



**TALK  
SPORTY  
TO ME**

# HOW TO TALK SPORTY AT WORK



## THE X'S AND O'S OF MAKING SPORTS SMALL TALK

With veteran sports broadcaster and  
Super Bowl ring owner Jen Mueller.

(In other words, this is legit.)

# SPORTS TALK IS NOT ROCKET SCIENCE.

Yet I run into people all the time who think they don't know enough to talk sports with other fans.

## You're wrong.

Talking sports at work, or work-related functions, is different than talking sports at a sports bar, tailgate or game. It's not a contest to see how much you know. It's a chance for you to get to know someone and for them to get to know you.

Being able to strike up a sports conversation means you can connect with over half the population of the United States and should give you the confidence to walk into any room and strike up a conversation with anyone.

## So to recap, sports talk is not rocket science. It's easier.

Especially if you utilize this How-To guide and the resources found at [TalkSportytoMe.com](http://TalkSportytoMe.com). They're designed help you build your sports knowledge, increase your confidence level in talking sports

and improve your overall communication skills.

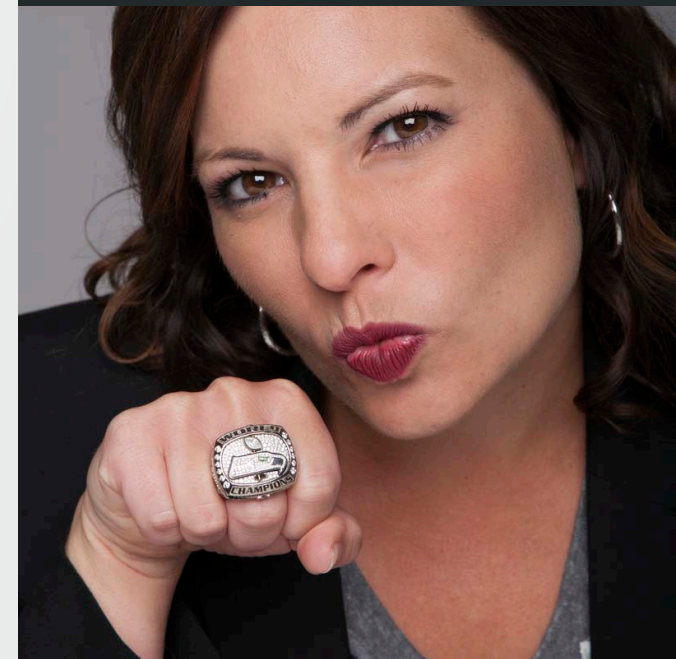
By the way, talking is one of the things I do best. Talking about sports is actually my job. I've spent two decades in sports broadcasting. My current responsibilities include pre- and post-game interviews on the Seattle Mariners television broadcast. I'm also on the Seahawks sidelines as their sideline radio reporter. Before I was in broadcasting, I was a life-long sports fan, an athlete through high school and a high school football official for 10 years.

## I know sports. I know how to talk. More importantly I know how to help you Talk Sporty.

These insights will give you confidence to talk sports regardless of your level of fandom, help you connect with different types of sports fans and engage in sports mall talk without spending hours glued to the TV - all with business relationships in mind.



Let's get started!



# SPORTS FAN PROFILES

Different types of sports fans talk sports differently. There's no right or wrong way to talk sports, but conversations will be more effective (and easier) if you consider the type of fan you're talking to and their preferred communication style.

**For example, you're not going to talk to a novice fan the same way you'd talk to a diehard fanatic. Some fans are more interested in stats than others.**

I bet the people you work with fall into one of these sports fan profiles or, as is the case with most fans, represent some combination of them. These are not definitive personality types, but they can give you an idea of how fans approach conversations and strategies you can use in your interactions.

**You'll notice that gender is not listed as a sports fan characteristic. The way you talk about sports is determined by your level of sports fandom and your communication style, not gender.**





## Novice Fan

- Sports knowledge often limited to a name or team they've heard of in passing.
- Working to build sports knowledgebase.
- Wants to engage in sports convos but are aware of their limitations.

