

# CONVERSATION HOW-TO'S: MAKING SMALL TALK WITH A STRANGER

Small-talk is a brief conversation with someone you don't know about a general topic. There are many situations where you may want to make small-talk with a stranger. It can sometimes be difficult to start a conversation with someone you don't know, but these tips for making small-talk will help you feel more confident when interacting with others.

## DO

- Start the conversation off with a friendly greeting.
- Comment on something in the environment, talk about the news, or ask a simple question such as how the person's day is going.
- Focus on a topic that both people understand.
- Build the conversation off the other person's responses.
- When it's time for you or the other person to leave the conversation, tell them it was nice meeting them.
- If you don't want to have a conversation, be polite and let the other person know that you aren't in the mood to talk.
- Make eye contact with the other person.
- If someone asks you a question you don't want to answer, tell them you prefer not to answer.

- If the other person talks to you first, don't ignore them or pretend not to hear them.
- Don't ask people how old they are or other potentially offensive questions.
- Don't interrupt the other person or leave without a friendly goodbye.
- Don't ask personal questions.
- Don't feel like you have to have a conversation. It's OK to politely decline talking to the other person.
- Don't answer overly personal questions.

## DON'T

### WHAT IF THE OTHER PERSON SEEMS UNINTERESTED?

If the other person shows signs of disinterest, they may be telling you that they don't want to have a conversation.

#### Cues that the other person may not want to have a conversation:

- The other person is avoiding eye-contact.
- The other person has a flat or annoyed tone of voice.
- The other person offers very short responses or no responses at all.

#### What should you do?

- If they are not talking to you, simply end the conversation with that person. Remember, it's not your fault that they don't want to talk.

*This information sheet was developed by the Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT).  
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