

CHAPTER 2 · BREAKING THE ICE

SMALL TALK THAT *goes somewhere*

Small talk isn't empty. It's how strangers check that it's safe to keep talking.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interactive version: attenglish.com/talk/2

PHRASE BOX SAY IT

WEATHER

Lovely day, isn't it?
It's a bit nippy today.
Looks like it's brightening up.

WEEKEND

Did you do anything nice at the weekend?
Any plans for the weekend?
How was your weekend?

KEEPING IT GOING

Oh really? How come?
That sounds fun. Where did you go?
Me too, actually.

ANSWER PLUS ONE BUILD

Short answers end conversations. The fix is simple: answer, add one detail, then ask one back. Build your own for the questions you hear most.

Your short answer

One extra detail

A question back

Put it together and write your line

SAFE, CAREFUL OR AVOID? **SORT**

Some topics are easy openers in the UK. Others are best kept for people you know well. Sort these. Tick one column for each.

	Safe	Careful	Avoid
The weather			
Weekend plans			
How much they earn			
Holidays and travel			
Their religion			
Their weight or appearance			
Food and restaurants			
Politics			
Their age			
The local area			
House prices			
TV, films and sport			

WEATHER TALK, DECODED **MATCH**

The British talk about the weather a lot, and they have their own way of doing it. Match each phrase to its meaning. Write the letter in the middle column.

They say	Letter	They mean
1. It's a bit nippy today.		A. It's warm and humid.
2. It's chucking it down.		B. The sun is coming out.
3. It's close today.		C. It's raining heavily.
4. It's brightening up.		D. A joke: it always rains on our days off.
5. Typical bank holiday weather!		E. A friendly opener. Agree and add something.
6. Lovely day, isn't it?		F. It's quite cold.

KEEP IT GOING **PLAY**

You meet a neighbour at the bus stop. Choose your reply at each turn and see how far the conversation goes. Write what you would say at each turn.

Neighbour: "Morning! Chilly one today, isn't it?"

Neighbour: "Ha, you'll get used to it! I take it every day. I work at the library in town."

Neighbour: "That's the one. Are you new round here? I don't think I've seen you before."

SAY IT ALOUD SAY IT

Practise your answer plus one until it comes out without thinking. Tick a box each time you say it aloud.

Line	Said it
Good, thanks. Busy week, actually. How's yours been?	☐ ☐ ☐
Really nice, thanks. We went for a walk by the river. Did you do anything nice?	☐ ☐ ☐
My own line:	☐ ☐ ☐

Focus: Let your voice go up on the question at the end.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON REFLECT

Who do you see regularly but never really talk to?

What is your “plus one” sentence for this week?

Which small talk topic feels most comfortable for you?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ☐ Answer, add one detail, ask one back.
- ☐ Weather, weekends and the local area are safe starters.
- ☐ Salary, weight, age and religion are best avoided with new people.
- ☐ A tag question (“isn't it?”) invites the other person to agree and add something.
- ☐ Small talk feels better afterwards than you expect.