

What is Culture?

Culture is defined as the language, beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and even material objects passed from one generation to the next.

Although the particulars of culture may differ from one group to another, culture itself is universal—all societies develop shared, learned ways of perceiving and participating in the world around them. Culture provides implicit instructions that tell us what we ought to do and a moral imperative that defines what we think is right and wrong.

Culture can be subdivided into **material culture** and **nonmaterial culture**. Material culture consists of the tools and technology required to use them that members of society create and utilize. This includes art, buildings, weapons, jewelry, machines, clothing, hairstyles and all other man-made objects. Nonmaterial culture includes a group's ways of thinking (beliefs, values, and other assumptions about the world) and patterns of behavior (language, gestures, and other forms of social interaction).

The effects of culture are profound and pervasive, touching almost every aspect of people's lives. However, most people are generally unaware of their own culture; culture is so engrained that it is often taken for granted. We assume that our own culture is normal or natural; in fact, it is not natural, but rather is learned. It penetrates our lives so deeply that it is taken for granted and provides the lens through which we perceive and evaluate things.

People often become more aware of their own culture when their cultural assumptions are challenged by exposure to other cultures, particularly those with fundamentally different beliefs and customs.

When people come into contact with cultures that significantly differ from their own, they often experience culture shock, a condition of disorientation that requires them to question their cultural assumptions, because radically different cultures challenge our basic assumptions.

Culture shock is influenced by ethnocentrism—the practice of viewing one's own culture as preferable, good, right, and superior and using it as a yardstick for judging other cultures.

It is functional when it creates in-group solidarity, but can be dysfunctional if it leads to discrimination against those who are different.

Although all groups practice some forms of ethnocentrism, people can also employ cultural relativism, the practice of understanding and appreciating other groups' ways of life and culture in the context in which they exist without assessing them as any better or worse than our own culture. Because we tend to use our own culture as the standard, cultural relativism presents a challenge to ordinary thinking. At the same time, this view helps us appreciate other ways of life.

#### Components of Symbolic Culture:

Sociologists sometimes refer to nonmaterial culture as symbolic culture, because symbols are the central component of nonmaterial culture, something to which people attach meaning and use in communications. Symbols include gestures, language, values, norms, sanctions, folkways, and mores.

#### Gestures:

Gestures involve the ways in which people use their bodies to communicate with one another. Although people in every culture use gestures, the gestures people use and the meanings they associate with those gestures vary greatly from one culture to another, which might cause confusion or offense. This leads to misunderstandings over the meaning of a gesture or misuse of a gesture. There is disagreement over whether there are any universal gestures. They tend to vary considerably around the world.

#### Language:

The primary way people communicate with each other is through language: a system of symbols that can be strung together in an infinite number of ways to communicate abstract thought. Each word is a symbol to which a culture attaches a particular meaning. Like gestures, all human groups have language. And like gestures, the meanings that people associate with different sounds and symbols can vary greatly from one culture to another.

Language is the basis of culture. It is critical to human life and essential for cultural development. Among other things, language allows human experiences to be cumulative. Each generation builds on the body of significant experiences that is passed on to it by the previous generation thus freeing people to move beyond immediate experiences.

It gives people the capacity to share understandings about the past. We are able to discuss past events with others.

It allows developing common perceptions about the future; and provides for complex, shared, goal-directed behavior. Language allows us to plan future activities with one another. It allows for the exchange of perspectives (i.e., ideas about events and experiences).

It allows us to have common understandings that enable us to establish a purpose for getting together with each other.

Values:

Values are the standards or beliefs by which people define what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad, beautiful or ugly.

All groups have values which they channel into norms (expectations, or rules of behavior, that develop from values). Norms vary in terms of their importance to a culture. They include folkways, mores and taboos.

Folkways are norms that are not strictly enforced such as passing on the left side of the sidewalk. They may result in a person getting a dirty look.

Mores are norms that are strictly enforced. They are believed to be essential to core values and we insist on conformity. A person who steals, rapes, and kills has violated some of society's most important mores.

