



SMALL TALK

BLUEPRINT

By Dan Chang

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Small talk does big things	4
Start a conversation	9
How to connect	17
Exit gracefully	25
Summary	29

Welcome to the Small Talk Blueprint!

In this book, I'll show you my step-by-step process to use small talk to connect with someone you've never met before.

So a little bit about me...

I'm a naturally shy guy. And I used to hate small talk.

Around new people, I would avoid conversations because I never knew what to say. My mind would go blank. I'd end up running out of topics really quickly.

And quite honestly, I thought small talk was a waste of time.

But about 9 years ago, I realized this was holding me back in a huge way. I saw that people who small talked really well were the ones having fun, making friends, and getting promoted at work.

So I started researching -- starting with the basics. And I had a lot of questions. Probably a lot of the same questions that you have.

WAIT BUT DOESN'T SMALL TALK SUCK?

Glad you asked.



**Small Talk Does
Big Things**

- If you Google the definition of small talk, you'll see things like...
- "Conversations about nothing with strangers or acquaintances you don't care about, that waste your time"
- "Useless and unnecessary conversation to fill awkward silence"

...I disagree

Small talk get a bad rep. Most people neglect it. They think it's boring, pointless, and awkward.

But we use small talk all the time. Even with close friends and family:

- "How are you?"
- "Beautiful day today!"
- "Been a long week?"

Think about it. Even with your friends, you *warm up* before you dive into the deep stuff.

Small talk has an important purpose.

I like to explain it like this: **Butt sniffing for humans.**

Say what? You nasty Dan! (yeah, I know)



But(t) seriously... Have you ever thought about *why* dogs sniff each other?

Turns out there's more than meets the eye (or nose?)

The dogs are literally sniffing out information about the other dog. They can smell the other dog's gender, emotions, and even diet. Basically, they're trying to figure out if they're compatible.

The same thing happens with humans. When you small talk, you're collecting information about the other person.

- How are they feeling?
- Are they in the mood to chat?
- Are they a friendly person?
- Do I want to know them better?

In those few minutes, you make thousands of micro-judgements and micro-decisions. But instead of using smells you're using words, facial expressions, and lots of other little signals.

Small talk is about getting to know the other person.

Small talk is a ritual that lets you get to know new people. It's light and easy for a reason. It lets you figure out if you like each other!

And if you do it right, small talk can add rocket fuel to your life. You'll make friends, enjoy parties, meet new people, and improve your performance at work.

For me, small talk has opened so many doors:

- I've been recommended for promotions (without asking for them)
- I met the inventor of HeadBlade (who inspired me to start my own business)
- I've become friends with a community of entrepreneurs (we talk every day)
- I've exchanged emails with dozens of interesting people (a painter, taxi driver, research scientist, Madison Square Garden employee, founder of a nonprofit organization, etc etc etc)

...And all I used was basic small talk!

Nothing complicated. Or particularly witty.

Just remember:

Small talk is the first step to all relationships.

So in the Small Talk Blueprint, I'll guide you through:

1. Starting a conversation
2. How to connect with someone
3. How to leave a lasting impression

Alright, let's get started.



Start a
Conversation

Starting conversations can be scary. Especially with strangers.

So here's what most people do: They try to be impressive.

...They try to be clever.

...Prepare impressive stories

...Use powerful body language

...etc

But these don't actually help you connect with people. And it can be extremely paralyzing. Especially if you're shy. You end up getting stuck in your head.

SO WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Instead of focusing on me, focus all your attention on the other person. Instead of asking how am I doing? Ask, how are they doing? What's going on in their world?

I love this quote from Steven Moffat:

”

**I've come to understand that charm isn't being funny.
Charm is finding other people funny.**

“

It's so true. The key is to focus on the person and not so much on what you're saying.

I know that sounds counterintuitive, but remember, don't put so much pressure on yourself. Get out of your own head. You don't need to blow minds.

And that's okay.

Remember, most people are terrible at small talk, and they won't even remember most of the conversation.

The key is to shift your focus off yourself and onto others.

