

What to say when

The Indonesian word for small talk is *basa-basi*. This term covers a wide range of situations from having a simple chat about the weather to using language in order to preserve social harmony or avoid embarrassment.

In Australia and in Indonesia, there are certain topics that people generally try to avoid. In Australia, for example, we tend to avoid discussing our personal financial situation. In Indonesia, many people may feel uncomfortable discussing internal political issues with foreigners. Silence accompanied by a smile or a polite laugh is a common Indonesian reaction to what might be considered an inappropriate remark about sensitive topics.

Exercises



1. In Indonesia, in formal and informal situations, the following topics of conversation are considered appropriate: the weather, food, sports, travel, pets and the modernisation of Indonesia. Why do you think these topics are considered appropriate?



2. As well as internal politics, topics of conversation that will generally embarrass or offend Indonesians are: money, a person's health, divorce or a female's physical appearance. Why do you think these topics of conversation are considered inappropriate?

What to say when



3. Here is a list of questions you have learnt so far in this course. Read through all of them and then do the exercises that follow.

Siapa nama Anda?

Bapak tinggal di mana?

Siapa nama Bapak / Ibu?

Apa kamu merasa panas?

Siapa namamu?

Apakah Bapak merasa dingin?

Kamu dari mana?

Kamu sudah pergi ke Monas, belum?

Apakah Bapak dari Jakarta?

Apakah Ibu sudah ke Monas?

Apa kamu suka Jakarta?

Bagaimana Jakarta?

Apakah Ibu suka Jakarta?

Apa kabar Pak?

Berapa umurmu?

Apa kamu butuh botol air?

Berapa umur Bapak / Ibu?

Apakah Bapak membutuhkan topi?

Kamu tinggal di mana?

a) Underline the questions you (a teenager) would ask an unfamiliar Indonesian adult if you wanted to get to know them. Why did you choose these questions?

b) Put a tick beside the questions that you (a teenager) would ask an unfamiliar Indonesian teenager if you wanted to get to know them. Why did you choose these questions?
