

SMALL TALK ON THE LINE

In On the Line (page 55), Ken Taylor explains how important it is to make small talk — even when you're on the phone to a business partner. You can practise formulating questions and statements for suitable small-talk topics on these two pages.

1. Tense questions

difficult

Complete the sentences in this dialogue by putting the verbs into the correct form.

- Rachel:** We could meet any time after 9.30. I'll have finished my Chinese lesson by then.
- Paul:** Chinese?! How long (a) _____ (you, learn) Chinese?
- Rachel:** About four months now.
- Paul:** And how (b) _____ (it, go)?
- Rachel:** Truthfully? ... It's incredibly difficult!
- Paul:** I can believe it! (c) _____ (you, have) a chance to use what you (d) _____ (learn) so far?
- Rachel:** Only once. Our Chinese agent was here last week, and I asked him about his flight. He understood me all right, but I had no idea what he said!
- Paul:** So what (e) _____ (you, make) decide to learn Chinese?
- Rachel:** Well, I'll need it for business and pleasure in future. We have more and more Chinese clients, particularly for the new products. ... Also, my son is getting married in the spring — and his future wife is from Beijing.
- Paul:** Fantastic! (f) _____ (she, speak) English?
- Rachel:** Yes, her English is perfect, but I'd like to be able to say at least a few words to her parents in Chinese.
- Paul:** Good for you! Where (g) _____ (the wedding, hold)? In China or in your home town?
- Rachel:** In China. We're really looking forward to going there. We've decided to travel around China for a month after the wedding.
- Paul:** Well, (h) _____ (I, wish) your son and his fiancée all the best! And that you have a great holiday.
- Rachel:** Thank you, Paul.



2. Spot the clue

medium

People who listen carefully should be able to pick up on any clues their partners may leave and then ask an appropriate question. Rearrange the words to create questions for these two mini-dialogues.

HOLIDAYS

- John:** I'm sorry I didn't call you yesterday. I only got back from my holiday last night.
- Susan:** That's OK.
anywhere / year / did / exotic / this / go / you
- a) _____?

- John:** Not exactly. We went to Cornwall!
- Susan:** But I've heard it's beautiful there, especially along the coast.
before / you / had / there / been
- b) _____?
- John:** Actually, we go there most summers. My wife is from Cornwall, from a little village called Polperro. Her sister still lives there.
- Susan:** drive / how / it / there / normally / you / long / to / take / down / does
- c) _____?
- John:** Much too long. Especially with the children in the car!

SPORT

- Julia:** OK, so I think we've finished everything. That's perfect. And it's still light outside, so I can go for a run.
- Karen:** Oh, you run?
particular / for / are / in / training / anything / you
- a) _____?
- Julia:** Don't laugh, but I'm planning to run a marathon in two months' time.
- Karen:** What's there to laugh about? I think that's fantastic.
you / ever / a / have / run / marathon
- b) _____?
- Julia:** No, never, but I'm pretty fit already.
- Karen:** do / running / often / you / week / go / every / how
- c) _____?
- Julia:** At least four times.

Answers

BUSINESS SKILLS (pages 6–7)

SMALL TALK ON THE LINE

1. Tense questions

- a) have you been learning;
- b) is it going;
- c) Have you had;
- d) have learned;
- e) made you;
- f) Does she speak;
- g) will the wedding be held (is the wedding going to be held / is the wedding being held);
- h) I wish.

2. Spot the clue

Holidays

- a) Did you go anywhere exotic this year?
- b) Had you been there before?
- c) How long does it normally take you to drive down there (normally)?

Sport

- a) Are you training for anything in particular? (or: Are you in training for anything particular?)
- b) Have you ever run a marathon?
- c) How often do you go running every week?