

Lesson: Networking – The office party

Level: Intermediate

Age: Adult

Time: 60 minutes

Language objectives: to use expressions for telling a secret or registering surprise; to practise workplace vocabulary; to practise rhythm and stress when giving important information

Key life skills: networking, active listening, building confidence

Materials: role cards cut up one per student; if you have more than eight students in the class, make copies of the last two cards (the ones with no gossip on them) for every extra student in the class



Warmer

Ask students if any of them work in an office. Have they ever been to an office party? What was it like? Do students think it's a good idea to have parties where they work? Does anybody in the class NOT like going to parties or social events with the people they work with?

1. Tell the class that they have all been invited to an office end-of-year party. Each person will have a different role.

Explain that the president of the company is not in the role play, the students must imagine that he or she will be arriving later. This means that everybody can gossip about work and complain about the president! The objective of the role-play is to find out as much gossip about the company as possible.

Make sure you explain *gossip* (uncountable noun) and *to gossip* (intransitive verb).

2. Tell them that some of them will have gossip to share, and others not. Before students begin the role-play, tell them that you want them to follow these guidelines each time they talk to someone new.

1. Introduce yourself and greet the other person.
2. Ask some questions to make small talk (give out Useful language).
3. If you have some gossip, tell it using the expression provided on your role card.
4. Listen to the other person's gossip and react (see Useful language).

When students are ready, give out the role cards tell them to stand up and begin mingling.

3. While students are doing the role-play, have some background music playing (some baroque classical music or 'cocktail party' music is good for this). Circulate and take notes of language errors, good use of the target language but don't correct at this point.

4. Ask students to sit down again. What did they find out? Elicit things from the groups. Do a quick feedback on the errors or language you took notes on. Then ask students to call out their pieces of gossip again, using the sentence stems on their role cards. Write these on the board. You can also use this time to review any work vocabulary that came up during the role-play (e.g. jobs, to be laid off, buy out ...)

5. Explain that in English, people usually slow down when they are giving some important information or a surprise.

That's because the important information (verbs or nouns) often will come at the end of the sentence. Ask them to turn to a partner and tell their gossip again, using one of the sentence stems on the board (from stage four) but this time to slow down or even pause, just before they give the information. When they have done this, write the following sentence stem on the board:

Listen to what I have to say, because I am not going to say it again ...

Tell the students that you want them to try to say something surprising to their partner but beginning with these words and pausing. Give them an example (think of something surprising!). Then have them do it in pairs, working on rhythm. Were they surprised?

Lesson: Networking – The office party

6. Now, explain that the president has arrived at the office party! Tell the students that they all want to talk to the president to try and impress him or her and raise their prospects of being promoted. Ask students to think about their character and to list five things they might say to the president to impress him or her at the party. You might want to give them some ideas on the board, these could be a mixture of the following:

- compliments to give the president
- finding mutual likes and hobbies
- sharing something they have achieved in work recently
- sharing something impressive they have done outside of work

While they are writing their ideas, go round the class to help struggling students. Once they have finished, ask them to compare their list of ideas with the student next to them and give each other advice on how to improve their ideas.

7. When students have finished comparing and discussing, ask them to work with a new partner. Explain that one of the students in each pair should be the president and the other their original character. They have five minutes to try and impress the president to get their promotion! Once the time is up, ask the pairs to swap roles so that each student has the chance to try their ideas out.

To finish, ask some students to feed back to the class and explain why they were or weren't impressed by their partners.



Useful language

Making small talk at the office party

How long have you been with the company?

What's your job? / What do you do?

Wow, this year has gone by really quickly.

I can't stand these office parties.

This is really good; would you like to try some?

Reacting to surprising news

Really!

No way!

I can't believe it!

You're kidding!

That's terrible!

Lesson: Networking – The office party

Role card

You are Sheri Smith, the receptionist. You work at the front desk. You know most people in the company. You know that the president has parties in his office late at night after people have left work.

Expressions to use:

I shouldn't really say this but ...

Role card

You are Andrea Penedes, the secretary to the president.

You know that the president has a serious problem with alcohol and likes to have parties in his office late at night. You also know that he had an affair with the last secretary.

Expressions to use:

Please don't tell anyone I told you ...

Role card

You are Patricia Mendez. You are a computer technician.

You know that the president's last secretary left because she was secretly pregnant. You don't know who the father was.

Expressions to use:

Well, I heard that ...

Role card

(Choose your own name and job before you start)

You work for the company. You don't like your job very much. You like to complain about your work and want to find out gossip about the company.

Role card

You are Malcolm Singh, the accountant. You know that the company is very much in debt and that the president is getting a very large financial bonus this year.

Expressions to use:

You may not believe this but ...

Role card

You are George Griffith, the Human Resources manager.

You know that ten people are going to be laid off in January because of financial problems with the company.

Expressions to use:

I know this isn't the time to talk about it but ...

Role card

You are Bernie Takana. You are a visitor to the company and have been invited to the party.

You know that your company is planning to buy out this company next year.

Expressions to use: I'm telling you this

in confidence ...

Role card

(Choose your own name and job before you start)

You work for the company. You don't like your job very much. You like to complain about your work and want to find out gossip about the company.

Role cards