### Convo strategy

Expect sports conversations to be shorter, but don't avoid engaging in them.

Make conversations easier by using the most popular topics generating headlines. The more something is being talked about, the more likely a novice fan is to have heard about it. Don't go crazy with stats.



## Diehard Fanatic

- Most vocal about their passion and knowledge of sports.
- Intensity might affect their ability to watch games with other people.
- Can demonstrate low tolerance for newer sports fans especially those they consider "bandwagon" fans.

### Convo strategy

Tee up the conversation, sit back and listen because these types of fans usually like an opportunity to talk about a game.

Due to the passion of these fans, consider staying away from sports conversations (and maybe conversations altogether) after a difficult loss.



## Local Interest Fan

- Roots for the home team or home-grown talent.
- Displays pride in associating with a local team, college or player.
- Frequently wears logo'd apparel to demonstrate fandom.
- Knowledge base might not extend past local interest.

### Convo strategy

Use local angles and local teams to initiate sports conversations.

Recognize the reasons for their fandom and listen for additional conversation topics around how their fandom developed. Interactions are especially pleasant after big wins. Avoid rubbing salt in the wound after a loss.



## Somewhere in the Middle

- General knowledge of both local and national sports headlines
- Enjoys watching games when time and schedules allow.
- Genuinely Interested in sports and willing to talk about any aspect.

### Convo strategy

Use their willingness to talk sports to stay on their radar and get a foot in the door to bigger business conversations.

Maintain a general level of sports knowledge. Stats, big headlines and social aspects of watching a game are all possible convo topics.

## Social Scene Fan

- Derives enjoyment from the social aspect of watching sports with others.
- In the know about the best sports bars, tailgates and sports hangouts.
- As likely to talk about the experience of watching a game as the game itself.

### Convo strategy

The bigger the game, or sporting event, the bigger the scene so stay up-to-date on events like rivalry games, playoff games, the Super Bowl, Kentucky Derby, March Madness or any local sports event that attracts a large crowd.

Don't forget about the actual game, but consider starting the conversation with talk about the food, people-watching and social aspect.



# TIPS FOR TALKING SPORTY AT WORK

Here are a few other things to keep in mind when jumping into sports conversations at work:

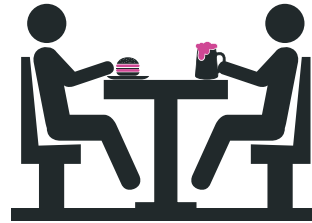
## Stay within your comfort zone.

In other words, don't over extend yourself in the conversation. Stick with what you know. Don't feel pressure to contribute to a conversation that's over your head. Doing that will make you look silly. It's what causes a lot of folks to categorize a novice sports fans as "faking it." We all have to start somewhere. You're not a fraud or a faker because you know the final score of the game, but don't know advanced statistics and sabermetrics. You will, however, sound like one if you start talking about things you don't understand. (Just like the people in your office who do that about any topic.)



## Don't limit yourself to sports.

There's more to sports than the X's and O's, stats and scores. Think about what you know that's adjacent to the sports conversation like restaurants that you like to go to by the ballpark, traffic concerns over getting to a dinner meeting the same night thousands of people are trying to get to the stadium a mile away.



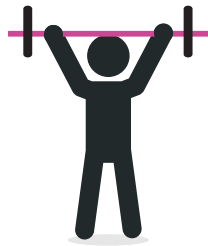
## Don't panic.

If a colleague asks what you thought of the Seahawks game and you didn't watch it and have no idea what happened, don't try to fake your way through the conversation. There's nothing wrong with saying that you didn't watch the game. You make the situation more awkward by freaking out or getting defensive. Stay calm. What were you doing on Sunday instead of watching the game? (Running your kids around to their basketball tournaments, unplugging at the cabin, taking the basket weaving class you've always dreamed of.) It doesn't matter what you were doing because, unless it was your job to watch the game, you've done nothing wrong. Go ahead and mention what you were up to and then ask your colleague for his/her synopsis of the game or opinion on what happened.



