

Small Talk for People Who Hate Small Talk

LUMARA ENGLISH

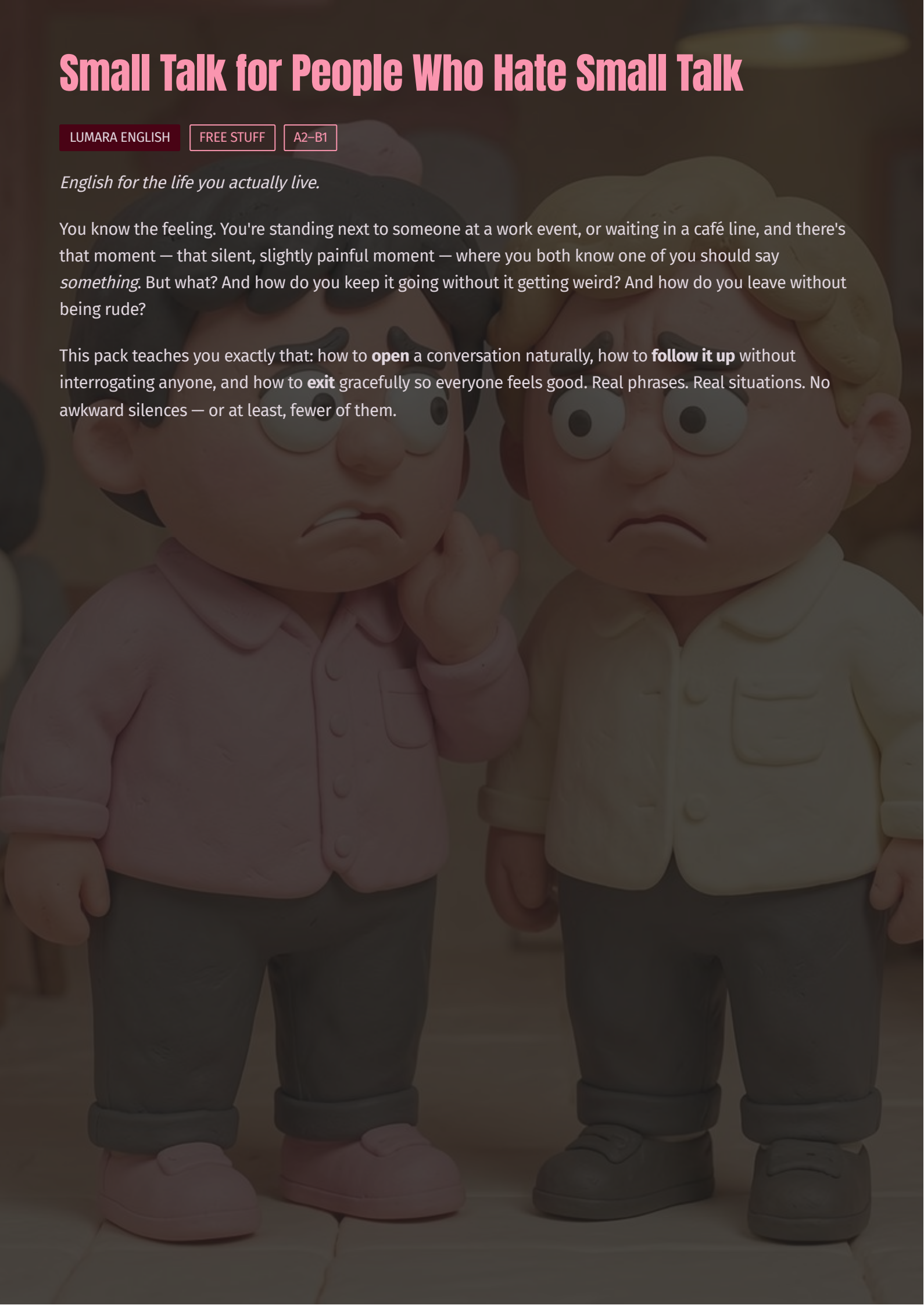
FREE STUFF

A2-B1

English for the life you actually live.

