

TIPS FOR  
ACHIEVEMENT

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LEARNING HOW TO  
SMALL TALK

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# the Clarion

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## Transfer Fair to be hosted at Sinclair



Clarion Archive

The Transfer Fair will be held in the Library Loggia on March 19 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Whitney Vickers

Editor-in-Chief

Sinclair Community College will host its annual transfer fair, open to all students seeking information about transferring colleges.

Manager of Career Services Matt Massie said 48 colleges have registered for the fair.

"Ohio is exceptionally rich with colleges and universities, so four-year transfer fairs brings a lot of them together in one place, and lets students start to explore and talk to those different institutions," he said.

The transfer fair will give students the opportunity to talk to colleges face-to-face, which is an advantage for students, Massie said.

"It's an opportunity to engage in a conversation with admission reps [or] recruiters from four-year institutions that may offer academic programs that align with their career goals," he said. "They can get a sense of what that next step is."

He added that the transfer fair may be especially beneficial for students within their last two terms of graduating, because it will give them a chance to engage with and explore what kind of colleges are out there.

*Oftentimes the more degrees that you can add, the more marketable you are to an employer, so adding that bachelors degree is a very good idea.*

— Matt Massie  
Manager of Career Services

"Many students come here with the intent to transfer on to pursue a bachelors degree or another credential, which is brilliant," he said. "Oftentimes the more degrees that you can add, the more marketable you are to an employer, so adding that bachelors degree is a very good idea. For students who can do that while they're in that study mode and are used to going to school, it's a great way to continue that process."

Transfer continued on page 3

## MULTITASKING: Doing more but getting less done



Daniel McCallum | Clarion Staff

The affects of multitasking can often strain an individual. Many question whether technology helps or hinders our ability to concentrate.

Andrew Fisher

News Editor

Many living in today's world know the feeling all too well: lots to do, not a lot of time. Technology claims it can help users organize and multitask more efficiently, but many accuse it of doing just the opposite.

"Multitasking doesn't exist, it's a myth," Mark Humbert, professor of psychology at Sinclair Community College said. "What you're actually doing is selectively focusing your attention on different tasks one at a time."

The word multitasking was first used to describe the parallel processing abilities of computers. In recent decades, it has transformed to describe the human attempt to do as many things as possible, simultaneously and quickly.

"Some are better than others at shifting their attention," Humbert said. "Its effectiveness often depends on the content of the communication."

In some cases, the attempt to divide one's attention can have negative effects, or can become a safety concern.

"Driving and texting is more dangerous than drunk driving," Humbert said. "You're constantly jumping back and forth from the text to the road."

Students might relate more to the example of those who walk through the halls with their phones in hand.

"I've seen people texting and walking who run into doors or people, anything," Sam McGee, a Computer Science major at Sinclair said. "It's the worst when you're stuck walking behind them."

But if they're texting and walking, isn't that multitasking?

"It's true, you're walking and texting at the same time, but you're not thinking about walking. That's the difference," Humbert said. "You look up occasionally to redirect your course, but again, the attention is simply shifting back and forth."

Business major Steven Kohler sums it up differently.

"Sometimes I feel like I have to choose between doing three things at once, but doing them poorly, or concentrating on a single thing and doing it well," he

said. "It's hard when I don't have a lot of time."

In the examples so far, technology hasn't helped with multitasking, but has been the culprit — the reason we become distracted from a task in the first place. Which brings up an important point: isn't technology supposed to help with multitasking?

"You may be doing more, but you're getting less done," Humbert said.

He refers to the three stages of memory, used by psychologists to understand how we process information.

"The first stage is sensory recognition. We take something in, though we may remember it for only 2.5 seconds. The second step is to pay attention to the sensory information you're taking in," Humbert said.

The second stage is our short-term memory. To reach the third stage, the information must be internalized and conceptualized, and is then added to our long-term memory, according to Humbert.

"The problem is, these days, we're only reaching the first step," he said.

When we shift our focus from task to task, we don't give our brain the time or effort required to internalize the information, Humbert said. He mentioned students who shift their attention back and forth in class, from laptops to smartphones, then back again to the lecture.

"They're taking snapshots of the lecture," he said. "The quality isn't there."

Timothy Taylor, an undecided major, agrees.

"I used to take my laptop to class, I thought I could multitask, take notes ... it didn't work for me," he said. "I'd always end up looking at the PowerPoint online later."

Humbert admits technology, if used correctly, can help people organize their lives.

"Without my calendar app I'd be lost half the time," he said.

When asked whether the distractions offered by current technology outweigh the benefits, he said it's hard to tell.

"There needs to be more research on how we attempt to multitask, and how technology has helped or hindered," he said.

## Criminal Justice Training Academy enables career opportunities for Sinclair students

Jennifer Franer

Assistant Editor

The Sinclair Community College Criminal Justice Training Academy offers those who enroll employment opportunities, and a chance to jumpstart their academic career.

"We are a state of Ohio program conducted at Sinclair," Pete Willis, training coordinator said. "This is a program designed and controlled by the Ohio attorney general that all Ohio law enforcement officers must complete in order to become officers for the state."

Willis said that no matter if the academy is at Sinclair or any other area in Ohio, the cadets all have to go through the same basic training.

Sinclair's training academy started in 1988 and has some of the highest pass rates of any open enrollment academy in Ohio, according to Willis.



Daniel McCallum | Clarion Staff

Graduating classes of the Criminal Justice Training Academy give plaques to training coordinators to put on the wall after they have completed the academy.

"What makes each academy different is what you add to the program," he said. "At Sinclair, we build in extra training."

Some of the extra training in-

cludes an English lesson on proper report writing, patrol rifle training and taser training.

"That's really important because most people fail to realize your

career is built on written reports," he said. "The better you are at writing, the better you will be at your job."

The academy provides those enrolled with 27 credit hours. Among those, 16 can be applied to an academic degree.

"I have some people who are using the academy as the beginning of their degree program," he said. "And some people use it as the final — they have all the other credits they needed, now they just need this to get their Criminal Justice associate degree."

