

Talking about your job & work

Let's talk about work today. Here is a conversation I have had quite often:

Michael: Hi. I'm Michael. Nice to meet you.

Thom: Hi Michael. I'm Thom. It's nice to meet you too.

Michael: So Thom, what do you do?

Thom: I'm an office worker.

Michael: I see, but what do you do?

Thom: I'm a businessman.

Michael: Right, but what do you do?

Thom: I'm a company employee.

Michael: ???????

When you are having an English conversation, and someone asks you about your job, you should tell them exactly what your job is. Usually, this is your job title:

- What do you do? → I'm an English teacher
- What do you do? → I'm a salesman
- What do you do? → I'm a secretary
- What do you do? → I'm an accountant.

We do not give general answers, like Thom did in the opening conversation. So answers like these are strange in English because they don't tell us about you. These answers are not unique:

- I'm a businessman → Lots of people are businessmen and businesswomen.
- I'm an office worker → Look around your city. Many people are office workers.
- I'm a company worker → Unless you own your own business, you work for a company

By the way, the words "salaryman" and "office lady" are not used in English.

You can also answer by describing your job, if your job doesn't have a clear title:

- What do you do? → I work for a real estate company in the accounting office
- What do you do? → I work for a graphic design company, in the marketing office.

Let's have a look at an improved version of the opening conversation:

Michael: Hi. I'm Michael. Nice to meet you.

Thom: Hi Michael. I'm Thom. It's nice to meet you too.

Michael: So Thom, what do you do?

Thom: I'm a sales manager for an advertising firm in Chicago.