you are riding on an over-crowded bus, you might complain about the traffic. It is even sometimes okay to discuss unpleasant things. For example in a doctor's waiting room people might talk about their health-related experiences or complain about the intricacy of the procedures when queueing in the local registry office.

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
I didn't think it would be so	Nie sądziłem, że dziś będzie taki

busy today.	ruch.
The bus seems to be running late today, again...	Autobus najwidoczniej dziś się spóźnia, znowu...
It looks like we are going to be here a while, huh?	Wygląda na to, że spędzimy tu dłuższy czas, co?
I'll have to remember not to come here on Fridays.	Muszę zapamiętać, by nie przychodzić tu w piątki
This is already the third time they've made me come back here!	Już trzeci raz kazali mi tu wrócić!
How long have you been waiting?	Jak długo już Pan/Pani czeka?

At social events it is common to discuss the buffet and the amenities

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Have you tried the cheese rolls?	Próbowaleś tych roladek serowych?
Are you enjoying your drink?	Smakuje Ci ten drink?
It looks like you're having fun	Wygląda na to, że dobrze się bawisz.
Pretty nice place they have here, huh?	Nieźle mają mieszkanie, co?

Similarly, in a workplace people might chat about new equipment or their lodgings. It is generally prudent to keep work-place small talk neutral. The management, the salaries and fellow workers should be considered a big no-go area. You should also avoid making any strongly negative comments, in case they fall upon the wrong ears.

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Looks like you've got your hands full.	Wygląda na to, że masz dużo roboty.
Are you looking forward to the weekend, too?	Też nie możesz się doczekać weekendu?

Have you worked here long?	Długo tu pracujesz?
I can't believe how quiet we are today, can you?	Nie do wiary, jaki dzisiaj spokój, prawda?
It's been a long week, don't you think?	Dłużył się ten tydzień, nie sądzisz?
You look like you could use a cup of coffee...	Wyglądasz jakbyś marzył o kawie..
What do you think of the new canteen?	Co sądzisz o nowej stołówce?

General questions and comments about personal matters and family are sometimes acceptable, especially when you and the other speaker have something in common. For example, people in playgrounds or walking their dogs will often talk about their charges, even if they are virtual strangers. Compliments on clothing or hair are fine; you should never mention a person's body, however, even as a compliment.

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Your baby looks just like my nephew. How old is he?	Twoje dziecko wygląda zupełnie jak mój siostrzeniec. W jakim jest wieku?
That's a cute puppy! What's her name?	Słodki szczeniaczek! Jak ma na imię?
I love your bag! Can I ask where you got it?	Piękna torebka! Czy mogę spytać gdzie ją kupiłaś?
I love what you did to your kitchen.	Bardzo podoba mi się jak urządziłaś kuchnię.
I come from a small town near Plymouth. How about you?	Pochodzę z małego miasteczka obok Plymouth. ATy?

Everyday routines and details of personal life are also popular conversation starters with people who know each other a little better.

QUOTE	TRANSLATION

So, how do you know Jacek?	To jak poznałeś Jacka?
And how is your dad doing these days?	A jak się ostatnio miewa Twój tata?
Hi, Jimmy! How was school?	Cześć Jimmy. Jak było w szkole?
Still working at Akme?	Nadal pracujesz w Akme?
How has your day been?	Jak Ci minął dzień?

During small talk you rarely volunteer information about yourself, there are, however, some opinions or experiences you can share, as long as you avoid topics that are obviously touchy. Similarly, it is also OK to ask the opinions of others.

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
The worst game I've ever seen was when France played Ireland in the world cup. Did you see it?	Najgorszy mecz jaki widziałem, to ten kiedy Francja grała z Irlandią na mistrzostwach świata. Widziałeś go?
I've stayed in different hotels, but that one must have been the worst I've ever seen!	Mieszkałem już w różnych hotelach, ale tamten był chyba najgorszy ze wszystkich
Have you tried the Gran Masala? In my opinion, it is by far the best Indian place in town.	Jadłeś już w Gran Masali? Moim zdaniem, to zdecydowanie najlepsza indyjska knajpka w mieście.
I adore jazz. What kind of music do you like?	Uwielbiam jazz. A jaką muzykę Ty lubisz?

