

Building rapport

THIS UNIT LOOKS AT:

- building a conversation
- asking about family and interests
- talking about other personal topics
- dealing with misunderstandings

Context



1 Look at this list of conversation topics.

- Asking about family: relationship/partner/spouse/children/parents
- Talking about interests: hobbies/music/sports/leisure activities
- Asking about where a person lives: house/apartment, etc.
- Asking about where a person lives: country/city/town, etc.
- Complimenting someone on their clothes/hair/jewellery, etc.
- Talking about your salary
- Talking about relationships at work
- Talking about travel and holidays

a Which of these topics do you think you might use with the following people? Rate the topics on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'safe' and 5 is 'risky'.

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| a a client | c a superior | e a project partner |
| b a colleague | d a subordinate | f someone of the opposite gender |

b In what circumstances might you talk about each topic?

2 Think about the following questions.

- 1 In your country and place of work, which of the topics above is it normal to talk about?
- 2 Are there any topics which you would never discuss?
- 3 Developing a working relationship often involves sharing some personal information. What questions might you use to open a conversation on any of the above topics?

Presentation



Michelle and Frank work in two different branches of the same company. They are going to be working on the same project and are both attending an induction session for the new project. They are talking during a coffee break.

Personal details 1 3.1 Listen to the conversation between Michelle and Frank. In each of these statements, underline the correct answer.

- 1 Frank works / *doesn't work* in New York.
- 2 Frank *has worked* / *hasn't worked* for the company for more than two years.
- 3 Frank knew Graham Robson in *New York* / *London*.
- 4 Michelle *was* / *wasn't* Graham's team leader.
- 5 Michelle has a *high* / *low* opinion of Graham.
- 6 Frank has known Graham for a *long* / *short* time.

2 3.1 Listen to the conversation again. Complete the sentences.

- 1 It sounds _____, doesn't it?
- 2 Mm, great, and it's _____ to meet the rest of the project team.
- 3 Yes, it is ... _____ with the New York office long, Frank?
- 4 Oh really? So _____ Graham Robson, then?
- 5 Yes, very well – he's an old friend. _____ ?
- 6 Oh, no, _____ how do you know Graham?
- 7 Yeah, Graham and I _____. Small world, eh?

Awkward topics 3 3.2 Listen to the rest of Michelle and Frank's conversation. Answer these questions.

- 1 What questions does Frank ask to find out more about Michelle?
- 2 What information does he discover about Michelle?
- 3 Which question is probably too personal?
- 4 How does Michelle respond to the question?
- 5 How does Frank recover the conversation?
- 6 How does Frank bring the conversation to an end?

Tip Be careful! Complimenting another person on their dress, hair, jewellery, style, etc. can be very personal and intimate. In western culture, it is mainly done between women.

Dealing with misunderstandings 4 3.3 In the conversation, there are three occasions when Frank and Michelle misunderstand each other. Frank recovers the conversation by making clear what he meant to say. Listen to the extracts again and underline the words that are stressed.

- 1 Oh, no, I meant how do you know Graham?
- 2 No, I said 'I'd like to live there.' You know, it's one of my dreams.
- 3 Oh, I see, sorry. I thought, you know, when you said the two of us, you meant ...