Taboos are norms so strong that the thought of violating them is universally revolting. Eating human flesh is an example of such behavior.

Norms can be enforced through sanctions. Sanctions are the positive or negative reactions to the way in which people follow norms. **Positive sanctions** include rewards that range from approving looks and gestures, smile and handshake to material compensation like money reward and a prize. **Negative sanctions** are like punishment that ranges from disapproving looks and gestures like a frown to harsh words, a fine, imprisonment and execution).

Cultures may contain numerous subcultures and countercultures. A subculture is a group whose values and related behaviors set it apart from the larger culture. Each subculture is a world within

the larger world of the dominant culture, and has a distinctive way of looking at life, but remains compatible with the dominant culture. U.S. society contains tens of thousands of subcultures. Some are quite broad (teenagers), while others are narrow (body builders). Some ethnic groups form subcultures, as do certain occupational groups.

A counterculture is a group whose values and related behaviors stand in opposition to the dominant culture. While usually associated with negative behavior, some countercultures are not.

Countercultures are often perceived as a threat by the dominant culture because they challenge the culture's values; for this reason the dominant culture will move against a particular counterculture in order to affirm its own core values. For example, the Mormons in the 1800s challenged the dominant culture's core value of monogamy.

Technology is central to a group's material culture. In its simplest sense, technology can be equated with tools. In its broadest sense, technology also includes the skills or procedures necessary to make and use those tools.

The sociological significance of technology is that it sets the framework for the nonmaterial culture, influencing the way people think and how they relate to one another.

The term "new technology" refers to any emerging technologies of an era that have a significant impact on social life.

Not all parts of culture change at the same pace; "cultural lag" was term for situations where the material culture changes first and the nonmaterial culture lags behind.

Although for most of human history, cultures have had little contact with one another, there has always been some contact with other groups, resulting in groups learning from one another.

With the emergence of new technologies in mass transportation and mass communication, the world is becoming more interconnected. This has resulted in more cultural diffusion (the spread of characteristics from one culture to another). It is more likely to produce changes in material culture than the nonmaterial culture. Cultural diffusion occurs more rapidly today, given the technology.

Travel and communication unite the world to such an extent that there is almost no "other side of the world" anymore. For example, Japan, no longer a purely Eastern culture, has adapted

Western economic production, forms of dress, music, and so on. This leads to cultural leveling where cultures become similar to one another. Cultural leveling is occurring rapidly around the world.

Mickey Mouse, Fred Flintstone, and the golden arches of McDonald's can be found in Miami, Mexico City, Moscow, and in most other major cities of the world.

#### KEY TERMS

After studying the chapter, review the definition for each of the following terms.

core values: the values that are central to a group, those around which it builds a common identity

counterculture: a group whose values, beliefs, and related behaviors place its members in opposition to the values of the broader culture

cultural diffusion: the spread of cultural characteristics from one group to another

cultural lag: William Ogburn's term for one part of a culture changing, and other parts lagging behind

cultural leveling: the process by which cultures become similar to one another, and especially by which Western industrial culture is imported and diffused into industrializing nations

cultural relativism: not judging a culture, but trying to understand it on its own terms

culture: the language, beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and even material objects that are passed from one generation to the next

culture shock: the disorientation that people experience when they come in contact with a fundamentally different culture and can no longer depend on their taken-for-granted assumptions about life

ethnocentrism: the use of one's own culture as a yardstick for judging the ways of other

individuals or societies, generally leading to a negative evaluation of their values, norms, and behaviors

folkways: norms that are not strictly enforced

gestures: the ways in which people use their bodies to communicate with one another

ideal culture: the ideal values and norms of a people, the goals held out for them

language: a system of symbols that can represent not only objects, but can be combined in an infinite number of ways for the purpose of communicating abstract thought

material culture: the material objects that distinguish a group of people, such as their art, buildings, weapons, utensils, machines, hairstyles, clothing, and jewelry

mores: norms that are strictly enforced because they are thought essential to core values

negative sanction: an expression of disapproval for breaking a norm, ranging from a mild, informal reaction such as a frown to a formal prison sentence or an execution

new technology: the emerging technologies of an era that have a significant impact on social life

nonmaterial culture: a group's ways of thinking (including its beliefs, values, and other assumptions about the world) and doing (its common patterns of behavior, including language, gestures and other forms of interaction)

norms: the expectations, or rules of behavior, that reflect and enforce behavior

pluralistic society: a society made up of many different groups

positive sanction: a reward given for following norms, ranging from a smile to a prize

real culture: the norms and values that people actually follow

sanctions: expressions of approval or disapproval given to people for upholding or violating norms

