



# THE ART OF SMALL TALK

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# Agenda

- Small Talk Defined
- STAMER Quiz
- Small Talk Stack
- ENGAGE your Nonverbals
- Seven Deadly Sins
- Cheat Sheet

Small talk means having a little loose change in your pocket. Like quarters at a soda machine, dimes at a gum dispenser, or a few nickels at a toll booth, it'll come in handy when you least expect it. When it comes to small talk, know when to jiggle it, spend it, or save it. Adapted from *Communicate with Confidence*

# (STAMER) Quiz

## Small Talk Apprehension Measure in Everyday Relationships

**1. I find it difficult to approach someone I don't know and introduce myself in a social situation.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me.
- VERY characteristic of me.
- MODERATELY characteristic of me.
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me.
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me.

**2. I have difficulty entering into an on-going conversation.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**3. I have difficulty remembering someone's name after being introduced.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**4. I experience such symptoms such as a racing heart and sweaty palms when making small talk.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**5. I never know what to say when making small talk.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**6. Most people I observe are better at making small talk than I am.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**7. My mind goes blank when someone asks me a question during a conversation.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**8. My mouth becomes dry when I have to make small talk.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**9. I have difficulty making small talk one-on-one with members of the opposite sex.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**10. Most people would not be interested in what I have to say when making small talk with me.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**11. I feel uncomfortable in social situations where I might have to make small talk with many people I don't know.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**12. I have difficulty making small talk with individuals in position of authority.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**13. I don't feel I have much to say when making small talk.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

**14. I worry about being evaluated negatively by others for what I say while making small talk.**

- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

# SMALL TALK STACK

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# Engage Formula

E

N

G

A

G

E

## The Seven Deadly "Sins" of Small Talk

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

# Additional SMALL TALK "Sins"

- Not preparing several topics that you're willing to bring up and discuss.
- Displaying closed body language that says, "I'm not interested in talking to you."
- Waiting for others to approach you.
- Not introducing yourself with a tag line.
- Not adding on "free information" when asked a yes/no or short-answer question.
- Asking several "closed-ended" questions instead of a few "open-ended" ones.
- Asking questions that are too personal, too early on.
- Arguing over minor details - even if you're certain you're right.
- Abruptly ending the conversation after a negative comment or a moment of silence.

"Everybody wants to feel like a somebody. People love to be appreciated, applauded and complimented...it is a basic drive for all of us; it's only natural for people to respond to this...*there is a rarity of applause and compliments in our everyday lives, not because we don't deserve it, but because nobody dishes them out.*"

*Giblin, 2005*

# SMALL TALK CHEAT SHEET

- Write a self-introduction, and practice it ahead of time.
- Keep up with the news—local, national, and sports—so you know what's going on in the world. It will give you more to talk about.
- Review the Small Talk Stack.
- Don't ask questions hoping that the other person will carry the conversation.
- Truly *listen* to what the other person is saying instead of planning what you are going to say next.
- Establish a comfortable connection with the other person by using ENGAGE.
- Contribute anecdotes that relate to the interests of the people you are chatting with. Don't redirect the spotlight to you.
- Stay in the moment, and talk about the event you are attending—the venue, the food, traffic, how you know the host, etc.
- Remember, most people are nice and really would like to talk to you.

“When you listen to people, you are allowing them to hear their favorite speaker...the more listening you do; the better you will be liked”

Les Giblin, *“People Smart”*, 2005

## Resources

- Carducci, B. J. (1999). The pocket guide to making successful small talk: How to talk to anyone anytime anywhere about anything. Pocket Guide Publishing, New Albany, IN.
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- Gabor, D. (2006) How to start a conversation and make friends. Simon & Schuster, NY.
- Giblin, L. (2006). How to be people smart. Embassy Books, St. Petersburg, FL.
- Honeychurch, C. (2003).Talk to me. New Harbinger Publications Inc., Oakland, CA.
- Martinet, J. (2006) The art of mingling: easy proven techniques for mastering any room. St. Martin' Griffin.