## Build your knowledge slowly.

Start by knowing the names of teams in your town or region. Then build your name recognition of a specific player or coach. The most popular names will be in the news the most. You won't have to go searching for this information.



## Location, location, location.

Use an opponent's location or a player's hometown as a jumping off point for conversation about travel or vacation. This works especially well for big games like the Super Bowl, All-Star games, golf/tennis majors.



# 55 QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU TALK SPORTY

There's a lot of information you can extract from a single sports headline to use in sports small talk and you can get even more info in the list of Weekly Sports Conversation Starters posted on [TalkSportytoMe.com](http://TalkSportytoMe.com) every Monday.

Even with all that knowledge at your fingertips there are bound to be some days (or weeks) when reading sports headlines is the last thing on your mind. It doesn't stop the conversations around you, however. Instead of walking away or zoning out and missing a chance to build a better business relationship try using the following set of questions to interact and engage.

Don't overthink this. If the questions seem too basic, remember this isn't rocket science. You don't need to know everything (or anything) to get a sports fan to share their thoughts, opinions and feelings about a game, player, outcome, coach, etc...

These questions will give you an opportunity to get or keep a conversation going, build rapport and get a foot in the door to a bigger conversation that relate to the business at hand.

7

**Here are a few tips on how to use the following questions:**

**Make the question specific when possible. Instead of saying "game" use the name of the team in town.**

**If in doubt, stick to what you know. It's better to be generic than ask a question that puts you in an awkward position, like asking about the clock management in a baseball game.**

**You don't have to commit to an excruciatingly long conversation. You do need to have a business segue to change the topic or make a graceful exit.**

**You don't have to have all the answers. You do need to be engaged in the conversation.**

**You don't have to give any sports answers of your own. You do need a strategy that pivots the conversation.**

01. Did you see the game?
02. What did you think about the game?
03. Holy cow what a game! Can you believe it?
04. Did they actually win that game?
05. Who should have won?
06. Is that the game you expected?
07. Are you going to watch the game?
08. Where did you watch the game?
09. I can't believe the score. How about you?
10. I didn't expect a win, what did you think?
11. Did they really lose? Who blew it?
12. What a disappointment. What happened?
13. Who should get the blame for that game?
14. Can you find a silver lining to that game?
15. What was the turning point?
16. What did you think about the game plan?
17. Who made the biggest play?
18. How does that compare to \_\_\_\_\_?
19. What's their record now?
20. How many wins is that?
21. What's been the biggest surprise?
22. Is the season lost?
23. Is the team going all the way?
24. How much credit does the coach get?
25. Did you agree with the coach's decision in the \_\_\_\_\_ quarter?
26. What about the clock management?
27. What did you think of the officiating?
28. Have you seen a difference in the way they play at home versus on the road?
29. How did \_\_\_\_\_ do in the game?
30. What's the biggest difference this year?
31. How have the new guys made an impact?
32. Are you going to a game this year?
33. What's the best venue in the league?
34. Who's your favorite player?
35. Which games should be guaranteed wins?
36. Who's made the biggest improvements?
37. What changes would you make?
38. What happens with the injury to \_\_\_\_\_?
39. What are their chances against \_\_\_\_\_?
40. What are their chances of making the playoffs?
41. Which team do you want to face in the playoffs?
42. How do you think the team is going to do this year?
43. Where do you think they'll finish?
44. How much do they have left in the tank?
45. I thought they would be better, why are they losing?
46. What changes would get them on track?

Use these questions if you haven't watched a game, aren't a passionate sports fan, or want to introduce a new topic.

