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SMALL TALK

Gordon is at his company's Christmas party with Monique

Gordon: Wow, this is a big party, isn't it? Would you mind if I introduce you to some people?

Monique: No problem. Look at all the business people. Who's that woman with the purple jacket?

Gordon: She's my boss. Let me introduce you to her...Ms. Sanchez!

Ms. Sanchez: Oh, hello, Gordon! I'm so glad you could make it to the party.

Gordon: I'd like you to meet a friend of mine.

Monique, this is my boss Ms. Sanchez. Ms Sanchez, this is my friend, Monique.

Monique: It's very nice to meet you, Ms. Sanchez. I've heard a lot of great things about your company.

Ms. Sanchez: That's nice to hear. Aren't you cute! Do you work out? You're in great shape, aren't you? I bet you have so many boyfriends! Now, are you Gordon's *friend* or his girlfriend? What's the scoop?

Gordon: Uh, we're actually just friends, Ms. Sanchez. Monique works in an office at the university. I hear that you graduated from the same university.

Ms. Sanchez: That's right. Could you hold my drink for a second, Gordon? Thanks. I have to fix my hair. Anyway, Monique, how long have you been studying there?

Monique: I'm in my fourth year of Political Science. I'll graduate next April. I really enjoy it.

Ms. Sanchez: Really? What do you think of politics these days? It would be great if you could give me some inside information. I hear that the Minister of Finance hits the bottle a little too often.

Monique: Well, politics could always be better. I think it's best not to start talking politics at the Christmas party. Remember, we're here to have fun. So, how long have you been with the company?

Ms. Sanchez: Well, I started in the mailroom ten years ago, and worked my way up the corporate ladder. It's been hard work, but it's been worth it. Speaking of hard work, Gordon, I hear you have had some great ideas about diversifying our markets. I would appreciate it if you could tell me about them next week. Oh, there's Herb! I have to go find out if he went on a date with Maggie from accounting. You two should go mingle!



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Gordon: OK. Enjoy the rest of the party, Ms. Sanchez.

Monique: It was nice meeting you! Bye!

Gordon: Sorry about that, Monique. Even though Ms. Sanchez knows how to run the company, she's not very good at small talk. She's a little too outgoing and can really put her foot in her mouth sometimes.

○○○▶ VOCABULARY

to work out – to exercise, often in a gym or fitness facility

political science – the study of political systems

to hit the bottle (slang) – to drink too much alcohol

scoop (noun; slang) – gossip; hot or latest news or information

the corporate ladder (saying) – the rank of people in a business, company or corporation, from lowest to highest

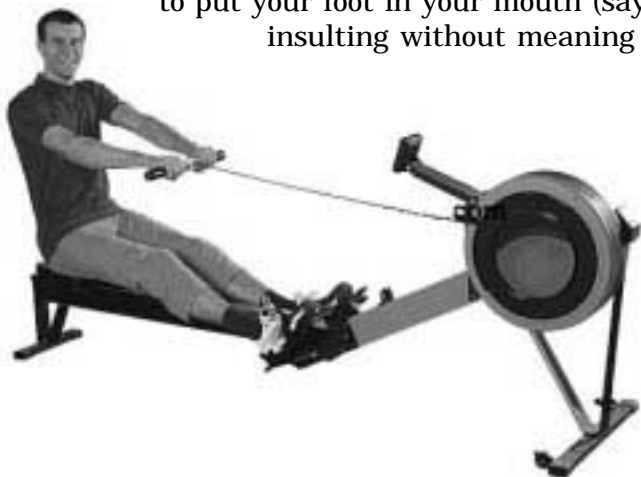
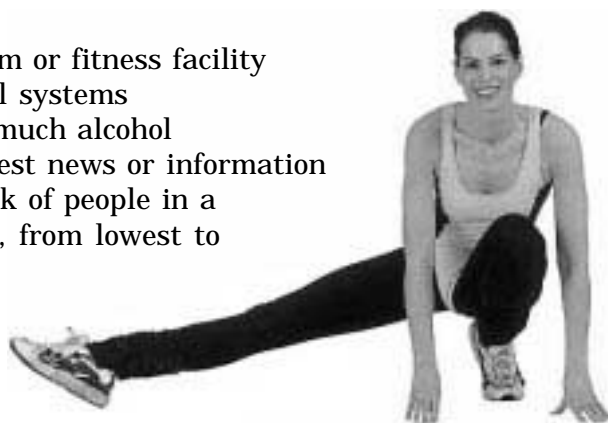
to diversify – to increase the variety of activities, products or markets

to mingle – to move around and talk to different people

small talk – talk about unimportant or trivial subjects, often used to start a conversation with an acquaintance or stranger, or to continue conversation

outgoing – a person who likes to meet new people and is not shy

to put your foot in your mouth (saying) – to say something embarrassing, rude or insulting without meaning to do so



Cultural Note:

In North America, it is common for a company to host a party in the Christmas season for the staff and their spouses. It usually involves dinner and drinks and it is a chance for the staff to gather in a social setting.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Why do people use small talk?
- 2) Are you comfortable meeting new people? Do you think that you are shy or outgoing?
- 3) Have you ever been to a party where you met a lot of new people?
- 4) What do you do when someone asks you a question that you don't want to answer?
- 5) What do you think are good topics for small talk? What are inappropriate topics for small talk?
- 6) Have you ever put your foot in your mouth? What happened?