With people who do not know each other well, there are some subjects considered not to be acceptable when making small talk. Discussing specific private issues, such as income or recent relationship problems, is simply not done. Negative comments about other persons not involved in the conversation are also not acceptable. In addition, it is best to avoid subjects commonly deemed controversial, such as religion or politics. The general rule

you should stick to is not to push through with items your conversation partner is not comfortable with or interested in.

### Subjects to avoid!

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
I'm Catholic; I go to Mass every Sunday. How about you?	Jestem katolikiem, co niedzielę chodzę na mszę. A Ty?
I need to lose some weight before I put on a bathing suit. But you have a great figure.	Muszę trochę stracić na wadze, zanim założę kostium kąpielowy. Ty za to masz świetną figurę.
All of you nurses are on strike again. Are they not paying you enough?	Wy pielęgniarki znów strajkujecie. Za mało wam płacą?
I just can't wait for my son to marry and move out.	Wprost nie mogę się doczekać aż mój syn ożeni się i wyprowadzi z domu
You marketing people must turn a nice buck...	Wy marketingowcy pewnie nieźle zarabiacie...

## How to make small talk?

When making small talk you not only need to pick a subject but also make the chat run fluidly. As with any conversation, you also need a way to begin and to end it. In the mean-time, you need to be able to keep up the other person's interest and be able to switch from subject to subject smoothly. Below we include some expressions you may want to use to accomplish that.

Greeting someone.	
QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Hello again!	Witam ponownie!
Hi! Hello!	Cześć!
What's up?	Co słychać?
What's new?	Co nowego?
How's it going?	Jak leci?
Good morning. How are you today?	Dzień dobry. Jak się dziś masz?
Good afternoon. How's everything?	Dzień dobry. Jak leci?
Good evening. How have you been?	Dobry wieczór. Jak się Pan/Pani miewa?
I haven't seen you in ages! How have you been?	Wieki całe Cię nie widziałem! Co u Ciebie?
How're things going?	Jak Ci leci?
How are you getting along?	Jak twoje sprawy?
Long time no see	Kopę lat.
Fancy meeting you here!	Fajnie, że Cię tu spotkałem!
What brings you here?	Co Cię tu sprowadza?
Never thought I'd see you here!	Nigdy bym nie zgadł, że Cię tu



	zobaczę!
What a surprise (to see you here)!	Co za niespodzianka (nie spodziewałem się Ciebie)!
So, what's new with you?	To co u Ciebie nowego?

### Opening a conversation and getting someone's attention.

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Excuse me,.....	Przepraszam,.
I couldn't help noticing....	I couldn't help noticing....
Listen (to this),...	Posłuchaj,...
Listen up,...	Listen up,...
Get this:...	Posłuchaj tego:...
Guess what (I just found out).	Wiesz, co (czego się dowiedziałem)?
Have you heard the latest?	Słyszałeś nowinę/nowiny?
Did you hear the news?	Słyszałeś, co nowego?
Can I talk to you?	(Czy) możemy porozmawiać?
Do you have a minute?	Masz chwilę?
May I have a word with you?	Czy możemy zamienić słówko?

### Introducing oneself

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
We haven't met, I'm....	Nie znamy się jeszcze, jestem...
I understand you are... I am...	Jak rozumiem Ty jesteś... Ja jestem...
You're....., aren't you? I'm ...	Jesteś..., prawda? Ja jestem.

### Introducing people to each other

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Naomi, I'd like you to meet Ben.	Naomi, poznaj Bena.
Naomi, this is my friend Ben.	Naomi, to mój przyjaciel Ben.
Ben, Naomi.	Ben, poznaj Naomi.
Naomi, have you met Ben?	Naomi, poznałaś już Bena?
Naomi, do you know Ben?	Naomi, znasz Bena?

### Responding to introduction

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Good/nice to meet you.	Miło mi Cię poznać.
I'm glad to meet you.	Cieszę się, że Cię poznałem.
What a pleasure to meet you.	To przyjemność Cię poznać.
A pleasure.	Miło mi.
How do you do?	Miło Pana/Panią poznać.
I'm sorry. What's your name again?	Przepraszam. Jeszcze raz, jak masz na imię?
Sorry, I didn't catch your name.	Przepraszam, nie dosłyszałem nazwiska.
I'm sorry, could you tell me your name again?	Przepraszam, czy może Pan/Pani powtórzyć swoje nazwisko?

