

Language Links

Volume 2

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What is "Small Talk"?

Small talk is casual conversation

When do you make small talk?

While waiting (for your drink, your meal, other members of your party, for the meeting to start, etc.)

Why is Small Talk Important?

©Small talk is what persons use with each other in order to find common ground. It's how they get to know one another.

©Small talk allows people to connect without the threat of business decisions or tension.

Small Talk at a business lunch

©If you're the guest, make small talk until the host signals the beginning of business talk.

©If you know the other person is married and/or has a family, ask a very general question about it.

©Bring up light business topics, such as new businesses, new inventions, funny happenings. Nothing heavy or serious.

©A good joke is best delivered early, before the business discussion begins.

Small Talk at a Social Function

©Give equal time to everyone around you, especially both dinner partners.

©If conversation bogs down, ask "personal" questions: Where was your last vacation? How do you know the host/hostess? What was the last movie seen/book read? Etc.

©Launch light topics of interest to all, not boring or depressing ones.

©If you know any good quotes, bring them out only when they fit the occasion.

When NOT to Make Small Talk

- ©Anytime someone is concentrating: Reading, working, involved in another conversation.
- ©When privacy might be expected: In a doctor's/dentist's waiting room, in a changing room, in a restroom.
- ©When someone doesn't respond to your initial gambit, but goes immediately back to their previous activity.



Culture Corner

Different cultures in giving gifts

Vietnam

Always wrap a gift in colorful paper.

- When visiting a Vietnamese home, bring a gift for the hostess. A gift for children or an elderly parent is also appreciated.
- Give items useful for daily activity, like designer soaps, cosmetics, lamps or framed pictures for the home.
- Don't give handkerchiefs (symbols of a sad farewell). Most Asians consider the Western habit of using a cloth handkerchief and then returning it to your pocket to be barbaric.

In business, give whiskey. Giving a gift in an office setting may be misinterpreted as a bribe. Try to save your business gift giving until you are invited to your colleague's home.







Cambodia

- Gifts made in America are well-received.
- Give personal gifts, like clothing and perfume, only when you know people well.
- Bring your hostess fruit, flowers or chocolates. Send flowers ahead of time, if possible. Roses are a favorite.
- Give your colleagues fine scotch and wines, engraved pens, calculators and gifts from your home region.

Singapore

- Business gifts are generally not exchanged.
- Use both hands to give someone a gift. A gift given to a guest or the host is not opened in the presence of the giver.
- Be careful of the gift being misinterpreted as a bribe, even a small gift. Never give a government official a gift, which might be considered a bribe.
- Always bring the hosts a gift when invited to someone's home.



Philippines



- Gifts are not expected, but are appreciated. You may want to bring a small gift to your first meeting.
- Gifts are not opened in the giver's presence. Thank the giver and set it aside.

Here's the Answer



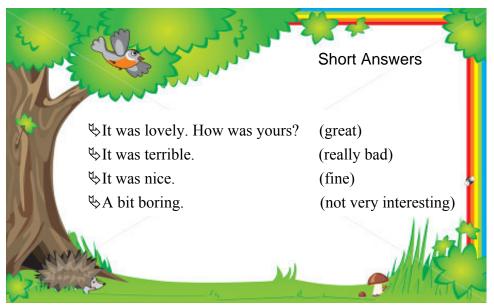
What would be possible answers for the question "How was your weekend?"

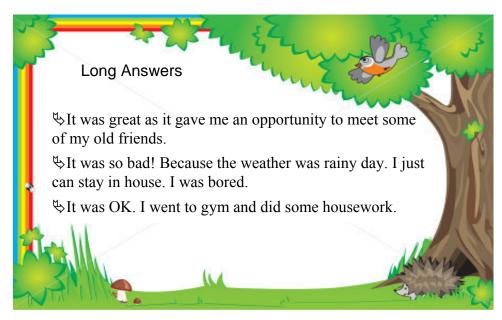


People often like to ask each other how they spent their holidays or weekend. There are a number of ways to answer questions about it.



How was...? How was your weekend?







Bits and Pieces

Hanami: A guide to cherry blossom viewing in Japan

Location: Throughout Japan, but especially good at <u>Yoshino</u>.

Dates: Cherry blossoms can begin to appear in Okinawa as early as January and not until May in Hokkaido, but through most of the country they're usually in flower near the end of March.



Level of participation: 5 – picnic and party among the blossoms.

One of the most beautiful natural sights in Japan is of groves of cherry trees in full blossom, giving the appearance of earthly clouds of flowers. Viewing the blossoms is such a big event that national news services even carry maps of their progress, and it's a time when the Japanese throw away their reserve and decide to party. Hanami tradition is to have a picnic party amid the blooming trees, and parties begin with the arrival of the earliest buds and endure to the last clinging blossoms. Both daytime parties and moonlit soirees are standard, as crowds flood the parks with beer and good humour. You can enjoy Hamani anywhere there's a cherry tree in blossom, but a few places have become favourites over the centuries.



In Tokyo, Ueno-kōen has 1000 flowering cherry trees and is ground zero for the Hamani explosion, making it arguably the most popular spot in the country. At Shinjuku-gyōen, one of Tokyo's largest parks, you'll be able to set up a Hamani party without such crowds. In cherry-central Kyoto, the pick of the spots is Maruyama-kōen, where the centrepiece is a massive weeping cherry tree. It's truly one of the city's most gorgeous sights, especially when lit at night. If you're in Kyoto on the second Sunday in April, head out to Daigo-ji temple,

where a special procession, in period costume, is held to re-enact a cherry-blossom party held here in 1598. Japan's top cherry-blossom destination, however, is the mountain-top Kansai town of Yoshino, where the blossoms of thousands of cherry trees form a floral carpet gradually ascending the mountainsides. It's definitely a sight worth travelling for, though the narrow streets of the village become jammed tight with thousands of visitors at this time.



Resources: http://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan/travel-tips-and-articles/76349

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