OKAY COOL, BUT WHAT EXACTLY DO I SAY?

Lots of people get stuck on this.

But don't worry, it's really not that complicated, and I'll give you the four easiest way to start talking to a stranger.

But first, I'd like to start with this idea:

"Cliche is okay."

Like I said before, you don't need to blow minds. When you start conversations, cliché is okay. Actually, cliché what you want to aim for.

Keep it simple.

We try to think of clever things to say, but it just ends up paralyzing us.

That's because our brains dismiss most of our ideas. We think, "that's so unoriginal, nobody wants to hear that." But most of the time that's not true.

The most important thing, which isn't cliché at all, is that you actually approach them. That alone sets you apart from 99% of the people out there.

That being said, I've found that the very best and easiest way to get anyone to open up, is to **be curious** about them.

If you focus on yourself, people won't really care.

And if you focus on information, the interaction will be over quick.

For example let's say you ask someone for the time:

- You: "Hey, do you know what time it is?"
- Stranger: "11:15 AM"
- You: "Great thanks!"
- Stranger: "No problem." <turns away>

It's really hard to get a conversation going from there..

But if you focus on **the person**, that's when it gets good. So here are the four easiest ways you can start talking with anyone.

#1 - SHARED EXPERIENCE

Make a comment on a shared experience.

That means something you're both experiencing.

It could be the weather (remember, cliché is okay), a long line, a funny smell... anything!

What this does is it creates an instant bond. It gives you something in common. Just the fact that you're both experiencing the same thing in the same place at the same time.

People are always on the lookout for people who are similar. And this is an easy way to create that.

Now some easy examples are:

- "This place is packed!"
- "Wow can you believe that guy?"
- "What going on with this line?"

Just pointing stuff out that you've both experiencing is a great way to start a conversation.

#2 - COMPLIMENT PLUS A QUESTION

Alright second, is a compliment plus a question.

My favorite thing is to compliment a piece of clothing.

The reason this is awesome is because it's personal, but it's not too personal. They've obviously put some thought into it, so it's a great way to start. But at the same time, it's not like too intrusive.

Some examples are:

- "I like your hat... what's that called?"
- "Hey cool shirt... where'd you get it?"

I know it sounds corny but this really works. I've done this so many times and it's amazing. It doesn't have to be anything complicated.

#3 - OFFER HELP

Third, you can offer someone help.

These people are literally hoping someone will approach them. After all, they need help!

So simply look for these people who are in need. These will be people who are:

- Bored
- Lost
- Carrying something heavy

And what you're going to do is help them.

This channels the rule of reciprocity, which means if you help someone, they're going to feel a need to repay you.

And this is a great time to start a conversation. After you've helped someone they'll be much more open and friendly.

Now, this won't work if they're busy and can't talk, but it's okay. You've improved their day and simply made the world a nicer place.

#4 - ASK THEIR OPINION

Lastly, ask someone for their opinion.

I love this one because it works every time, it's amazing.

Most people will say yes if you ask them for an opinion because it's easy and it's non-threatening. And it also works great because it makes them feel valued. You're basically saying, hey I care about what you think, would you mind helping me out?

Very very few people will say no.

So I like to ask for someone's opinion while I'm shopping. Let's say I'm browsing men's clothes, I'll be like:

*"Excuse me I could really use a female opinion,
which one of these shirts do you think looks better on me?"*

I've gotten some really interesting responses and started some really fun conversations. And it's really really easy to do.

And that's it!



How to Connect

Okay, now that you've started a conversation...

How do you connect?

Sometimes you only have a few minutes. So I'm going to show you how you can do it quickly with anyone you meet. The key thing to understand here is that:

We like people who are similar to us.

It's natural, and it's been proven in studies. Similarity draws people together. And no matter how small or silly those similarities may seem, it's powerful stuff.

Think about the way people form groups. They find people who are similar to them.

So in order to connect, you must highlight similarities.

I used to think being passionate and interesting is what made people connect, but that's not true. The truth is nobody will care how interesting you are unless you learn how to relate to them.