You know the feeling. You're standing next to someone at a work event, or waiting in a café line, and there's that moment — that silent, slightly painful moment — where you both know one of you should say *something*. But what? And how do you keep it going without it getting weird? And how do you leave without being rude?

This pack teaches you exactly that: how to **open** a conversation naturally, how to **follow it up** without interrogating anyone, and how to **exit** gracefully so everyone feels good. Real phrases. Real situations. No awkward silences — or at least, fewer of them.



Start Here

YOUR GUIDE TO THIS PACK

Before we dive in, here's a quick scene. You're at a professional networking event. There's coffee. There's a person standing near you. They glance at you. You glance back. Someone has to go first...

"How's your week going?"

— You, bravely, holding your coffee cup like a shield

That's it. That's small talk. And by the end of this pack, those four words will feel completely natural.

Goal 1: Open

Learn natural, friendly openers that don't feel forced. Start conversations without overthinking it.

Goal 2: Follow Up

Ask one good question. Listen. Share a little. Keep the exchange balanced — not an interview.

Goal 3: Exit

Leave the conversation warmly and confidently, so both people feel good about it.

How to Use This Pack

01

Read the explanations

Card 3 teaches the key phrases and patterns in clear, friendly language.

02

Watch it in action

Card 4 shows two complete fictional conversations — a café queue and a professional event.

03

Try it yourself

Card 5 has practice tasks. Write your answers, then check Card 7 for the key.

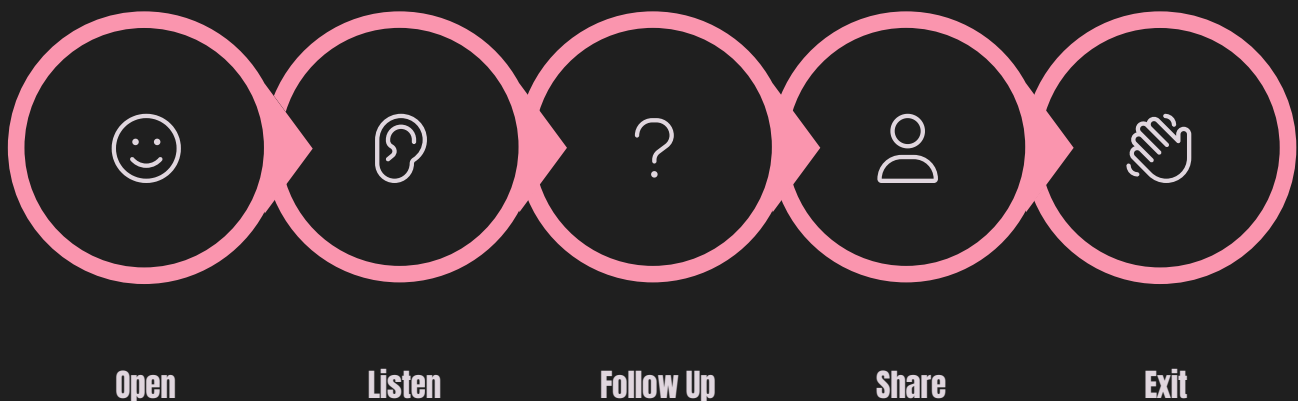
04

Make it yours

Card 6 has a speaking task, a writing task, and a fun meme to help you remember.

The Core Pattern

Everything in this pack follows one simple, repeatable pattern. Think of it like a recipe — you don't have to follow it perfectly every time, but it helps to know the steps.



You'll see this pattern again and again throughout the pack. Once you recognise it, small talk stops feeling random — it has a shape, and you can follow it.

Learn It

KEY PHRASES & PATTERNS

Let's build your small talk toolkit phrase by phrase. We'll start at the very beginning — the opener — and work our way through the pattern. Each phrase comes with an explanation, a natural example, and a quick note in Spanish where it helps.

The Opener: Getting Started

How's your week going?

This is your best all-purpose opener. It's warm, open-ended, and works almost anywhere — at work, at a class, at a social event. It invites the other person to share as much or as little as they want.

Why it works: It focuses on the *present* (this week), which feels personal without being intrusive. Compare it to "How are you?" — which people answer automatically without thinking — this one actually invites a real answer.