Willis said one of the advantages of being in the training academy at Sinclair is that training gear and equipment is provided

"We take the financial burden off of a person coming into our program," he said. "This is something that we pride ourselves on, that we take the burden off of you."

Academy continued on page 3



campuscalendar

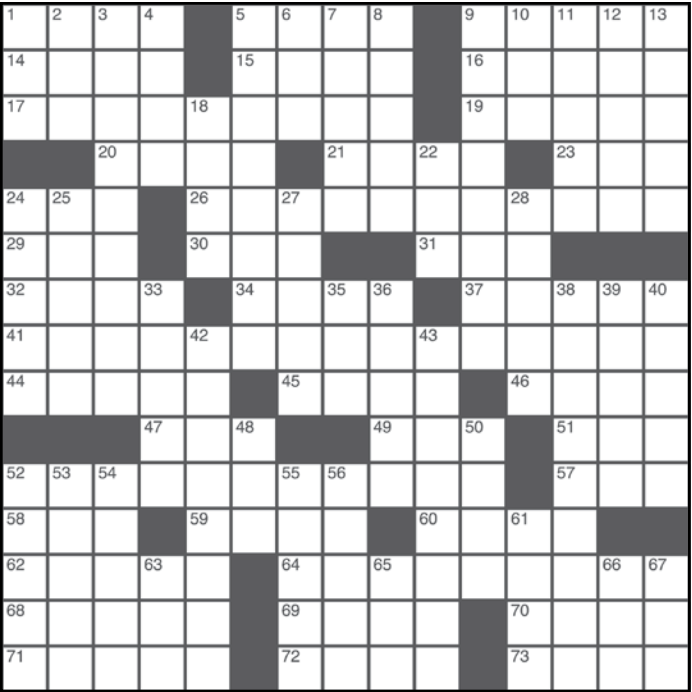
<p><b>March 11</b> Student Workshop: <b>Hopeful</b> <i>Building 12 Smith Auditorium, 11 to 12:30 p.m.</i></p> <p><b>March 13</b> Sinclair Talks: <b>Toxic Relationships</b> <i>Building 2 Room 334, noon to 1 p.m.</i></p> <p><b>March 14</b> Sinclair Talks: <b>Get College Credits for what you already know</b> <i>Library Loggia, noon to 1 p.m.</i></p> <p><b>March 14</b> <b>Jazz Ensemble Concert</b> <i>Building 2 Blair Hall Theatre, 8 to 10 p.m.</i></p>	<p><b>March 17</b> Sinclair Talks: <b>10 Ways to Fail in College</b> <i>Library Loggia, noon to 1 p.m.</i></p> <p><b>March 18</b> Sinclair Talks: <b>Sociology Career Day</b> <i>Library Loggia, 11 to 12:15 p.m.</i></p> <p><b>March 18</b> Sinclair Talks: <b>Being Supportive of People with Disabilities</b> <i>Building 2 Room 334, noon to 1 p.m.</i></p> <p><b>March 19</b> Sinclair Talks: <b>Coping with Change</b> <i>Building 2 Room 334, noon to 1 p.m.</i></p>	<p><b>March 19</b> <b>4-Year College Transfer Fair</b> <i>Library Loggia, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.</i></p> <p><b>March 20</b> Sinclair Talks: <b>Human Trafficking</b> <i>Library Loggia, noon to 1 p.m.</i></p> <p><b>March 24</b> <b>Planning to Transfer</b> <i>Courseview Campus Building A Room 113, 9 to 10 a.m.</i></p> <p><b>March 24</b> Sinclair Talks: <b>Sinclair Grads Success Stories</b> <i>Library Loggia, noon to 1 p.m.</i></p>
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campusphoto

Each week, the Clarion will feature a photo of students without identifying them. Keep your eye out for a Clarion photographer throughout this semester. It's up to our readers to figure out if they or someone they know has been spotted.

