+49 511 4739339
james@englisch-lehrer.com · www.englisch-lehrer.com

A2 SMALL TALK ≈ 27 MIN

Safe Small-Talk Topics — *start safely*

You will check light topics for professional small talk and practise keeping the exchange friendly with open follow-ups.

> Could **everyone** in the room answer the question comfortably? Yes = **safe** ; no = leave it out.

NAME _____ DATE _____

YOUR BUILD — 1 · SORTING ◯ — 2 · FILL-IN ◯ — 3 · CORRECT ◯ — 4 · WRITE ◯

BRICK 1 · SORT THE TOPICS · APPROX. 4 MIN ●○○

Sort each topic. Write light, shared topics on the left and private or divisive topics on the right.

the rain outside · a colleague's salary · a visitor's train ride · a client's political views · Saturday plans · a supplier's religion · the office pastries · a manager's age · the conference venue · a guest's divorce

SAFE TOPIC	OFF-LIMITS TOPIC

BRICK 2 · COMPLETE EACH LINE · APPROX. 6 MIN ●●○

Complete each gap with the suitable label, reply, or open-question wording.

01 "The pastries look fresh." is a _____ opener during a client breakfast.

02 "Which political party do you support?" is _____ at an industry event.

03 Nora: "How are you?" Ben: " _____ "

04 Lena: "I watched the tennis final." You: "Nice! _____ did you think of it?"

05 Omar: "The ferry ride was easy." You: "Good to hear. _____ part of the trip did you enjoy most?"

06 At a coffee break, asking about a guest's faith belongs on the _____ list.

07 A colleague mentions a Sunday cycle ride. Ask openly: " _____ did you cycle?"

08 A visitor praises the city. Continue warmly: "Glad you like it! What did you enjoy _____ ?"

YOUR BUILD 1 · SORTING 2 · FILL-IN 3 · CORRECT 4 · WRITE

BRICK 3 · MAKE THE SMALL TALK SAFE · APPROX. 7 MIN

Each line breaks a lesson rule. Underline the problem and write a suitable alternative; where appropriate, use a warm reaction and open follow-up.

01 At a supplier reception: "What do you earn each month?"

02 Before a client workshop: "Which religion do you follow?"

03 Manager: "How are you?" Alex: "My knee hurts, and I slept badly all week."

04 Rosa: "I went to a food festival." You: "Was it good?"

05 At the conference buffet: "Why don't you have children?"

06 A guest says, "I spent Saturday at a local race." You reply, "Let's discuss the contract."

BRICK 4 · WRITE YOUR OWN CONVERSATION MOVES · APPROX. 8 MIN

Write a short English conversation move for each situation. Use a safe topic, an open follow-up, or a warm reaction as requested.

01 Before a video call with a colleague in another city: write a weather opener and an open follow-up. Begin with "It looks sunny there …"

02 At breakfast with a client: write a food opener and an open follow-up. Use "The desserts look good …" as your start.

03 Priya arrives by bus for a workshop: ask safely about the journey, then respond to her answer with an open follow-up.

04 Before a Friday meeting, Karim mentions a weekend basketball event: write a warm reaction and an open follow-up.

MINI-CHECK — CAN I DO THIS YET?

- ☐ I check first: could everyone in the room answer comfortably?
- ☐ I class weather, the journey, the weekend, food, sport, and the venue or city as safe — and salary, politics, religion, age, health, and private family details as off-limits.
- ☐ I treat "How are you?" as a greeting ritual and reply briefly and positively.
- ☐ I combine a safe topic with an open follow-up and a warm reaction.

Not every box ticked yet? Review the topic lists and say your three conversation moves aloud.

Answer key

Check only when you have finished. Every answer comes with the **why** — the rule matters more than the result.

BRICK 1 · SORTING

01 the rain outside → **SAFE**
Weather is one of the six safe topics.

02 a colleague's salary → **OFF-LIMITS**
Salary is on the off-limits list and can make people uncomfortable.

03 a visitor's train ride → **SAFE**
The journey is a shared, light conversation topic.

04 a client's political views → **OFF-LIMITS**
Politics can divide the room and stays off-limits.

05 Saturday plans → **SAFE**
Weekend plans are one of the six safe topics.

06 a supplier's religion → **OFF-LIMITS**
Religion is on the off-limits list and can divide people.

07 the office pastries → **SAFE**
Food is a light topic that everyone present can share.

08 a manager's age → **OFF-LIMITS**
Age is treated as private in professional small talk.

09 the conference venue → **SAFE**
The venue is a safe topic shared by everyone there.

10 a guest's divorce → **OFF-LIMITS**
Private family details belong on the off-limits list.

BRICK 2 · FILL-IN

01 **SAFE**
Food is a safe topic for everyone at the table.

02 **OFF-LIMITS**
Politics can divide people and stays off-limits in professional small talk.

03 **Fine, thanks — and you?**
Here, "How are you?" is a greeting ritual that expects a brief positive reply.

04 **What**
An open follow-up invites Lena to say more than yes or no.

05 **Which**
The open follow-up picks up a keyword from Omar's answer.

06 **OFF-LIMITS**
Religion belongs on the off-limits list.

07 **Where**
An open where-question keeps the safe sport topic going.

08 **most**
The warm reaction plus open follow-up follows the conversation pattern.

BRICK 3 · CORRECT

01 At a supplier reception: "**The buffet looks excellent. What would you like to try?**"
Salary is off-limits, while food is safe and the follow-up is open.

02 Before a client workshop: "**What do you think of the venue?**"
Religion is off-limits, while the venue is safe.

03 Manager: "How are you?" Alex: "**Fine, thanks — and you?**"
The greeting ritual expects a brief positive reply and a returned question.

04 Rosa: "I went to a food festival." You: "**Nice! What did you enjoy most?**"
A warm reaction with an open follow-up keeps the exchange going.

05 At the conference buffet: "**What do you think of the city?**"
Private family details are off-limits, while the city is safe.

06 A guest says, "I spent Saturday at a local race." You reply, "**Sounds fun! What was the race like?**"
A warm reaction and open follow-up continue the small talk.

BRICK 4 · WRITE

Your answers may differ — just check the safe topic, open follow-up, and warm reaction.

01 "It looks sunny there today. **What is the weather like at your office?**"
Weather is safe, and the open follow-up invites an answer.

02 "The desserts look good. **Which one would you recommend?**"
Food is a safe shared topic, and the follow-up is open.

03 "Was the bus ride comfortable?" — "Yes, very." — "**Good to hear! What did you notice on the way?**"
The journey is safe, and the reaction leads to an open follow-up.

04 "**Sounds fun! What are you looking forward to most?**"
The warm reaction plus open follow-up keeps the safe event topic alive.

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englisch-lehrer.com/hannover

BERLIN
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englisch-lehrer.com/berlin

ONLINE COURSES
englisch-lehrer.com/online
worldwide on Zoom

CONTACT
+49 511 4739339
james@englisch-lehrer.com