En español: ¿Cómo va tu semana? — *nota que en inglés usamos "going" (gerundio), no un infinitivo.*

Have you been here before?

A brilliant opener for a specific place — a café, a class, an event, a gym. It's friendly, it's easy to answer, and it naturally leads to follow-up conversation because the answer is almost always interesting either way.

If they say **yes** → "What do you like about it?"

If they say **no** → "Me neither! / Oh, it's my first time too."

En español: ¿Has estado aquí antes? — *usa el presente perfecto en inglés (have + been), igual que en español.*

Natural example:

"Have you been here before? The coffee is supposed to be amazing."

The Follow-Up: Keeping It Going

Once someone responds, your job is to show genuine interest — not to fire questions one after another. The best follow-up question is open-ended (it can't be answered with just "yes" or "no") and responds to what they actually said.

What do you enjoy about it?

Perfect when someone mentions an activity, a place, or a job. It's positive, curious, and non-judgmental.

En español: ¿Qué es lo que disfrutas de eso? — "enjoy" va seguido de gerundio: "enjoy doing", no "enjoy to do".

Example: "Oh, you do yoga? What do you enjoy about it?"

That sounds interesting!

A warm, encouraging response that buys you a moment to think of a real question. Use your voice — say it like you mean it.

En español: ¡Eso suena interesante! — "sounds" aquí no es sobre sonido, es un verbo copulativo como "parece".

Example: "That sounds interesting — how did you get into that?"

Important: Don't Interrogate

- ❑ Small talk is a **conversation**, not an interview. After you ask a question and they answer, **share something about yourself** before asking the next question. And always respect a short answer — if someone says "Fine, thanks," they may not want to chat right now, and that's completely okay.

Also, avoid assumptions about things that can be personal or sensitive. Don't ask about someone's family situation, whether they have children, or what they earn. These topics can feel intrusive very quickly. Stick to shared experiences — the place you're both in, the event you're both at, things you can both see or do.

✓ Good questions

"What do you enjoy about it?"
"Have you tried the coffee here?"
"How long have you been coming to this class?"

✗ Questions to avoid

"Do you have kids?"
"What's your salary like?"
"Why aren't you married?"

See It in Real Life

TWO COMPLETE CONVERSATIONS

Here are two fictional conversations that show the full **Open → Listen → Follow Up → Share → Exit** pattern in action. Read them out loud if you can — it makes a big difference!

☕ Scene 1: The Café Queue

Two people are waiting in line at a busy café on a Tuesday morning. They've never met.

Maya: "How's your week going so far?"

Daniel: "Pretty well, thanks! A bit busy, but good. You?"

Maya: "Same — I'm trying to survive on coffee at the moment. Have you been here before?"

Daniel: "First time, actually. Someone at work recommended it."

Maya: "Oh nice! The oat milk latte is really good, if you like that kind of thing."

Daniel: "Oh, perfect — that's exactly what I was going to order."

Maya: "Ha! Great minds. Do you work nearby?"

Daniel: "Yeah, just around the corner — a small design studio. What about you?"

Maya: "I'm freelance, so I basically live in cafés. It works, though — I actually get more done here than at home."

Daniel: "That sounds interesting — what kind of work do you do?"

Maya: "Copywriting, mostly. Lots of tech clients."

Daniel: "Oh, cool — that must keep you busy."

Maya: "It does! Anyway — I think that's my order. It was lovely talking to you. Enjoy the latte!"

Daniel: "You too — thanks for the recommendation!"

🔍 **Notice:** Maya opened with the week question, followed up naturally, shared about herself, and exited warmly without it feeling abrupt. She didn't ask about Daniel's salary, family, or age.

👋 Scene 2: Professional Networking Event

Two people are standing near the drinks table at a small industry event. They have name badges but don't know each other.

Sofia: "How's your week going? It's been a busy one for me."

Liam: "Ha, same here — this is actually the third event I've been to this week."

Sofia: "Oh wow! You must be good at these. Have you been to one of these events before?"

Liam: "A couple of times, yeah. It's a good crowd usually. What about you?"

Sofia: "First time at this one. I'm still figuring out the format — do people actually talk about work, or is it more casual?"

Liam: "Honestly, a bit of both. I usually just see what the other person is interested in and go from there."