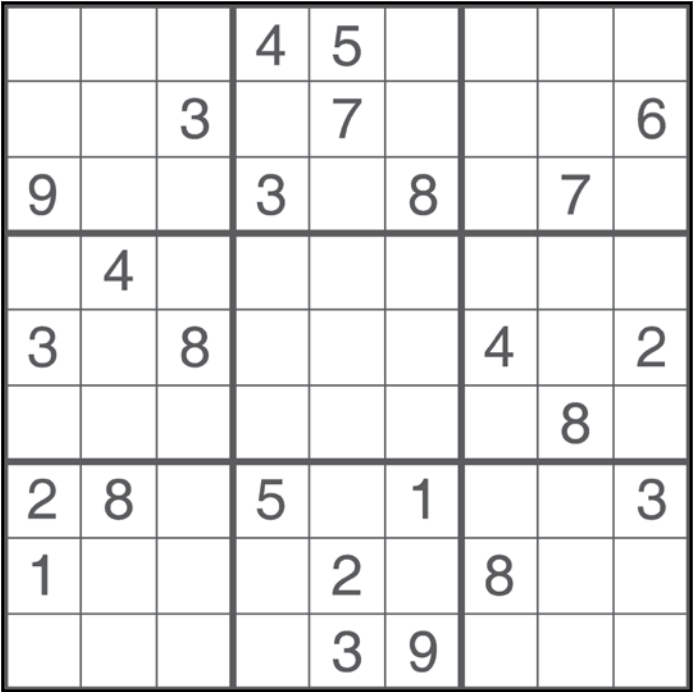


crosswordpuzzle



- ACROSS
- 1 Pi r squared, for a circle
- 5 Encyclopedia tidbit
- 9 Big-time
- 14 Speeds (up)
- 15 \_\_\_ about: roughly
- 16 Render speechless
- 17 Penniless
- 19 Powerful person
- 20 Cozy corner
- 21 Monogram part: Abbr.
- 23 Singer DiFranco
- 24 Crone
- 26 Like champion sprinters
- 29 Capri suffix
- 30 Little lie
- 31 Church-founded Dallas sch.
- 32 FDR's dog
- 34 Confused mental states
- 37 Mythological sky holder
- 41 Worker in the sky
- 44 Foil maker
- 45 Struggling to decide
- 46 Bone: Pref.
- 47 Queue after Q
- 49 20s dispenser, for short
- 51 Darjeeling, for one
- 52 Suggest something tentatively
- 57 "Bad" cholesterol letters
- 58 Key next to the space bar
- 59 "A Visit From the Goon Squad" Pulitzer-winning novelist Jennifer
- 60 March Madness org.
- 62 Pig \_\_\_
- 64 Piece for two winds
- 68 Pillar from a fire
- 69 Film director's unit
- 70 Look at rudely
- 71 Slipped gently (into)
- 72 Renders speechless
- 73 Wobbly table stabilizer
- DOWN
- 1 "Bow-wow!"
- 2 Belief sys.
- 3 Pertaining to the gospel
- 4 Concerning
- 5 Warehouse vehicle
- 6 "It's \_\_\_-win situation"
- 7 Newswoman Roberts
- 8 River through Nottingham
- 9 Direct, as a father-son conversation
- 10 Doctors' org.
- 11 Try to punch
- 12 Layer with "holes" in it
- 13 Opener's second call, in bridge
- 18 Big Broadway hit, slangily
- 22 Stipulations
- 24 Teamsters president James
- 25 For any reason
- 27 WWII torpedo craft
- 28 One-up
- 33 Greek marketplace
- 35 Pontiac muscle car relaunched briefly in 2004
- 36 Valuable violin
- 38 Comeback victor's vindication
- 39 Fed the kitty
- 40 Filch
- 42 Hurried
- 43 International accords
- 48 Schoolyard game
- 50 Riot control weapon
- 52 Like lies
- 53 Alpaca kin
- 54 Director Preminger and others
- 55 U.S.-Mexico-Canada commerce pact
- 56 Bride's new relative, say
- 61 Hullabaloo
- 63 Eisenhower nickname
- 65 Guitar cousin
- 66 Brother of Peyton Manning
- 67 President pro \_\_\_

sudokupuzzle



The objective of the game is to fill all the blank squares in a game with the correct numbers. There are three very simple constraints to follow. In a 9 by 9 square Sudoku game:

- Every row of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order.
- Every column of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order.
- Every 3 by 3 subsection of the 9 by 9 square must include all digits 1 through 9.

Every Sudoku game begins with some squares already filled in, and the difficulty of each game is due to how many squares are filled in. The more squares that are known, the easier it is to figure out which numbers go in the open squares. As you

fill in squares correctly, options for the remaining squares are narrowed and it becomes easier to fill them in.

Sudoku Tips: Start by looking for numbers that occur frequently in the initial puzzle. For example, say you have a lot of 5's in the initial puzzle. Look for the 3x3 box where there is no 5. Look for 5's in other rows and columns that can help you eliminate where the 5 might go in that box. If there is a 5 in column's 1 and 2, then there can't be a 5 anywhere else in either of those columns. You know then that whatever leftmost 3x3 box that is missing a 5 must have it go in column 3. If you can eliminate all the possibilities in that box except for 1 square, you've got it down!

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- graduating in spring of 2015

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- ability to work 4-5 hours per week
- prefer candidates who have taken introduction to journalism

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- 2.0 GPA or above
- experience in Wordpress and PHP
- CIS major preferred.
- ability to work 2-5 hour work week

Distribution Coordinator

- minimum of 6 credit hours on campus
- 2.0 GPA or above
- ability to walk long distances and perform heavy lifting

If Interested, applications for this position are on the door at The Clarion office at 8027.

daytonevents

- Monday, March 10
- Eight Ball Tournament
- Game to feature a matched pot of up to \$100.
- Chap's Saloon
- Game starts at 7 p.m. Must be 21 and up to participate.
- Thursday, March 13
- Dr. Gonzo
- Comedian to perform live stand-up act.
- Wiley's Comedy Club
- Show starts at 8 p.m. Costs between \$7 — \$15 to attend.
- Tuesday, March 11
- Aqua Yoga
- Yoga class to be held in the pool. It will feature slow movement motions and will help with balance, increased mind-body awareness and flexibility.
- Lohrey Recreation Center, Belmont Pool
- Class starts at 6:45 and ends at 7:30 p.m. Costs \$3 per class, \$30 per month or \$85 per year. Must be 18 and up to participate; bathing suit and towel required.
- Friday, March 14
- Reggae Party 2nd Friday
- Reggae, ska and dancehall music to be featured for attendees to dance.
- Therapy Café
- Starts at 10 p.m. Costs \$10 to attend, must be 21 and up to attend.
- Saturday, March 15
- James Batdorf and James Lee Stanley
- Artists to perform live music.
- Canal Street Tavern
- Event starts at 9 p.m.
- Saturday, March 15
- Dog Social "Spring Fling"
- The Southern Ohio Flying K-9s Frisbee dogs extraordinaire will be featured during this event. Friendly dogs are invited to attend, along with their owners.
- Lost Creek Reserve
- Register by emailing register@miamicounty parks, visiting the program calendar at MiamiValleyParks.com or by calling (937) 335-6273, ext. 104
- Wednesday, March 12
- Nature Club
- Event to feature teachings about mammals from Ohio.
- Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Community Center
- Event starts at 3 and ends at 4 p.m. Costs \$3 for residents, \$8 for non-residents.
- Dress for the outdoors, must be registered by March 11.

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the Clarion

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editor-in-chief  
Whitney Vickers

assistant editor  
Jennifer Franer

graphic design director  
Carly Orndorff

assistant graphic designer  
Brandon Kissel

news editor  
Andrew Fisher

copy editor  
Jason Sedy

advertising representative  
Katie Hering

multi-media specialist  
Daniel McCallum

reporters  
Trace Cureton  
Jason Sedy

web technician  
Stetson Blake

distribution coordinator  
Jason Sedy

'the clarion' adviser  
Avainte Saunders

clarion staff email  
clarion@sinclair.edu

phone: editor-in-chief  
937.512.2958

phone: advertising  
937.512.2744  
Fax: 937. 512.4590

'the clarion' location  
Building 8, Room 027

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SINCLAIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE



According to Matt Massie, several hundred people attended the transfer fair last year.



tartanalumni

Whitney Vickers  
*Editor-in-Chief*

Sinclair Community College is the home of several alumni, some of which sought after higher education, while others went directly into the workforce. To recognize these individuals, the Clarion speaks with various graduates about their lives after Sinclair.

