

### Welcoming visitors to your company

#### **Welcoming a visitor**

Welcome to [company name].  
Did you have any trouble finding us?  
Hello, [name]. Nice to see you again.  
You can leave your things here/in my office/at the reception desk.  
I'll take you around to meet the team.

#### **Offering hospitality**

Would you like something to drink?  
How would you like that? Milk/Cream (AE)? Sugar?  
Here you are.  
Please help yourself to the biscuits/cookies (AE).

#### **Talking about the offices and company**

It's a lovely space/a very nice location.  
The reception area looks very nice.  
Have you been in this location long?  
How many people work here?  
How long has the company been around?

#### **Accepting hospitality**

A cup of coffee./Some water would be nice.  
Just black./With milk and sugar, please.  
Thank you./Thanks.

### Try to avoid these common mistakes:

~~Welcome in our company.~~  
~~Are you in this location long?~~  
~~We are fifty employees.~~  
Please: (when you give sb sth)  
Please: (when sb thanks you)

Welcome **to** our company.  
**Have** you **been** in this location long?  
**There** are fifty employees.  
Here you are.  
You're welcome./Not at all.



### Using first names

In general, Britons and Americans prefer to use first names rather than surnames. Colleagues, in particular, nearly always use first names with each other. One exception, however, is when someone of 'low status' is talking to someone of 'high status'. For example, a secretary might call the company CEO 'Ms Phillips' and the CEO would call the secretary 'Mary'.

If you are not sure which name to use, then use the surname. Normally the native speaker will suggest you change to first names ("Please, call me Geoff."). Of course, *you* can also suggest it, especially if you are older or senior in position.

Note that if you are using surnames, the accepted form for addressing women is 'Ms' (pronounced 'Miz'). Always use this form unless a woman says she prefers 'Mrs'. 'Miss' is hardly ever used now and sounds very old-fashioned.

### Keeping a conversation going

Sometimes it can be difficult to keep a conversation going, especially if your conversation partner is not very good at socializing. Here are some tips for avoiding awkward silences.

- When someone asks you a question, usually it is because they are genuinely interested so don't just give a simple answer. Give some extra information and/or ask another question in return:

A *How long have you been working here?*

B *About three years. Before that I was actually working for the competition. What about you? How long have you been with your company?*

- If someone offers 'extra' information when answering your question, ask another follow-up question:

A *This is a great restaurant. Do you come here often?*

B *Oh yes. I was here last week actually.*

A *Oh really? Was that for business or pleasure?*

- If the conversation 'dies', you can start a new topic by referring to or asking about something that was said earlier:

*So, are you married, Marco? You mentioned your mother-in-law earlier.*

*You were saying earlier that you spent some time in Africa.*



### Moving from small talk to business

There is normally a period of small talk at the beginning of a meeting. How long the small talk lasts depends on the culture – it can be as little as 5 minutes or as long as 20 minutes. At some point, the person who is in charge of the meeting should signal that it's time to start talking about business.

Normally there will be a short pause in the conversation, then he/she will say something like:

*Well, I suppose we should make a start.*

*So, shall we get down to business?*

*Right, let's make a start, shall we?*

### Ending a conversation politely

Sometimes it can be difficult to end a conversation politely. Here are some tips for getting away from people without being rude.

- Exchange business cards (this is often a signal you want to end the conversation):

*Anyway, let me give you my card.  
Listen, do you have a card?*

- Say you have to leave because of another commitment, e. g. another meeting:

*Sorry, I really have to go now. My boss is waiting for me outside.  
I should really get going. I have another appointment in a couple of minutes.*

- Say you've seen someone you want to talk to:

*Listen, I've just seen Chris over there. Excuse me a moment, I really need to catch him.*

Native speakers often use words like 'so', 'right then' and 'OK' (often with the person's name) to signal that they are ready to finish the conversation. The sentence 'It was nice talking to you' is a very clear signal that the person wants to move on.



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*Wir freuen uns auf Sie!*

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