Sofia: "That sounds like a good approach. So — what is it that you do?"

Liam: "I work in UX research — basically finding out why people get confused by apps."

Sofia: "That sounds really interesting — what do you enjoy most about it?"

Liam: "Honestly? The interviews. You hear such surprising things about how people think."

Sofia: "I can imagine. I'm in marketing, so I spend a lot of time guessing what people think — sounds like you actually know."

Liam: "Ha! More or less. It's never quite what you expect."

Sofia: "I'd love to hear more another time. I'm going to grab a drink — it was lovely talking to you, Liam."

Liam: "You too, Sofia. Enjoy the evening!"

🔍 **Notice:** "I'm going to grab a drink" is a classic, friendly exit. It gives a natural reason for leaving — no one feels rejected. Sofia also used "That sounds interesting" and "What do you enjoy most about it?" — exactly the phrases from Card 3.

The Exit Phrases: Leaving Well

"It was lovely talking to you."

Warm and genuine. Works in any context — formal or casual. Always a safe choice.

En español: Fue un placer hablar contigo. — "lovely" aquí es un adjetivo que significa "wonderful/very nice".

"I'm going to grab a drink."

A natural, relaxed reason to move on. Nobody feels like you're escaping — you're just getting a drink! Pair it with "It was lovely talking to you" for a complete, polished exit.

Try It

PRACTICE TASKS

Time to try these phrases yourself. Work through each task below. There's space to write your answers — then check the answer key on the last card when you're ready. No peeking! 🙊

1

Choose the natural reply

Someone says: "**How's your week going?**"

Which answer sounds more natural in casual small talk?

- a) Pretty well, thanks.
- b) At the library.

Your answer: _____

2

Choose the right follow-up

Someone says: "**I've started painting.**"

Which is a good follow-up question?

- a) What do you like painting?
- b) What is your salary?

Your answer: _____

3

Complete the phrase

Fill in the missing word:

"**It was lovely** _____ **to you.**"

Your answer: _____

4

Repair this question

A learner wrote this question in small talk:

"**How many years do you have?**"

This is a direct translation from Spanish (*¿Cuántos años tienes?*). How would a native English speaker ask this instead?

Your answer: _____

1

Write a friendly exit

You've had a nice short conversation at a networking event. Write **two sentences** to leave the conversation warmly. Use the phrases you've learned.

Your answer:

2

Generate a follow-up

Someone says: "**I went hiking last weekend.**"

Write **one** natural, open-ended follow-up question.

Your answer:



Tip: Try saying your answers out loud before writing them. Small talk is a speaking skill — your mouth needs practice too, not just your pen!

Make It Yours

SPEAKING & WRITING TASKS

You've learned the phrases. You've seen them in action. Now it's time to bring them into *your* life. These tasks are designed to feel real — because that's the only kind of practice that sticks.

Speaking Task: The 90-Second Conversation

Imagine you're at a casual evening class — it could be a language class, a cooking class, or an art class. You've just arrived and you're standing next to someone you've never spoken to before.

Your challenge: Have a 90-second conversation using the Open → Listen → Follow Up → Share → Exit pattern. You can do this with a real person, or practise alone by speaking both parts out loud.

Plan your opener

Will you use "How's your week going?" or "Have you been to this class before?" Write it here:

Prepare one follow-up question

If they mention something they enjoy, what will you ask?

"What do you enjoy about _____?"

or: "That sounds _____! How did you get into that?"

Plan your exit

Write your two exit sentences here:

Writing Task: The Thank-You Message

After a networking event, it's common to send a short friendly message to someone you met. Write **4–6 sentences** to a person you had a nice conversation with. Mention something specific they said (you can invent the detail), and keep the tone warm and natural.

Useful phrases to include: *It was lovely talking to you... I enjoyed hearing about... I'd love to hear more about... Hope your week is going well...*

Your message:

The Meme



Caption this!

"Me: I know five small talk openers.
Also me at the actual party: 🙄💋🙄"

Language note: "Also me" is a very common informal structure in internet English. It creates a funny contrast — "Me [in theory]: I'm prepared. Also me [in reality]: I'm panicking." It's not formal grammar, but it's everywhere on social media.