Dan Baker and his wife Gwen Nalls are both Sinclair graduates, and have recently published a book called, “Blood in the Streets — Racism, Riots and Murders in the Heartland of America.”

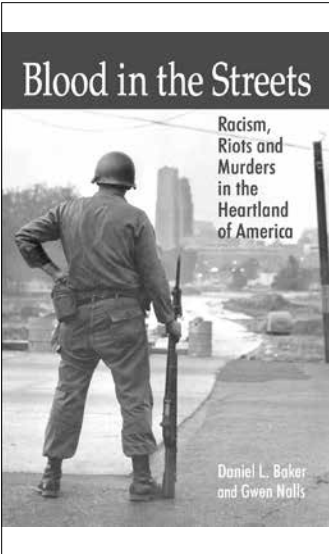
They said it is about the Dayton community during the civil rights movement.

Baker said that Dayton has always been a segregated area with the river separating the west side from the rest of the city.

When the city exploded into riot in 1966, it took 1,000 national guardsmen and 500 police officers patrolling an eight square mile area to keep things under control, according to Baker.

“That’s what the story captures — it goes through the period of the turmoil of the riots and the desegregation efforts and its impacts on society ... and against all this, there’s a serial killer that goes on and on for years,” Baker said. “The story is based on actual events and it’s told in a novel format. It’s not a textbook and it’s not a history book, it’s a story.”

Baker graduated from the law enforcement program at Sinclair, pursued a bachelor’s degree from the University of Dayton, and later, a masters degree in counseling. He also pursued a



forensicpublications.com | Photo Pull  
Sinclari alumni Dan Baker and Gwen Nalls released a book in January.

license in mental health counseling. He worked on the Dayton Police Department for 25 years, commanded the Violent Crime Bureau and the Hostage Negotiation Team. He offered his insight as a police officer during the book-writing process, and acts as a character in the book.

“At times, it’s kind of a rough story,” he said. “It’s written from a police officer perspective through the riots and in those days when I was a young rookie police officer, we weren’t really prepared or trained for what was about to happen in America. Nowhere was really prepared, quite honestly, in policing. It’s kind of a rough and gritty story in some places. [However] the real message of the story is [that] there is redemption; the story moves through the coming together of people, so it’s not just a negative police story.”

Nalls studied securement and materials management at Sinclair. She pursued degrees from the University of Dayton, Central Michigan University and Salmon P. Chase College of Law, and earned her doctorate degree and license in law. Today

she is a licensed attorney. She offers her insight as an African-American woman living in Dayton during the time period when the book takes place.

“What is unique about this book is that it is coming from personal experiences; living through it, working through it, being educated in the whole scenario as it unfolded during the 1965 through 1975 era,” Nalls said. “It talks about the cultural experiences of the black people in the community. It talks a lot about the churches [and] the meetings and discussions and rallies, and how black people communicated, what they were communicating, how they actually survived through the era.”

Both Baker and Nalls agree that Sinclair set them up for success, and highly support the college in the community.

“I credit a lot of my background success to the education I received at Sinclair,” Nalls said. “It was a very enjoyable experience for me because it catered to my ability to work during the day, go to school during the night and be taught by people who were professionals in the industry and could take [required courses] and bring them to life.”

Baker said Sinclair made a difference in his life.

“Had I not gone to Sinclair and gained my confidence there and learned like I did from the people who worked and taught, I would not have gone on,” he said. “It made a huge difference in my life and it certainly made a big difference in my earning ability.”

For more information about their book, visit forensicpublications.com.

# Counseling available for a variety of issues

Stephanie Thompson  
*Contributing Writer*

If a student has ever felt like talking to someone about personal or academic issues, Sinclair Community College offers both academic and personal counseling.

“On the academic side, the things that we cover are students who have challenges with their study habits, test anxiety, concentration, motivation, time management, so we work with them specifically on those ... giving them tips or feedback on figuring out how to resolve those barriers and how to be successful,” Eric Henderson, a counselor at Sinclair said.

The counselors try to be available and cover many issues that students may be having.

“On the personal-emotional side of things, we work with students on a variety of different things,” he said. “Students who are feeling anxious, stressed, depressed, relationship issues, grief loss, self-esteem, anger — we try to cover and be available to whatever the student needs as much as possible.”

While the counselors don’t diagnose students, they do have a community referral base which they use to connect students with other resources.

“We do have an extensive community referral base that we can link students to ... and then we stay linked with the student until they’ve gotten connected with that

other resource,” he said.

The counseling that a student receives is also confidential.

“The counselors here are very respectful with students’ privacy, so even if you run into that counselor somewhere else around campus, they’re going to leave you your anonymity. If the student approached the counselor and talked to them, by all means,” Teresa Parker, manager of the center said.

She said information is not shared with family members or instructors.

“If someone is at risk of harming themselves or someone else, that’s always the caveat where no one can make a promise like that,” Parker said.

Henderson also said it comes down to safety for breaking confidentiality.

“When it comes to safety, we may have to break confidentiality but only with regards to that situation of harm. We’re not going to go into everything else we’ve talked about in that moment or situation, it’s just focused on safety and making sure that person or those people are safe,” Henderson said.

For students who consider getting counseling, Henderson would recommend giving it a chance.

“I would say come — we offer a wide array, even if it’s just a question that they’re not sure they know the answer to ... even the smallest of questions to the biggest

situations in life, we try to cover it all. I would definitely recommend coming in even if they think it’s not that important, because it’s in their head [that] there’s something there, that’s probably important and we can help them out with that,” he said.

Parker said students should not be afraid to get counseling, they are not going to judge, and have heard many different issues.

“There’s nothing we haven’t heard, so if there’s fear behind whatever it is that they need help with, we’ve heard it all and they’re not going to get judged. [It’s] a very open and supporting environment here,” she said.

The office hours are Monday through Thursday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a crisis walk-in hour at 3 p.m.

The crisis walk-in hour is for students who need to see a counselor, but have not made an appointment.