### Responding to questions about your well being

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
I'm fine.	W porządku.
Great.	Świetnie.

Couldn't be better.	Lepiej być nie może.
(I) can't complain.	Nie narzekam.
Very busy. There aren't enough hours in the day	(Byłem/byłam) bardzo zajęty/-a. Dnia mi nie starcza.
I'm snowed under.	(Jestem) zawałony/-a robotą.
So-so.	Tak sobie.
Same old.	Po staremu.
Plugging along.	Jakoś orzę (żyję).
Not too great/ well.	Nie najlepiej.
Not so good.	Nie za dobrze.
I've been better.	Bywało lepiej.

<b>Showing interest</b>	
<b>QUOTE</b>	<b>TRANSLATION</b>
Really?	Naprawdę?
I see/get it.	Rozumiem.
Uh huh.	Aha.
(That's) right.	Jasne.
That's interesting.	To ciekawe.
No way!	Niemożliwe!
You're not pulling my leg, are you?	Nie nabierasz mnie, co?
OK then.	No dobrze.
Yes. Go on/keep going.	Tak. Mów dalej.
And (what then)?	I co (dalej)?
So you just said	Tak, mówiłeś.
I get the/your point.	Rozumiem, w czym rzecz.

No kidding	Bez jaj!
Are you serious?	Poważnie
You're making this up, aren't you?	Żartujesz, prawda?
I hear you	Rozumiem
I don't get it.	Nie rozumiem.
I don't follow you	Nie wiem, o co Ci chodzi.
I'm not sure I get your point	Nie do końca rozumiem do czego zmierzasz
I'm not sure I know what you mean	Nie do końca rozumiem, co masz na myśli

<b>Agreeing and disagreeing</b>	
<b>QUOTE</b>	<b>TRANSLATION</b>
You're right.	Masz rację
Exactly.	Dokładnie
Absolutely	Jak najbardziej
Indeed	W rzeczy samej
That's for sure.	Pewnie
I totally agree with you	Całkowicie się z tobą zgadzam
I couldn't agree with you more	Mam dokładnie to samo zdanie
Can't argue with that	Trudno zaprzeczyć.
Couldn't have said it better.	Sam lepiej bym tego nie powiedział
You may be right	Możesz mieć rację.
Well, perhaps (you're right)	Cóż, być może (masz rację).
You might have a point there.	Tu możesz mieć słuszność.

It may be so, but...	Być może tak jest, ale...
I'm not sure (if) I agree with you totally there.	Co do tego niezupełnie się zgadzam
I'm afraid I can't agree with you.	Obawiam się, że z tym nie mogę się zgodzić.
Very true.	To jak najbardziej prawda.

### Redirecting a conversation

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
That reminds me.....	To mi przypomina...
While we're on the subject of....	Skoro już mowa o...
By the way, ....	Przy okazji...
Talking of.....	À propos...
Funny you should say that because....	Zabawne, że to mówisz, bo...
However,...	Jednakże,...
On the other hand,...	Z drugiej strony...
But...	Ale/jednak...

### Ending a conversation

QUOTE	TRANSLATION
Is that the time? Time to hit the road.	To już ta godzina? Czas w drogę.
It was nice talking to you.	Miło się z Panem/Panią rozmawiało.
Will you excuse me?	Proszę mi wybaczyć.
Excuse me, I must just go and....	Przepraszam, muszę tylko...
I'm afraid I'll have to be going.	Obawiam się, że muszę już iść.
I have a big day tomorrow	Jutro ważny dzień.
I'm sorry, I must dash.	Przepraszam, ale muszę lecieć.
See you around/later.	Do zobaczenia.
Take care.	Trzymaj się.
Talk to you soon.	Niedługo pogadamy.

See you (real) soon.	Do zobaczenia wkrótce.
It was nice/good to see you.	Cieszę się, że się spotkaliśmy.
Bye (for) now!	Na razie!
See you tomorrow.	Do jutra.
It was nice/a pleasure meeting you.	Miło było Pana poznać.
It's been a real pleasure (Let's) stay in touch.	Pozostańmy w kontakcie.
Well, it's getting late.	Było mi naprawdę miło.
I'd better get going	Cóż, robi się późno.
I'd better be off. I have to get up early tomorrow	Lepiej już pójde
	Lepiej już pójde. Jutro muszę wcześniej wstać.