Your caption: Write your own version below!

Success Checklist

I can open a conversation

I can say "How's your week going?" or "Have you been here before?" naturally.

I can follow up

I know how to ask "What do you enjoy about it?" and respond with "That sounds interesting."

I can share & balance

I share something about myself after asking, so it feels like a conversation, not an interview.

I can exit well

I can say "It was lovely talking to you" and "I'm going to grab a drink" with confidence.

Answers & Examples

ANSWER KEY

Here are the answers to Card 5. Remember: for speaking and writing tasks, there's no single "correct" answer — what matters is that your language is natural, warm, and follows the pattern. Model answers are provided as *examples*, not as the only possibility.

1 The natural reply to "How's your week going?"

✓ **Answer:** a) **Pretty well, thanks.**

Option b) ("At the library") answers a different question — *where* you are, not *how* your week is going. In small talk, match the type of question with the type of answer. "How's your week going?" invites a feeling or an update, not a location.

En español: "Pretty well" = *bastante bien*. Es una respuesta natural y amistosa, no demasiado formal ni demasiado informal.

2 The right follow-up to "I've started painting"

✓ **Answer:** a) **What do you like painting?**

Option b) ("What is your salary?") is completely off-topic and intrusive. Never ask about money, family, or relationships in casual small talk unless the other person brings it up first. Option a) shows curiosity about *them* and what they enjoy — exactly the right move.

En español: "What do you like painting?" = ¿Qué te gusta pintar? — open question, invites them to share more.

3 Complete the phrase

✓ **Answer:** **talking**

Full phrase: **"It was lovely talking to you."**

The verb after "lovely" here is a gerund (verb + -ing). This is a fixed, very common phrase. You'll hear it in both formal and informal contexts. Don't say "It was lovely to talk you" — the preposition "to" goes after "talking", not before "you".

En español: Fue un placer hablar contigo. — "lovely" como adjetivo aquí equivale a "muy agradable".

4 Repair "How many years do you have?"

✓ **Answer:** **"How old are you?"**

Learning point: "How many years do you have?" is a direct translation of ¿Cuántos años tienes? — grammatically understandable, but not natural in English.

Native speakers say **"How old are you?"**

However — and this is important — asking someone's age is often unnecessary in casual small talk, and can feel intrusive. In most conversations, you simply don't need to ask. Focus on shared interests instead.

5 Write a friendly exit

✓ **Model answer:** *"It was lovely talking to you. I'm going to say hello to a friend over there!"*

Your exit works as long as it's warm, it uses a phrase like "It was lovely talking to you," and it gives a natural reason for leaving. You don't need to explain yourself in detail — a simple, friendly reason is perfect.

6 A follow-up to "I went hiking"

✓ **Model answer:** *"Where did you go?"*

Other great options: "How long was the hike?" / "Did you go with friends?" / "What was the scenery like?" All of these are open, friendly, and respond directly to what the person said. They show you were listening — which is the most important small talk skill of all.

Speaking & Writing: What to Look For

Speaking Task: Model

A: "Have you been to this class before?"

B: "No, it's my first time! Have you?"

A: "A couple of times — I really enjoy it. What made you want to try it?"

B: "I wanted to try something creative. I spend all day at a computer."

A: "That sounds like a great reason! I know that feeling. Anyway — I think we're starting soon. It was lovely talking to you!"

B: "You too — see you in class!"

Writing Task: Model

"Hi Liam, it was lovely talking to you at the event last night! I really enjoyed hearing about your work in UX research — what you said about interview surprises really stuck with me. I'd love to hear more about it sometime. Hope your week is going well!"

What makes this work: specific detail, warm tone, "It was lovely talking to you," and "Hope your week is going well" — a natural opener recycled as a sign-off.

Quick Recap

1

Open

"How's your week going?" / "Have you been here before?"

2

Follow Up

"What do you enjoy about it?" / "That sounds interesting!"

3

Exit

"It was lovely talking to you. I'm going to grab a drink."

Small talk isn't about being perfect — it's about being present. You've got the tools. Now go be brave. 💪

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Free resources, worksheets, and more at tms.lumarauniverse.com