
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Small Talk

Subjects to avoid: Politics

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.

Debbie

Neil.

Neil

Hello Debbie

Debbie

Hiya.

Neil

I didn't think you were here today.

Debbie

Yep. Just the trains... loads of delays.

Neil

Terrible, aren't they? Really awful. Next election, I tell you, I'm going to vote this lot out.

Debbie

Yeah, yeah things could be better. It's not great.

Neil

So, who do you vote for normally?

Debbie

Sorry?

Neil

Who do you vote for? Which party? Are you political? Are you a member of a party?

Debbie

Um... Um... I'm sorry, I'm sorry... I just... I've just... I've just got to speak to someone.

Neil

Yeah.

Debbie

Jim! Sorry. Jim!

Neil

See you later.

Neil voiceover

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

Sam

I thought he made a really strong start with the transport and the delays. And she was willing to answer those questions and talk about it. And we love talking about delayed trains in the UK.

Kee

He could have talked about his own journey in.

Sam

Yeah.

Kee

But instead he went for something else.

Sam

And yeah... you can... even talking about politics, the fact that there's a general election – fair enough, you can say, 'Oh yeah, things are interesting at the moment with the general election', but you could leave it there.

Kee

Sure, sure.

Sam

You wouldn't talk about who you voted for.

Kee

And also, they're in the canteen.

Sam

Yeah

Kee

'What did you buy?'

Kee/Sam

'What have you got for breakfast?' A lot of clues in there – things that you could talk about. Absolutely.

Sam

He had something in his hand.

Kee

Yeah he had like a...

Sam

She was clearly on her way to get something.

Kee

Sure, yeah. And I think as soon as he asked that question, she was looking for an excuse to get away from him. So the signs were there, like you say.

Sam

Written all over her face.

Neil voiceover

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

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