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf's hypothesis that language creates ways of thinking and perceiving

subculture: the values and related behaviors of a group that distinguish its members from the larger culture; a world within a world

symbol: something to which people attach meaning and then use to communicate with others

symbolic culture: another term for nonmaterial culture

taboo: a norm so strong that it brings revulsion if it is violated

technology: in its narrow sense, tools; its broader sense includes the skills or procedures

necessary to make and use those tools

value cluster: a series of interrelated values that together form a larger whole

value contradictions: values that contradict with one another; to follow the one means to come into conflict with the other

values: the standards by which people define what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad, beautiful or ugly.

Instructor's Manual for Henslin, Essentials of Sociology, 10/e

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# **United Kingdom - Britain - England Introduction**

**Please note:** We have mainly written about England, as that is the country within the UK.

England is one of four distinct regions of the United Kingdom, which also includes Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. England's population is approximately 47 million.

It is important to note that the Scots, Welsh, and Irish are not English, and are often offended when referred to as such. Additionally, citizens of the U.K. do not consider themselves European. Unfortunately, they are usually grouped as such, due in part to their membership in the European Union.

The English are very proud of their heritage and history. Along with their contributions to the world of today, several famous writers came from England. Some of the most famous are Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, and Chaucer. This century, England has seen many influential daughters and sons. The Beatles, Winston Churchill, and Queen Elizabeth II have all played a tremendous role in England's presence in the modern world.

The English are said to be reserved in manners, dress and speech. They are famous for their politeness, self-discipline and especially for their sense of humour. Basic politeness (please, thank you, excuse me) is expected.

## **United Kingdom - Britain - England Fun Fact**

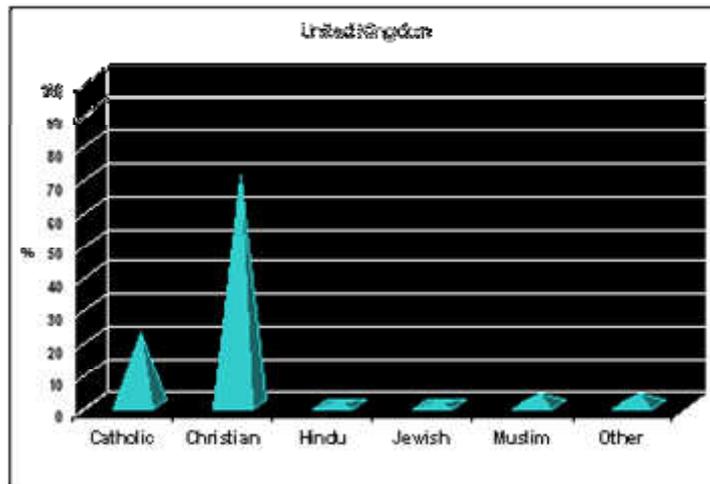
Gambling is very popular in Britain. The British buy more lottery tickets than any other people in the world. It has been estimated that 75% of adults in Britain play the lottery at least once a week.

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## **Geert Hofstede Analysis for United Kingdom - Britain - England**

The Geert Hofstede analysis for England illustrates their strong feelings towards individualism and masculinity. The power distance and uncertainty avoidance are ranked considerably lower than the first two. Long-term orientation ranks the lowest, indicating that change in England can be achieved more rapidly than in many other countries .

