

APB Online Workshop Series: English for University Professionals

Series 2: Engaging in Meaningful Small Talks

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When you hear the term ‘small talk’, many would wonder of its significance. Is it really important? Why would we even bother learning this skill? Well, despite being ‘small’, this social skill is essential as it enables effective networking, forms positive impressions, as well as acts as a saviour in any awkward conversation. In recognition of its importance in professional career development, APB had organised the Online Workshop Series, and the second series of this workshop focused solely on ‘Engaging in Meaningful Small Talks’. This two-hour workshop was held on 17th December 2021, via Google Meet and was facilitated by Prof. Madya Dr Rushita Ismail, Mr. Lim Teck Heng, Mr. Rasaya Marimuthu, Pn. Hanani Ahmad Zubir, Pn. Muriatul Khusmah Musa, and Dr Isma Noornisa Ismail.

In this workshop, participants were exposed to the techniques to engage in small talks within various contexts, such as at networking events (conferences, meetings, seminars), at the workplace (interview, with the boss, with colleagues), and in academic settings (with students in or outside the classroom). Among the most notable highlights of this workshop is the importance of conveying the right body language, as it speaks louder than verbal communication. Using inappropriate body language such as fidgeting or nail biting could signal the failure of that small talk which will also ruin the chance of building a good rapport.

Apart from that, choosing suitable topics to discuss during a small talk is also imperative as broaching controversial topics like politics, financial issues, death, or any personal issues may be sensitive to others. Therefore, the choice of topics should be selected with care and examples of safe topics can range from the weather, food, common interests to any interesting news.

Before the workshop ended, the participants also had the chance to practise their small talk skills in role-plays assigned to them. Judging from their performance, they had surely ditched any awkwardness! It is our hope that this workshop would benefit the participants and empower their social skills further. On a final note to everyone reading this, flash your sweetest smile, and ace that small talk.

- ◇ Assuming that nobody wants to talk to you.
- ◇ Interrupting or intruding upon an existing conversation.
- ◇ Start talking without having something to say.
- ◇ Broaching controversial topics.
- ◇ Being hard to follow.
- ◇ Talking too much about yourself — or about the other person.
- ◇ Wasting someone’s time.

Source:
<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/17/avoid-these-mistakes-if-you-want-to-be-good-at-small-talk-says-public-speaking-expert.html>