I'm not saying you change yourself to please others (never do that). But it's a shift in how you think.

There's basically two ways you can look at people...

Take Arnold and Danny here, for example.

You could look at the differences...
...or you could look at the similarities.

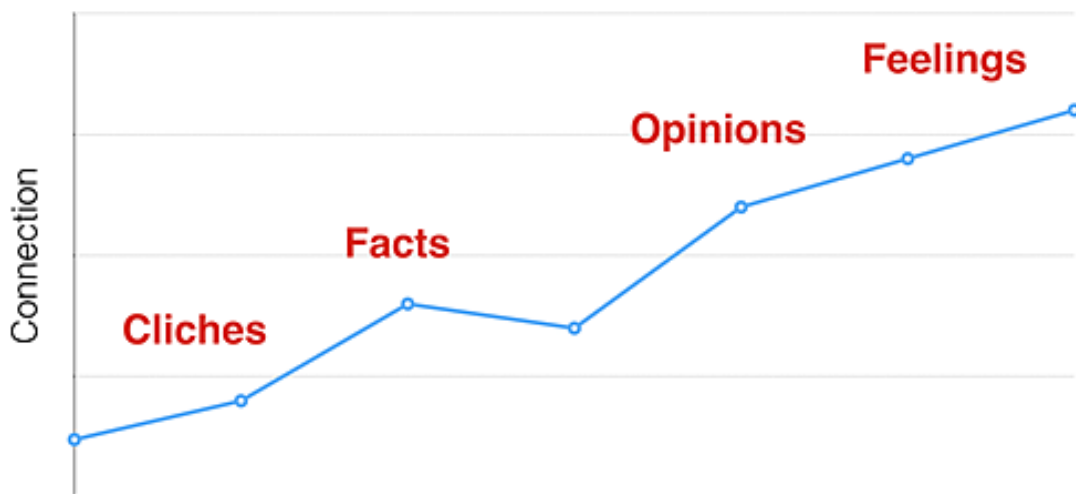
There will always be differences between you and other people. But at the same time, there will always be similarities.



The most likable people I know do this automatically.
And here's how you can do it:

STEP 1 - Uncover opinions and feelings

I have a whole lesson about this in my advanced course. But in a nutshell, this is the basic framework for all conversations. There are 4 stages: cliches, facts, opinions, and feelings.



The first step is to uncover opinions and feelings. In other words, from WHAT to WHY.

Most people ask generic questions like "how are you?" or "what do you do?" and they get stuck at cliches and facts. Ask specific questions to get specific answers and move you away from cliches and facts into the deeper stuff.

This helps open up even reserved people because they see that you actually care.

For example, ask specific questions to really understand someone's day:

- What's going well? What isn't?
- Doing anything fun?
- Any plans for tonight?

From there, continue asking questions that really draw on their opinions and feelings:

- What's that like? It must be so exciting
- What's your favorite spot to eat around here?
- Do you enjoy that?

STEP 2: Affirm what they say

Next, simply affirm what they say.

When someone says something to you, they're putting a piece of themselves out there, and seeing how you react. It's little glimpse of who they are. So you need to show that you "get them."

Show that you understand them by affirming what they say. So here are some easy phrases you can use.

- True..
- That's amazing...
- I feel you..
- Tell me about it..
- I know right...
- That makes two of us...

These are also known as "phatic expressions." There are hundreds of others, so figure out what works for you. The best approach I've found, and the mother of them all, is "yes and." The general rule here is to start with "yes" and then build upon it with "and."

The point here isn't to be a people-pleaser, but to show someone that you understand them.

You can also affirm what they say by matching them.

First, you can match how they talk.

Are they talking really fast and energetic, or are they talking slow and super chill? Are they loud, or are they soft spoken?

When you reflect these things, what you're doing is matching their energy level and meeting them where they are.

Think about it.

If you're tired, there's nothing more annoying than an excited person. And if you're excited there's nothing more annoying than a low energy person. So match their energy levels by matching how they talk.

Also, you can match how they move with your posture, lean, breathing, head tilting, etc.