## **Religion in the United Kingdom - Great Britain - England**



\* WORLD FACTBOOK 2011

In analyzing Predominantly Christian countries, the primary correlation between religion and the Geert Hofstede Dimensions is a high Individualism (IDV) ranking. This indicates that predominantly Christian countries have a strong belief in individuality, with individual rights being paramount within the society. Individuals in these countries may tend to form a larger number of looser relationships.

## United Kingdom - Great Britain - England Behavior

- Always be punctual in England. Arriving a few minutes early for safety is acceptable.
- Decision-making is slower in England than in the United States; therefore it is unwise to rush the English into making a decision.
- A simple handshake is the standard greeting (for both men and women) for business occasions and for visiting a home.
- English people are quite reserved when greeting one another. A greeting can be a bright 'Hello' 'Hi' or 'Good morning', when you arrive at work or at school.
- Privacy is very important to the English. Therefore asking personal questions or intensely staring at another person should be avoided.
- Eye contact is seldom kept during British conversations.
- To signal that something is to be kept confidential or secret, tap your nose.
- Personal space is important in England, and one should maintain a wide physical space when

conversing. Furthermore, it is considered inappropriate to touch others in public.

- Giving of gifts are not required as part of doing business in England.
- A business lunch will often be conducted in a pub and will consist of a light meal and perhaps a pint of ale.
- When socializing after work hours, do not bring up the subject of work.
- When dining out, it is not considered polite to toast those who are older than yourself.

### **United Kingdom - Great Britain - England Communications**

- In England, English is the official language, but it should be noted that Queen's English and American English are very different.
- Often times ordinary vocabulary can differ between the two countries.
- Loud talking and disruptive behavior should be avoided.
- One gesture to avoid is the V for Victory sign, done with the palm facing yourself. This is a very offensive gesture.
- If a man has been knighted, he is addressed as "Sir and his first name" example: Sir John. If writing a letter, the envelope is addressed "Sir First name and Last name" example: Sir John Roberts.

## Terms of Endearment - Names we may call you

You may be called by many different 'affectionate' names, according to which part of the England you are visiting. Do not be offended, this is quite normal. For example, you may be called dear, dearie, flower, love, chick, chuck, me duck, me duckie, mate, guv, son, ma'am, madam, miss, sir, or treacle, according to your sex, age and location.



### Message from one of our visitors

*"In Staffordshire and the West Midlands both men and women use the term 'duck' when speaking to another person irrespective of their sex. I was quite shocked when I first arrived here in Staffordshire from London to be called 'Duck' by a man and now I find it very endearing and reassuring and far better than that awful term 'Mate'."*

Jim  
Staffordshire

### Interesting Fact

The 'affectionate' name 'duck' is thought to come from the [Anglo-Saxon](#) word '**ducis**' which was meant as a term of respect; similar to the Middle English 'duc', 'duk' which denotes a leader, commander, general; from which comes the title 'Duke' and the Old French word 'duchéé' - the territory ruled by a Duke.

### Visiting people in their houses

When being entertained at someone's home it is nice to take a gift for the host and hostess. A bunch of flowers or chocolates are all acceptable.

Sending a thank you note is also considered appropriate.

### Eating

We eat continental style, with fork in the left hand and the knife in the right.

## Manners are Important

### DOs and DON'TS (Taboos) in Britain

#### **Do stand in line:**

In England we like to form orderly queues (standing in line) and wait patiently for our turn e.g. boarding a bus. It is usual to queue when required, and expected that you will take your correct turn and not push in front. 'Queue jumping' is frowned upon.

#### **Do take your hat off when you go indoors (men only)**

It is impolite for men to wear hats indoors especially in churches.

Nowadays, it is becoming more common to see men wearing hats indoors. However, this is still seen as being impolite, especially to the older generations.

#### **Do say "Excuse Me":**

If someone is blocking your way and you would like them to move, say excuse me and they will move out of your way.

#### **Do Pay as you Go:**

Pay for drinks as you order them in pubs and other types of bars.

#### **Do say "Please" and "Thank you":**

It is very good manners to say "please" and "thank you". It is considered rude if you don't. You will notice in England that we say 'thank you' a lot.