## Quiz

Match the conversation starter with the correct response.

	starter		response
1	There isn't a cloud in the sky. Don't you love this weather?	A	Quite so, I've been here for at least thirty minutes now.
2	Ah, this seems like a long wait. Have you been waiting long?	B	I love reading. Do you prefer fact or fiction?
3	I guess, I'll use the afternoon to catch up on my reading.	C	Likewise. And please, call me John.
4	That was one inspiring lecture, don't you think.	D	Absolutely. But I heard they are forecasting rain all weekend.
5	It was nice to meet you Mr Brown.	E	I sure do. Let's make sure to catch the follow up next week.

Check your answers. 1D, 2A, 3B, 4E, 5C

**At the water-cooler – read the dialogue below and find five mistakes.**

**Jill:** "Hi there."

**Joe:** "Hi. I haven't seen you around here before. Have you worked here long?"

**Jill:** "No, I've only been here a few weeks. I work in the Finance Department."

**Joe:** "Oh, you must make more money than I do then. I'm in Sales."

**Jill:** "Sales sounds like an interesting job."

**Joe:** "It's okay. Hey, you look like you could really use a coffee."

**Jill:** "Yes, it's been a really hectic week."

**Joe:** "Tell me about it! At least it's supposed to be a nice weekend."

**Jill:** "Yes, I've heard that they are forecasting blue skies."

**Joe:** „Say, are you going to the game Saturday night?"

**Jill:** "No, I don't even know who's playing. I don't really follow sports."

**Joe:** "Do you think The Badgers are going to make it to the finals this year?"

**Jill:** "I'm not sure. Well, I'd better get back to my desk."

**Joe:** "Speaking of desks, what do you think of the new office furniture?"

**Jill:** "It's nice, but I'd rather get a bonus than have new furniture."

**Joe:** "Oh. Well, I think I'll go and get that hot coffee. Can you believe all of this cold weather?"

**Jill:** "I know. I can't wait until Spring."

**Joe:** "Me neither! My divorce will finally come through by then!"

Check your answers:

1. It is inappropriate to discuss salaries during small talk.
2. One should not continue with a subject that the other person is obviously not interested in.
3. Joe did not take the cue that Jill wants to end the conversation.
4. Giving your opinion about salaries is not safe when making small talk with someone you don't know or trust.
5. Private information about one's personal life is not an appropriate small talk subject.

## Starting a business meeting

Read the dialogue below and fill in the blanks by choosing from the following options: (a) I agree; (b) Very true; (c) It's a pleasure; (d) That's for sure; (e) However



**John:** "Hi. My name is John Brown. (1)\_\_\_ to meet you, er – Bill, isn't it?"

**Bill:** "Hello John. Yes, I'm Bill Smith – I'm glad to be here."

**John:** "Did you have any problems finding this place?"

**Bill:** "I didn't have any problems. I found directions on the Internet so it was pretty easy to find. (2)\_\_\_, the traffic wasn't too good, though."

**John:** "Traffic is never good around here."

**Bill:** "(3)\_\_\_ . It would be great if there was a train or a subway line that went through here."

**John:** "(4)\_\_\_ . I would definitely take the train if they had it."

**Bill:** "Trains are great because I can do some work instead of having to fight the traffic."

**John:** "(5)\_\_\_ . Well, let me begin by telling you about our company..."

Check your answers. 1c; 2e; 3a; 4d; 5b.

# Wirtschaftsdeutsch.pl

## Niemiecki w biznesie

Nowoczesny serwis stworzony z myślą o chcących uczyć się, rozwijać lub przypomnieć sobie język niemiecki biznesowy. Serwis dostarcza ciekawe teksty, dialogi i aktualne artykuły. Kurs kończy się testem sprawdzającym uwiecznionym certyfikatem Wirtschaftsdeutsch.pl



# Table of Contents

Why do people make small talk?

With whom to make small talk?

When to use small talk?

Where to make small talk?

What to make small talk about?

How to make small talk?

Quiz

Match the conversation starter with the correct response.

At the water-cooler – read the dialogue below and find five mistakes.

Starting a business meeting