Bottom line: *This creates more similarity.*

STEP 3: Relate with your opinions and feelings

Finally, it's your turn to relate. After all, you can't just keep affirming others....

You need to enjoy the conversation too! And talk about what you're interested in.

You've got to *share about you* to truly connect.

So relate by sharing your opinions and feelings.

In other words, show how you're similar! Not that you're exactly the same, but how do you relate?

It doesn't have to be complicated. Simply use this formula:

"That's so _____ because _____."

And just insert your opinions and feelings in the blanks.

So for examples someone tells me: “I’m having chipotle for lunch.”

I might say, “That’s so awesome, because chipotle is amazing. I haven’t had it in over a year, now I’m craving it!”

And that’s it! In summary, here’s the 3-step formula for connecting:

- **Step 1** - Uncover their opinions and feelings
- **Step 2** - Affirm what they say
- **Step 3** - Share your opinions and feelings

Remember, the goal here is not to become a “yes man” and people pleaser.

It’s about connecting.

And in those first few minutes of a conversation, the key to building that connection is to **highlight similarity**.



Exit Gracefully

When and how to end a conversation can be tricky.

Let's talk about how you can exit gracefully in a way that leaves an impression.

Last impressions are lasting impressions.

It's what makes people look forward to talking to you again. And a big part of that is how you exit. And I'll teach you the absolute best way to do it.

STEP 1 - Touch interrupt

When you exit a conversation is key.

Most people wait for the energy to die and exit when it's awkward. But you leave a weird last impression. Instead, exit on a high note.



I like to leave in the middle of laughter, for example.

Then, all you do is briefly touch them on the arm or shoulder.
For no more than like 2 seconds.

This does two things.

First, because you're invading their personal space, it creates a pause. This is really useful when someone talks a lot and you can't really find a good point to exit.

Second, it creates a bonding effect. When you touch someone they'll feel more connected to you, especially if it's during a high point, which is exactly the best time for you to leave.

STEP 2 - Leave regretfully

Now that you've got their attention, what you do is leave regretfully by putting the blame on you.

You've enjoyed the conversation, but now you need to go do something. The focus should be on the "thing" and not the person or the conversation.

The most important thing here is that you don't lie!

Be honest about what you need to do and then go do it.

You can do this even when you don't have to physically leave the location. So here's a few examples of what you can say:

- I need to go talk to...
- I'm gonna go take care of...
- I have to use the restroom...
- I promised myself I would...
- I want to take a look at...

STEP 3 - End with an unfinished thought

End with an unfinished thought to leave people wanting more.

When you do this, you will be burned into their mind until the next time they see you. Often, people will seek you out to close the open loop. For example, say something like

- "Oh yeah, remind me to tell you about _____ , which I think you'll love."
- "There's something really interesting I noticed about you, I'll tell you later!"

Easy enough right? So what we've done is interrupt the conversation at a high point using touch, leave regretfully, and then end with an unfinished thought.



Summary

Congratulations, you've made it to the end!

You're on your way to becoming a small talk master.

Here's a quick summary of what you've learned:

- **Cliche is okay.** When you're starting a conversation, you don't have to be clever. You don't have to be unique. Just start with something easy. And all these four things I've taught you are very easy and simple.
- **Get out of your head.** This is a huge one. Too often, shy people focus on themselves. Is this weird? Am I being awkward? What do they think of me? What if they don't want to talk to me? Shift your thinking off of yourself and onto the other person. Focus on the other person. Instead of thinking "how am I doing?" focus on them and "how are they doing?"
- **Highlight similarity.** People like people who are like themselves. So in order to connect, you highlight similarity. First uncover opinions and feelings. Then, affirm what they say. Then lastly, share your opinions and feelings. You don't have to agree with everything they say, but it's about showing how you relate.
- **Leave on a high.** To exit gracefully and leave an impression, leave at the high note of a conversation using the touch interrupt. Then leave regretfully by putting the blame on you. Then end with an unfinished thought. This will burn an impression of you into someone's mind until the next time they see you.