

A List of the Best and Worst Topics

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Best: Weather

Below are some ideas of conversation starters you can use:

- "Lovely day, don't you think?"
- "Looks like rain is in the forecast."
- "Did you order this beautiful weather?"

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Best: Arts and Entertainment

Arts and entertainment topics that are good conversation starters include

- movies and television shows
- popular restaurants
- popular music
- books

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Best: Sports

Sports topics that you can discuss with others include

- favorite teams
- sporting events
- tournaments
- bowl games

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Best: News

Below are some ideas of conversation openers:

- Did you hear about the new hotel they are building downtown?
- What do you think about the teachers going on strike?
- I read that they are going to hike up transit fares, did you hear that?

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Best: Family

People are likely to ask you about your family. Conversation openers about family may include the following:

- "Do you have any brothers or sisters?"
- "How long have you been married?"
- "Do you have any children?"

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Best: Work

Some ideas for work-related small talk include the following:

- "How long have you worked as a (insert job title)?"
- "Do you like your job?"
- "That is an interesting line of work, how did you get into it?"

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Best: Travel

Ask others about their favourite travel spots and what they recommend. Most people like to help and will be happy to share their experiences.

As an extra tip, if you are trying to break into a group conversation, always establish eye contact, smile, and introduce yourself first. Then listen and remember the names of the other people in the group.

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Best: Celebrity Gossip

It isn't necessary to follow celebrity gossip to make small talk. However, it is a good idea to know a little bit about some of the most popular celebrities in case the topic comes up.

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Best: Hobbies

People like to talk about their hobbies and are likely to be interested in yours. If you don't have any hobbies, consider trying something new. Not only will you have something to talk about, but having a hobby will give you a chance to meet others with similar interests.

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Best: Hometown

You might be asked about your hometown. For example:

- "How is where you grew up different from where you live now?"
 - "Why did you leave?"
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Worst: Financial

Asking personal financial questions of people that you have just met is inappropriate. It is fine to ask what someone does for work or what the positive aspects are of that career, but do not ask questions about salary. Most people will find this question intrusive and inappropriate.

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Worst: Politics

The problem with talking about politics is that you never know who in the crowd may have strong opinions. Stay away from this topic unless you want to risk ending up in the middle of a heated conversation.

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Worst: Religion

Religion is another extremely personal and potentially sensitive topic that should be avoided.

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Worst: Sex

Talking about sex or asking questions of an intimate nature is inappropriate during small talk. When talking with strangers, avoid talking openly about sex or making sexual innuendos. Both are likely to make others uncomfortable.

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Worst: Death

Death is another heavy topic that should be avoided during small talk. When you are in the company of strangers, do not bring up emotional topics that have the potential to be upsetting.

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Worst: Age/Appearance

Unless you know someone well, avoid topics related to age and appearance.

Do not ask a person's age. Although the question might seem simple to you, it can be a hot topic for some.

In addition, avoid questions related to appearance. Do not ask a woman if she is pregnant, or comment that someone has lost weight. You never know the reason for weight gain or loss and could be left in an uncomfortable situation.

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Worst: Personal Gossip

While celebrity gossip is fair game during small talk, gossip about people that you know personally is not. Gossiping about others not only paints you in a bad light, but you never know who might know each other. Avoid bad-mouthing others.

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Worst: Offensive Jokes

Save your sensitive jokes for your best friends (or better yet, replace them with jokes that don't have time and place restrictions). In particular, making sexist or racist jokes is offensive and a quick way to end a conversation with strangers.

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Worst: Narrow Topics

Avoid talking at length about topics that are one-sided. If no one else has seen the movie, don't go into detail about the plot or the funny scenes. Watch for signs that others have lost interest and find a quick ending to your story.

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Worst: Past Relationships

Avoid talking about past relationships on a first date. Making comparisons or talking endlessly about a past love is a turnoff and a quick way to ensure you don't get a second date.