“If someone comes in and they’re upset and we’re just not available because we’re already in other appointments, there’s a time designated each day that they can come and meet with a counselor and that’s 3 p.m.,” Henderson said.

To make an appointment for counseling, students can call 937-512-3032. For academic counseling, call 937-512-3700. Appointments can also be made by coming to the office which is located in Building 10, Room 424.

## Tips for achievement at Sinclair

Caitlyn Nehr  
*Contributing writer*

Matt Massie, manager of Career Services, gives tips on how students can achieve their goals before, during and after their time at Sinclair Community College.

“It’s all about attitude, it’s all about passion, it’s all about teamwork and communication, problem solving. Those are the attributes that students need to have,” Massie said.

Career Services on the Dayton campus is designed for you to meet with a career coach who can help guide you on the right path for a job that is suitable for an individual need.

Massie said assessments are taken by the students and the results will determine their interests and what careers they might be involved in. From there, the student will talk to their career coach to find out how to reach their

goals. This could be achieved by helping them create a resume, making sure they are taking the correct classes or even making sure they keep a positive attitude.

“It’s those soft skills that the work force is lacking, and that’s what the employers out there are begging for,” Massie said.

When understanding how to interact effectively with other people, it will make you more desirable to a company, Massie said. Including these skills on resumes will set you apart when employers are looking for new employees, according to Massie.

“Personality, a drive to work, commitment to show up on time, [being] dressed appropriately. Those are the things that employers can’t or are not willing to teach,” Massie said.

Companies are willing to train individuals they know can be trusted to gain more knowledge in that job posi-

tion, Massie said. Showing up on time to interviews, as well as shifts, is extremely helpful when looking for a job or promotion.

“Internships are of vital importance,” Massie said. “Many employers are saying that internships are now as important to see as that degree, internships are the gateway in.”

Massie said internships are offered through different companies and can be used to get into a career or job if you work hard to succeed in the position.

Massie said internships are wonderful to have on a resume and they will set you apart from other applicants. Internships are proof that you are able to be successful in that certain position.

Even if your program of study doesn’t require one, it is important to look at your options at internships because they are important, Massie said.

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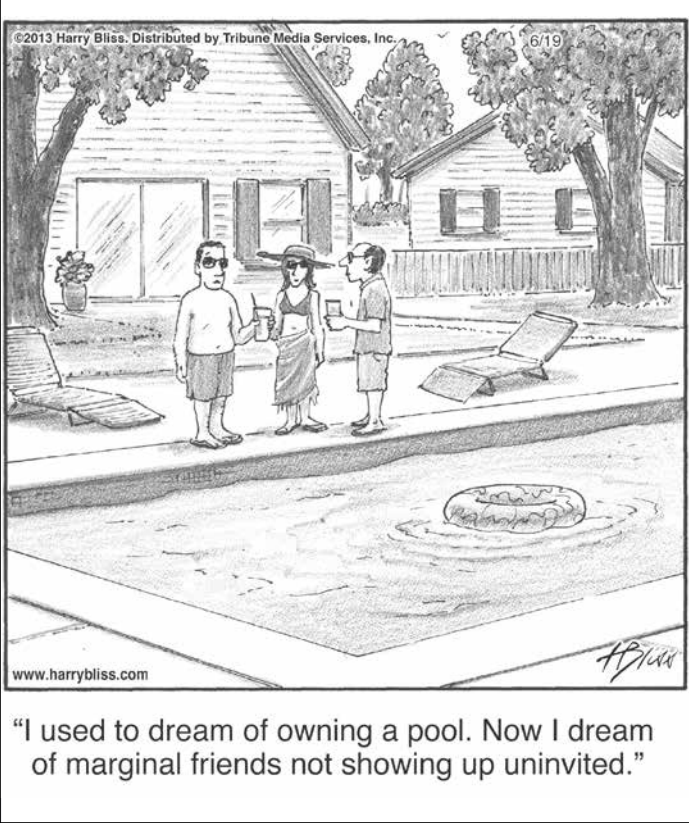
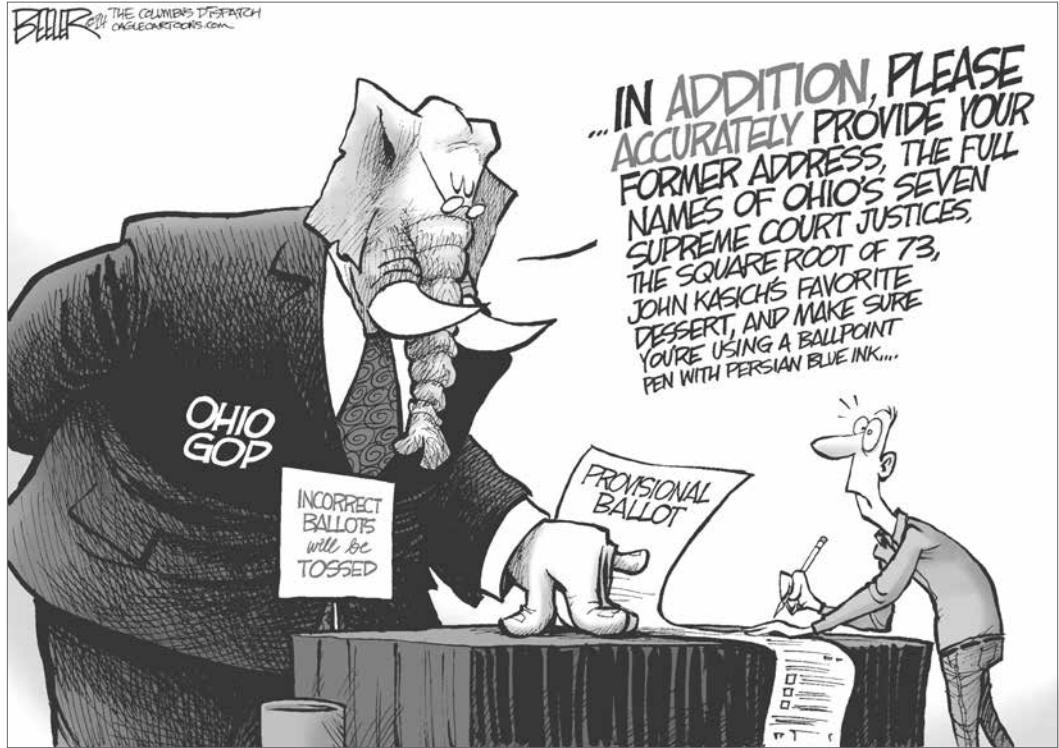
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From the FDA, a mixed bag of food labels