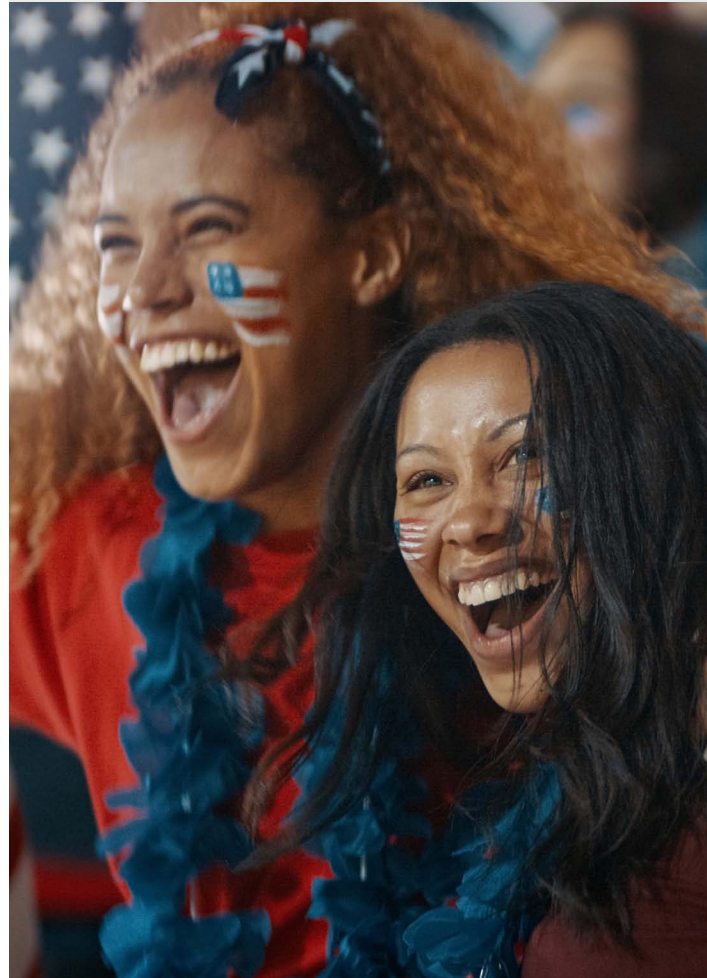
47. I didn't see the game, what happened?
48. I saw the score, but not the highlights. How did it play out?
49. I only saw the highlights. What did you think of the game?
50. I only watched a few minutes of the game before i had to \_\_\_\_\_. What did I miss?
51. I just started following the team this year. What's your perspective?
52. I'm more of a \_\_\_\_\_ fan. I'm counting on you to give me \_\_\_\_\_ news. What should I know?
53. I haven't had time to watch the last few weeks. What have I missed?
54. I haven't gotten into \_\_\_\_\_ this year. I'm waiting for \_\_\_\_\_ season. How about you?
55. I lost interest in \_\_\_\_\_. I'm starting to pay more attention to \_\_\_\_\_. Do you follow \_\_\_\_\_?



# TOP 5 REASONS TO TALK SPORTY AT WORK

## POPULARITY

Yearly surveys show that more than half of all Americans identify as sports fans. If you can talk sports, you can connect with roughly 156 million fans.



## DVR-PROOF

The amount of sports programming and viewing habits of sports fans provides daily conversation topics. This means you've always got something to talk about with millions of sports fans.

## ACCESS

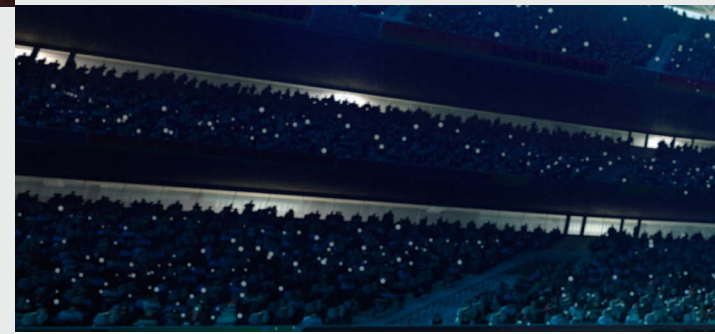
Sports fans talk to other sports fans. It's as simple as that. If the key influencer or decision-maker you want to meet is a sports fan, a sports conversation will open doors.

## CUSTOMIZABLE

Plan to talk about more than the actual game. Identify a key business message in a hot sports topic. Strategize a segue and use sports as a starting point to talk about the real business at hand.

## PERSONAL BRANDING

The way you talk about a game says a lot about you. Make it count.





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**THANK YOU!** 