
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Small Talk

Subjects to avoid: Salary

Neil voiceover

I've been working at the BBC for a long time now. I've met lots of people. And I sometimes bump into them... and make small talk. They call it small talk, but that doesn't mean it's of little importance.

Neil

Hey Callum!

Callum

Hey! Hey Neil, how's it going? Haven't seen you in ages...

Neil

It's been a while.

Callum

Yeah, yeah. How's the kids? How's the family?

Neil

Yeah, yeah. They're good, they're good. And you... I heard you've got a new job.

Callum

Yes I have, yes. Started a few weeks ago, yeah, yeah...

Neil

So... What's the salary?

Callum

Um... It's OK. I've got to go...

Neil

How much exactly? How much do they pay you?

Callum

Um... some. Enough.

Neil

What's the figure?

Callum

Sorry, I've got to run. See ya. Bye bye.

Neil

OK. Nice to see you. Bye. See ya.

Neil voiceover

Let's see what our experts have to say about that.

Sam

They seem to know each other; seem to have a little bit of knowledge of each other.

Kee

Absolutely. He's obviously found out that he's changed jobs.

Sam

Yeah, yeah. And he reacted really nicely to it.

Kee

Yeah, absolutely. Until he decided to ask how much he's earning.

Sam/Kee

Yeah. His salary.

Kee

Why would you not ask that question?

Sam

It's just not a common question. It's considered very rude to talk about money generally...

Kee

It is, isn't it?

Sam

But specifically money you make.

Kee

Right.

Sam/Kee

It's just not done. No, you wouldn't ask that, would you?

Sam

So, what do you think he could have done instead?

Kee

I think the obvious question is, 'How are you finding your new job?'

Sam

Yeah.

Kee

Are you enjoying it? You know, like, what are your colleagues like?

Sam

Yeah

Kee

Or even just asking about the job itself. 'What are you doing in your new job?' I think that's a standard thing to do rather than... 'So, what's your salary?'

Sam

Exactly.

Kee

And I think most people will want to talk about their new job.

Sam

Yeah definitely.

Kee

They'll want to tell the other person about what they enjoy and what they're not enjoying. But not this guy. Money.

Neil voiceover

Thanks for the tips, guys. I'll try harder next time.

Watch the video here: <http://bbc.in/2hEfZqs>