Los Angeles Times  
(MCT)

The U.S. Food and Drug administration broke new ground in consumer protection when it required, more than 20 years ago, the now-familiar nutrition labels on virtually every bit of packaged food. Now, the labels are being revamped — in ways that have both benefits and downsides. One of the most noticeable changes — and the least justifiable — would be the addition of a new sub-category: the number of grams of added sugar in the food, in addition to the existing measure of total sugar. But why make such a change? Doctors and dietitians have declared that there is no nutritional dif-

ference between naturally occurring sugars such as fructose (in fruit juice) and the sugars that are added. All are processed the same way by the body; the only difference, some scientists have found, is when the sugar occurs in a whole, unprocessed food such as an apple. The same isn't true, though, of the sugar in soda or that in apple juice, though the proposed labels would imply otherwise. If people want to avoid added sugar, they just need to look at the ingredients list. The FDA proposal is on firmer footing when it suggests listing the number of calories, the number of servings in a container and the size of each serving in more prominent type. The number of calories is the

number most consumers want to check, so it should be easy to locate and read. Similarly, some shoppers think that the number of calories listed is the total for the package rather than for the serving size; they don't notice that even a relatively small bag of chips might contain two or three servings, although that information is included on the label. A consumer who is not looking closely might think he is eating a 100-calorie snack when he is actually consuming more like 300 calories. For the same reason, the FDA wants packages of food that might be consumed by one person at a sitting to be relabeled as a single serving, with the total calorie count. In other words, a 20-ounce bottle

of soda, which most people probably drink at a sitting, could no longer be counted as 2 servings. The goal is a good one: to keep consumers from being misled. But the proposed change on these smaller packages would mean that there are no real standards of what constitutes a serving. A 12-ounce can of Coke would be designated a single serving, as would a 20-ounce bottle of Coke — which is at least as confusing as the current system. Also, one of the chief obstacles in whittling the nation's waistline is the great American food portion. Once labels say that 20 ounces of soda is a single serving, consumers might start thinking of that as a standard, reasonable size. They shouldn't.

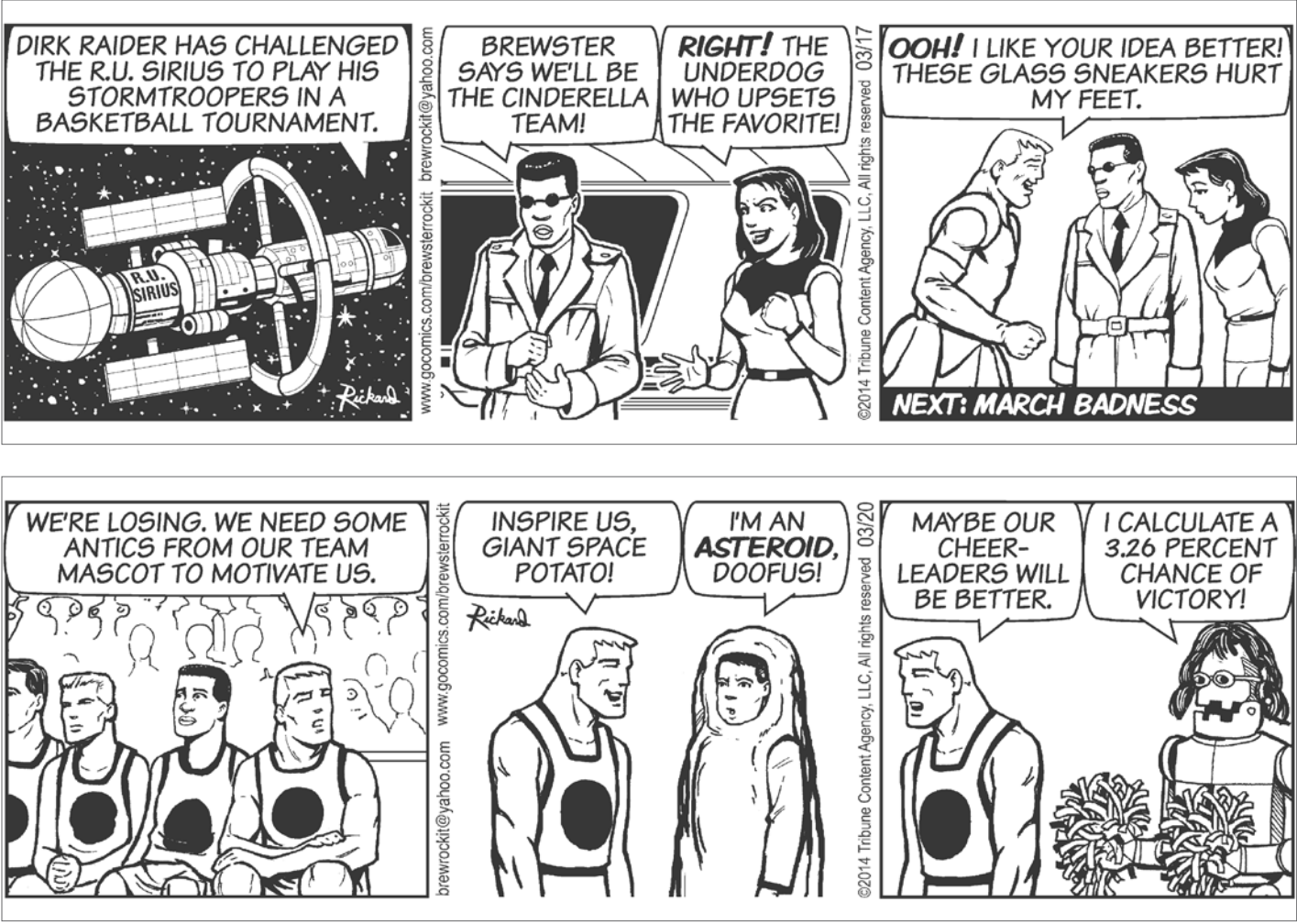
puzzlesolutions

crossword

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F	L	A	T	B	R	O	K	E		N	A	B	O	B
		N	O	O	K		I	N	I	T		A	N	I
H	A	G		F	L	E	E	T	F	O	O	T	E	D
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sudoku

