

Podcast Script Small talk

Speaker: Small talk is not easy. Small talk depends on culture and personality and maybe your mood on that day. Here is an example of rather poor small talk. Nicole and Patrick have their first French lesson together. They are waiting for the teacher. Can you find out what makes the conversation difficult?

Nicole: Hi, I'm Nicole.

Patrick: Hi.

Nicole: And what's your name?

Patrick: Patrick.

Nicole: Do you know the teacher?

Patrick: No.

Nicole: mmhhh.....I hope we are going to learn French very fast. I need it for my new job.

Patrick. mmmh.

Nicole: Is this your first French course?

Patrick: Yep. *

**very short form of yes*

Speaker: What are the problems in this conversation?

First of all, Patrick is not interested in the conversation at all. Secondly, he only gives very short yes/no answers. This is not very polite or friendly in English.

Nicole only asks yes/no questions. Sometimes open questions are better. In our answers, we should always try and give a little more information, so that the conversation can continue.

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Here is a better version of the same conversation:

Nicole: Hi, I'm Nicole.

Patrick: Hi there, I'm Patrick. I am little nervous because this is my first French course ever.

Nicole: but don't worry. Sure you already know some French words.

Patrick: Like...?

Nicole: Like croissant, and cuisine, and ca va, je t'aime...

Patrick: Ah yeah, that's true. You speak French already? Why are you in the beginners' class?

Nicole: mmhhh.....I think I have forgotten the little French I learnt at school. And now I suddenly need French for my job.

Patrick. That's interesting. What do you do?

Nicole: I am a Personal Assistant in an international company. And you?

Patrick: I work in Marketing. But I never speak French at work. I only want to be able to speak better French on holiday.

Nicole: Oh, have you been to France?

Patrick: Yes, twice so far. To Paris and Provence.

Nicole: Oh, Provence, the lavender, I've seen lots of pictures. It looks lovely.

Patrick: Absolutely. Unfortunately the lavender was not flowering when I was there. But I loved the food in Provence.

Nicole: Ah, here comes the teacher...

Speaker: Can you see what helps the conversation?

Show some interest in the other person.

Ask questions, but not too many. Open questions might lead to longer answers.

Show natural body reactions and verbal reactions such as "really?", "interesting" and "yeah, absolutely".

Never answer just in one or two words. Try to give a little more information.

And last but not least: Don't talk about politics, religion, money or diseases and death.

Talk about easy topics such as food, the weather or holidays.

And now it is up to you to practice, practice, practice.