IRL: The Art of Small Talk
or Get Your Face out of Your Mobile Device
You Are Here or Are You?

- How many people did you talk to, that you did not know prior to the session starting?
- How many of those people were part of your registration/parking/getting here journey?
Why Do We Need Small Talk in Our Toolbox?

- Small Talk Makes Us Smarter
- Small Talk Makes Us Happier
- Small Talk Makes Us Feel Better
When you make eye contact, you create a subconscious connection with the other person. This helps to build a feeling of trust, which will make small talk easier for both of you.

Mechanisms & Pro Tips:

Imagine a triangle on the other person’s face that surrounds their eyes and mouth. Change the location of your gaze every 5 to 10 seconds from one point on the triangle to another.
Asking questions enable people to choose the focus of the conversation. This will lead to more open dialogue.

Mechanisms & Pro Tips:

- What do you do for a living?
- Where are you from originally?
- Where do you call home?
- What's keeping you busy these days?
Use the FORD-method to Ask Questions

Mechanisms & Pro Tips:

- **WHY?**
  - By asking questions related to these subjects, you can master small talk in many social settings.

- **Family**
  - I’m going to visit my sister for the holidays. Where is your family from?

- **Occupation**
  - I work virtually. Where do you work?

- **Recreation**
  - I just got a new video game. What do you do for fun?

- **Dreams**
  - I am thinking about walking the Appalachian Trail this year. Are you planning any trips this year?

Lloyd, C. (2012) Use the FORD Technique to Make Small Talk Easier. lifehacker.com
Actively Listen
Unsurprisingly, actually listening to what your conversation partner is saying, makes small talk easier and more natural for both of you.

Mechanisms & Pro Tips:
Focus on keywords and phrases, and use them to picture what people say in your mind.

Occasionally restating something you’ve heard in your own words shows you are paying attention and can prompt the other person to continue speaking.

Mechanisms & Pro Tips:

Krause Whitbourne, S. (2011) 10 Tips to Talk About Anything with Anyone. psychologytoday.com
Body Language Still Matters

Use your body to communicate! You can often convey more with your body than with the tone of your voice and actual words. Positive body language will show you are engaged in a conversation.

Mechanisms & Pro Tips:
- Position your body so it’s facing the other person
- Keep your arms at your sides and uncrossed
- Lean in slightly

Economy, P. 18 Ways to Send the Right Message With Body Language, inc.com
Leverage Your Surroundings

Your current setting is something both you and your conversation partner share. Use this connection to build a longer conversation.

WHY?

Mechanisms & Pro Tips:

- How did you get here today?
- Can you recommend a good place to eat nearby?
- What do you think of this transition music they are playing?
The Exit

When it is time to leave a conversation, use the phrase “I need”. This take the burden of leaving the conversation off your partners shoulders and shows that you are leaving because you are bored.

Mechanisms & Pro Tips:

- I’m sorry, but I need to run. I am presenting in the next session.
- You’ll have to excuse me. I’m dying to get a glass of water.
- This has been great, but I need to get some food. I should not have skipped breakfast.

WHY?

Small talk doesn't have to be painful. By remembering these easy tips and preparing a few questions in advance, you'll be ready for every situation, whether it's meeting new coworkers or chatting with fellow stakeholders.

Now get your face out of your screens and mingle.
*Ronin, K. 4 Reasons Why You Don’t Get Noticed at Networking Events (and She Does). themuse.com
Media College. Open-Ended Questions, mediacollege.com
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Merchant, YS. (2018) A communication expert shares 4 conversation tips for people who hate small talk, businessinsider.com
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Thank You!

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