7	2	1	4	5	6	9	3	8
8	5	3	9	7	2	1	4	6
9	6	4	3	1	8	2	7	5
6	4	7	2	8	3	5	1	9
3	1	8	7	9	5	4	6	2
5	9	2	1	6	4	3	8	7
2	8	6	5	4	1	7	9	3
1	3	9	6	2	7	8	5	4
4	7	5	8	3	9	6	2	1



the Clarion

encourages feedback

Letters to the editor may be submitted to the Clarion in Building 8 Room 027 or by email, clarion@sinclair.edu. Submissions might be edited for space.

No anonymous submissions will be accepted. All submissions must include author's name and phone number. The Clarion reserves the right to edit all letters. Deadline is Monday at noon for the following Tuesday publication. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

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Staff Contact Information

Editor-in-Chief

Whitney Vickers

937.512.2958

Graphic Designer

Carly Orndorff

937.512.4576

Advertising Representative

Katie Hering

937.512.2744

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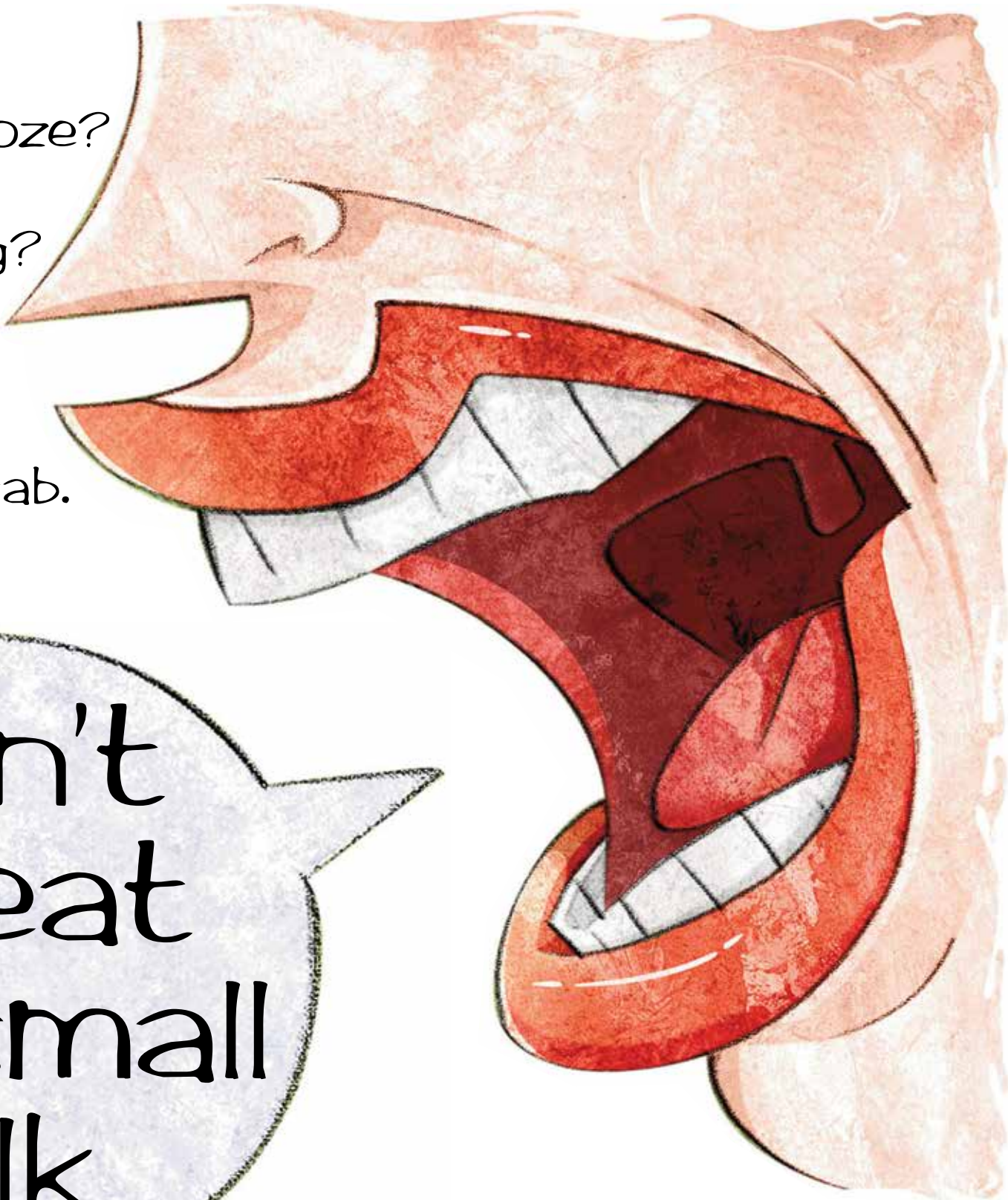


Dread the schmooze?

Mind the mingling?

Get over it and

learn the gift of gab.



# Don't sweat the small talk

By ERIN WADE  
The Dallas Morning News

“Hi there, how are you doing?”  
“Great, thanks, how are you?”  
“Just fine, thank you — uh, and you?”  
Ugh. Pause. Uncomfortable silence. Crickets. Downward glance. Twiddling thumbs. Rising blood pressure. Now what? Why does small talk have to be such a big cause of stress?

While some may be gifted with the ability to gab, many more feel uncomfortable with small talk, mingling, networking, “schmoozing,” what have you, be it at work, a party, the gym or the bar. But there are ways to keep the conversation going without feeling phony or betraying your personality.

