

# LOOSE LIPS

How loose lips can sink your career ship.

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Come on, everyone does it! Girls do it as a form of therapy on girlie nights, boys never admit to it but actually do it just as much as girls, and some of us pay hundreds of pounds so we can do it in front of a therapist. It's commonly known as bitching, moaning and whining and sometimes it's all that gets us through a hectic day. Gossiping is natural, whether it's complaining about the latest enforced policy with your coworker over lunch or raving about the latest management argument that only you witnessed because everyone else was out training yesterday and you should have heard the language flying about as well as the crockery!

Gossiping on the job is an inevitable result of corporate culture, but is gossiping a healthy way to build relationships, share information, have your private feelings validated or gauge the internal goings-on of your office environment? Or should it be avoided at all costs, buried in the stationary cupboard along with last year's regrettable office Christmas card with that typo and run screaming from should it dare to rear its ugly fork-tongued head?

Everyone needs to offload some steam from time to time and, usually, gossiping is a harmless way

of reinstating your status in the office since you always have the latest hot news, or to share a problem that a colleague may be able to help you with by offering a new perspective. However, it could also potentially end your career, since you may be badmouthing the hand that feeds you, so to speak. Gossiping and rumour-mongering can add a dimension to the workplace that causes a negative atmosphere. It's also very possible that the focus of your bitching, if it is a person, may find out about it and, if they happen to be a manager, the ramifications of bitching about them behind their backs could be far-reaching. It's not the most professional way of addressing an issue now, is it? Spending time gossiping also means that you're spending less time actually working. Unless you're a woman, in which case you can multi-task.

Sharing information in groups or with colleagues you get on well with can be a good thing. Getting the latest on office intrigue is sometimes the only way you can build up an accurate picture of what's going on behind the scenes and it's a good way of finding out what people like and dislike in others so you can amend your own actions to fit in. But you need to be

careful that you're not bitching to the wrong person, since it can be easy to be misunderstood or to have your tales carried to the wrong ears.

*If you want to indulge in a little on-the-job gossip safely and without threatening your job, follow these tips:*

## HOW TO GOSSIP GOOD

- Work on the principle that whatever you say will be repeated. Think about the implications of what you're about to say before you open your mouth.
- When you gossip, make sure you're out of earshot of anyone you don't want overhearing. Even if you're only imparting a few choice words.
- If something you say gets back to a friend or colleague, be upfront and apologise. Damage control is the only way to get out of the situation and you really don't want the hassle this will cause in the workplace.





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