

A friendship founded on business is better than a business founded on friendship.

John D Rockefeller, American industrialist

Do you think it's important to build friendships in business?

Learning objectives: Unit 9

Business communication skills

Completing a questionnaire on cultural awareness; Talking about experiences; Roleplay: Engaging in small talk

Listening Pre-meeting conversations

Vocabulary Exaggeration and understatement

Grammar Past Simple or Present Perfect

Phrase bank Engaging in small talk

Small talk

1 What exactly is small talk? How important do you think it is in business?

2 How culturally aware are you? Try a cultural sensitivity test. Speaker A see page 129. Speaker B see page 137.

Getting down to business

1 In *When Cultures Collide*, cross-cultural consultant Richard D Lewis talks about the role of small talk in international business. The diagram below shows how long it takes different nationalities to get down to business. Try to complete the diagram with the names of the countries in the box.

Finland France Germany Japan Spain and Italy UK USA

a _____ →

Formal introduction. Sit down. Begin.

b _____ →

Formal introduction. Cup of coffee. Sit down. Begin.

c _____ →

Informal introduction. Cup of coffee. Joke. Begin.

d _____ →

Formal introduction. Cup of tea and biscuits. 10 mins small talk (weather, sport). Casual beginning.

e _____ →

Formal introduction. 15 mins small talk (politics, scandal). Begin.

f _____ →

Formal introduction. Formal seating. Green tea. 15–20 mins small talk (pleasantries). Signal from superior. Begin.

g _____ →

20–30 mins small talk (football, family) while others arrive. Begin when everyone's there.

Mins 0 5 10 15 20 25 30



2  **2.01-2.07** Listen to extracts from seven meetings. Check your answers in 1 by matching each extract to the correct country.

3  **2.01-2.07** Listen again and answer the questions. There is one question for each extract.

- a** Where exactly is Tom Pearson asked to sit?
- b** How long is Dr Alan Winter going to spend in Berlin?
- c** What was Miss Sterling's father's job?
- d** What kind of snack is served at the meeting?
- e** Why was Catherine in Finland before?
- f** In the joke, what score do both the man and the woman get in the test?
- g** What commonly happens in their meetings these days?

4 Put your own nationality on the diagram, if it's not there already. If it is there, do you agree with where it's placed?

5  **2.01-2.07** Look at these excerpts from the conversations you just listened to and underline the best grammatical choice. Then listen again and check.

- a** **A** *Did you try / Have you tried* green tea before, Mr Pearson?
B *Er, yes, I did / have. I had / have had* it last time I *was / have been* here. I like it very much.
- b** **A** *I'd like to introduce you all to Dr Alan Winter, who came / has come* over from the Atlanta office to spend a few days at our research centre. Welcome to Berlin, Dr Winter.
B *Thank you very much, Wolfgang. It was / has been* kind of you to invite me.
- c** **A** *... And then Juventus scored / has scored* the winner. It *was / has been* an incredible goal! *Did you see / Have you seen* the Lazio game last night, Miss Sterling?
B *Yes, I did / have. Wasn't it / Hasn't it been* a great match? One of the best I *ever saw / have ever seen*.
- d** **A** *Rain stopped / has stopped* play again yesterday, I see.
B Sorry?
A *The cricket. They cancelled / have cancelled* the match.
B *Oh, they didn't / haven't!* Well, we certainly *didn't see / haven't seen* much cricket this summer.
- e** **A** *I think this is your first time in Finland, isn't it, Catherine? Or were you / have you been* here before?
B *Actually, I came / have come* here on holiday once, but that *was / has been* a long time ago.
- f** **A** That's a terrible joke, Marty.
B *No, you see, he copied / has copied* her test, right?
A *Marty, we heard / 've heard* the joke before. It's ancient. Okay, everybody, time to work.
B *I thought / have thought* it *was / has been* funny.
- g** **A** *What I do worry about is what's going on between our vice-president and our head of finance.*
B *They're having an affair?*
A *Didn't you hear / Haven't you heard?* I *thought / have thought* everybody *knew / has known*.
B *No! No one ever tells me anything.*