Debra Fine is a former engineer who is now a professional speaker and author of “The Fine Art of Small Talk” (Hyperion, \$16.95), living in Colorado. She says small talk didn’t come naturally to her either. “I honestly had no clue how these people did this. My philosophy was that, if it didn’t come naturally, then you just didn’t do it. But now I know you can learn it.”

So why is small talk so difficult? Fine says it’s because the less gregarious of us are too self-concerned and only worried about our own comfort level.

“Most of us are afraid of rejection,” Fine says. “But you have to take the risk of talking to someone new. They may be in a bad mood or getting sued or something, but it’s up to you to take the risk.”

Also, if we take more of a burden of communication upon ourselves, it puts us more in control of the situation.

“I always used to hope that someone else would come up with something to talk about, but that’s unfair,” Fine says. “You have to take the burden of making everyone else feel comfortable. If someone asks you how you are doing and you say ‘Fine,’ that’s not enough. You have to give them something to work with.”

Here are 10 more tips from the experts on how to conquer small talk and actually learn to enjoy it.

**1. ASK QUESTIONS.** Ed Peters of 4Profit Institute in Arlington, Texas, has been a professional speaker for about 15 years. “When talking to someone one-on-one, you have one minute to find out everything about them. You have the rest of your life to tell them about you,” he says. “We immediately think that we have to do all the talking. But let the other person talk, or you may never have a chance later down the road to tell them about you.”

**2. KEEP IT SIMPLE.** “The most basic thing to do is keep things simple,” says David Erkel, a Dallas financial planner and member of Toastmasters. “Where are you from? What are your plans for the weekend? Stay away from tricky topics.”

**3. BE VAGUE.** If you don’t know the person well or haven’t seen them in a

while, don’t assume they are still working for a specific company or they are still married, etc. Instead of “How’s the wife?” maybe ask “How’s the family?” Or instead of “How’s the job at the newspaper?” ask “What’s been going on with work?”

**4. AVOID CONFLICT.** “I’ve done a little bit of reading on communication and happiness, and one of the things I often come across, where people get into trouble, is when they insist on being right,” Erkel says. “About 99 percent of the time, being right doesn’t really matter. If someone says a car is a nice shade of blue, but it doesn’t look blue, there’s absolutely no reason to be right. It’s better not to take a position. Be agreeable.”

**5. YOU DON’T HAVE TO SPILL YOUR GUTS.** If you’re a private person, that’s OK. You can still engage in small talk and keep your private life just that, Erkel says. “You have a private life and a social life,” he says. “Small talk doesn’t mean that you’re opening up your personal life. You’re just navigating and socializing through any given day.”

**6. FOCUS.** It’s OK not to talk to everyone. If you get a good conversation going, then run with it and build that relationship. “In my experience it’s been much more valuable to have a good conversation with one person in a limited amount of time versus trying to talk to 20 or 30 people,” Erkel says.

**7. LEARN TO LISTEN.** Some people may not be the best talkers, and Peters says that there is a responsibility on you to get something out of the conversation. “Some

people may have distracting mannerisms, or be all over the board, or be really boring,” he says. “But ... I always try to find something that’s usable. If you walk away from them without understanding, that’s as much your fault as it was the speaker’s.”

**8. TELL A STORY.** While Peters encourages small talkers to do a lot of listening, inevitably someone is going to ask you a question.

“Don’t just say, ‘I had a great day.’ Tell them a story,” he says. “People love stories, be it something that happened at work or with the family. It’s more interesting than facts or statements.” It’s also a great way for people to remember you. “I can run into someone I met 10 years ago who won’t remember my name, but they’ll remember the story.”

**9. WATCH YOUR BODY LANGUAGE.** Uncross those arms. Look them straight in the eye. “Your body language will betray you if it doesn’t match your words,” Erkel says.

Peters also says that too much movement can distract the listener from what you are trying to say. “Gestures and movements should have meaning,” he adds. “Step forward to make a point, or step back and open your arms when you expect someone to react.”

**10. PRACTICE.** “If somebody’s bashful or not tremendously comfortable with small talk, make it a project or personal goal to improve,” Erkel says. “Continue to experiment with waiters, clerks in stores, etc. Set a goal to open up the door to conversation.”

# Do these sound familiar?



**THE LOW TALKER**  
**Signature trait:** You find yourself nodding to nothing in particular.  
**How to deal:** “Ask the person to speak up,” says author, life coach and columnist Harriette Cole. “It would be ruder to stand and presumably talk to someone who expects a response from you. It’s far kinder to let them know you can’t understand them.”



**THE CLOSE TALKER**  
**Signature trait:** You can see their teeth — and smell their breath.  
**How to deal:** “Reposition your body and stand with your shoulder near the person,” Cole says. “This creates a bit of distance. Also, speak up. If you speak louder, the other person will usually back up.”



**THE INAPPROPRIATE TALKER**  
**Signature trait:** They are either talking about someone behind their back or using racial slurs, and similar offensive speech. You don’t want to be caught talking to these people!  
**How to deal:** “This depends on your level of risk,” Cole says. “If it’s really offensive, say, ‘I’m sorry, this topic makes me uncomfortable.’ Try to personalize it and not attack the person. But I always believe in accountability, so I think it’s better to say something.”



**THE INCESSANT TALKER**  
**Signature trait:** The person who won’t let you get a word in edgewise.  
**How to deal:** Just nod happily until you can get away. At least you get a break from talking for a while. Excusing yourself to the restroom is often the perfect getaway — unless, of course, they decide to follow you there.



**THE INTERRUPTER**  
**Signature trait:** They finish your sentences or try to one-up you before you’re done with your story.  
**How to deal:** “If it’s a person you talk regularly with, you need to train them on how to talk to you,” Cole says. “Say, ‘Just a moment, I’d like to complete my thought.’”



**THE NO TALKER**  
**Signature trait:** Are they even there? Hello? This person won’t hold up his or her end of the conversation.  
**How to deal:** “In a social setting, you don’t need to stay and try to talk to them,” Cole says. “The person may be distracted, or having a bad day, but you don’t need to subject yourself to that. Just say, ‘It’s been nice talking to you,’ and move on.”

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DEAN HOLLINGSWORTH/THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS/MCT