

Small talk after not meeting for a while

Choose questions from below **that are really suitable to ask your partner**, thinking about things that you already know and don't know about that person and what communication you have had recently. Ask and answer, with follow up questions if you like.

- (Are you) busy this week/ at the moment?
- (Have you been) busy this week/ lately?
- Are you making progress with...?
- Did you enjoy...?
- Did you go anywhere nice over the holiday/ at the weekend/ last night/ for lunch/...?
- Did you go to the meeting about...?
- Did you have a good flight/ journey/ holiday/ weekend/ trip/...?
- Did you hear (the news) about...?
- Did you see... last night/ last week/ at the weekend/ on...?
- Did you... last night/ last week/ at the weekend/ on...?
- Do you have many meetings today/ this week?
- Have you (almost/ nearly) finished...?
- Have you changed your hair?/ Have you had a haircut?
- Have you got hay fever/ a cold/...?
- Have you had many meetings today/ this week?
- Have you had the chance to... today/ this week?
- Have you managed to catch up with... yet?
- Have you... since we last met/ since I last saw you?
- Have you... today/ yet/ this week/since...?
- How are you (today)?/ How's life?/ How are things?/ How's it going?
- How has your day/ week been (so far)?
- How was the weather in/ on...?
- How was your flight/ journey/ holiday/ weekend/ day off/ break/ trip/ hotel/...?
- How's (name)/ your family/...?
- How's business?
- How's work?
- How's... going?
- Is that a new...?
- It's been (really) busy/ quiet/ cold/ humid/ ... recently, don't you think?
- It's got really hot/ cold/ humid/..., hasn't it?
- Long time no see. How have you been?
- Long time no see. How long has it been?
- Long time no see. What have you been up to?
- Thanks for your email/ message about...
- What are you working on (at the moment)?/ Are you still working on...?
- What did you do last week/ at the weekend/ after...?
- What time did you... last night?
- When did you get back from...?

- Where did you...?
- You look terrible/ sick/ tired/ hungover....
- You're looking (very) good/ healthy/ tanned/ relaxed. Have you...?

Ask about any questions above which you don't understand or don't know how to answer. Put a tick next to questions above which are suitable for (exactly) the situation that you were just in, a cross next to ones which probably aren't, and a question mark next to those which you think might be okay or aren't sure about.

Change partners and do the same speaking activity again, but this time pretend that you are in a meeting and so move onto really getting down to business after a minute or two of small talk. Note that you might need different questions with your new partner.

Brainstorm things that you can include in a phrase for getting down to business into the gaps below:

Getting down to business (= really starting) phrases

1. Saying something polite or friendly about the small talk that you just had ("Well/ So/ Anyway/ Well then/ Okay then/ Right then, _____, but...")

2. Giving a reason for ending the small talk ("_____, so...")

3. Suggesting getting down to business/ really starting the meeting

4. Something short after that suggestion to make it softer and make other people reply

Use the key words below to help with the task above.

1. **Saying something polite or friendly about the small talk that you just had (“Well/ So/ Anyway/ Well then/ Okay then/ Right then, _____, but...”)**

- great
- more

2. **Giving a reason for ending the small talk (“_____, so...”)**

- have to
- another
- busy

3. **Suggesting getting down to business/ really starting the meeting**

- down
- get
- make
- agenda

4. **Something short after that suggestion to make it softer and make other people reply**

- shall
- mind
- okay
- think

Compare your answers with those under the fold below. Note that many more answers are possible.

Suggested answers

NOT... X in italics means something that is not suitable

1. **Saying something polite or friendly about the small talk that you just had (“Well/ So/ Anyway/ Well then/ Okay then/ Right then, _____, but...”)**

- Well, it’s been **great** to chat but.../ So, it’s been **great** to catch up but...
- Okay, I’d love to talk (about that) **more**, but.../ So, I wish I could chat **more**, but.../ Well, I’d love to hear **more** about that after the meeting but.../ So, you must tell me **more** about that later, but...

2. **Giving a reason for ending the small talk (“_____, so...”)**

- We **have to** be out of here by twelve, so...
- I have **another** meeting at 11, so...
- I know you’re very **busy**, so... - *NOT I am very busy..., so... X*

3. **Suggesting getting down to business/ really starting the meeting**

- Let’s get **down** to business.
- Shall we **get** started?

- I think we should **make** a start.
- It's about time to look at the **agenda**.

4. Something short after that suggestion to make it softer and make other people reply

- ...**shall** we?
- ...if you don't **mind**.
- ...if that's **okay**.
- ...don't you **think**?