#### **Do cover your Mouth:**

When yawning or coughing always cover your mouth with your hand.

#### **Do Shake Hands:**

When you are first introduced to someone, shake their right hand with your own right hand.

#### **Do say sorry:**

If you accidentally bump into someone, say 'sorry'. They probably will too, even if it was your fault! This is a habit and can be seen as very amusing by an 'outsider'.

#### **Do Smile:**

A smiling face is a welcoming face.

**Do Drive on the left side of the road**

**Do open doors for other people**

Men and women both hold open the door for each other. It depends on who goes through the door first.

In Britain...

**Do not greet people with a kiss:**

We only kiss people who are close friends and relatives.

**Avoid talking loudly in public**

**It is impolite to stare at anyone in public.**

Privacy is highly regarded.

**Do not ask a lady her age**

It is considered impolite to ask a lady her age

**Do not pick your nose in public:**

We are disgusted by this. If your nostrils need de-bugging, use a handkerchief.

**Avoid doing gestures such as backslapping and hugging**

This is only done among close friends.

**Do not spit.**

Spitting in the street is considered to be very bad mannered.

**Do not burp in public**

You may feel better by burping loudly after eating or drinking, but other people will not! If you can not stop a burp from bursting out, then cover your mouth with your hand and say 'excuse me' afterwards.

**Do not pass wind in public**

Now how can we say this politely? Let's say that you want to pass wind. What do you do? Go somewhere private and let it out. If you accidentally pass wind in company say 'pardon me'.

**Belinda sent us an email on the indelicate subject of 'passing wind' in public:**

"The expression 'pardon me' would be considered by the upper classes to be rather common. When I was growing up, I was told by my mother, at school and by my

aunt who was a nanny to an aristocratic family that the correct thing to do if this happens is to carry on as if nothing's happened and for the entire company to ignore it completely as if they've never noticed. ( even if it's very obvious). I think young people nowadays would probably be more inclined to laugh it off but certainly the older generation in 'polite company' would never, ever draw attention to the incident by apologising. **Basically the advice is say 'excuse me' for mouth burps, ignore bottom burps."**

### **It is impolite speak with your mouth full of food**

#### **Do not ask personal or intimate questions**

We like our privacy. Please do not ask questions such as "How much money do you earn?" "How much do you weigh?" or "Why aren't you married?".

#### **Never eat off a knife when having a meal.**

In all countries in Britain ...

Women in Britain are entitled to equal respect and status as men (and indeed vice versa) in all areas of life and tend to have more independence and responsibility than in some other cultures. Women are usually independent and accustomed to entering public places unaccompanied. It is usual for women to go out and about on their own as well as with friends. Men and women mix freely.

- It is ok for women to eat alone in a restaurant.
- It is ok for women to wander around on their own.
- It is ok for women to drink beer.

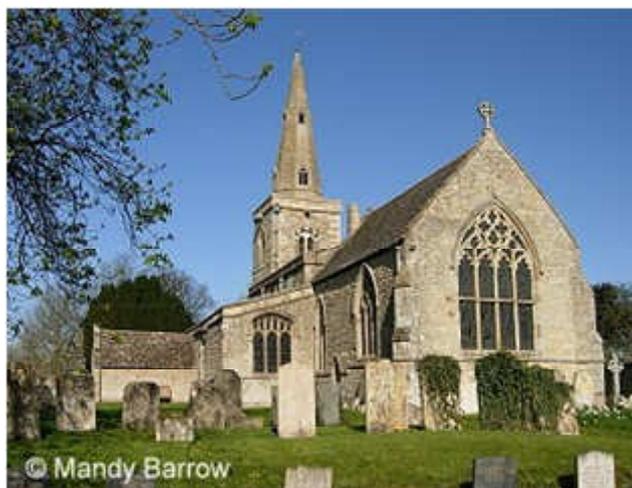
Why not make a similar list for visitors to your country?

What do British people like doing at the weekends ?

The weekends are a time for families in Britain. Often the parents are not at work having worked a five day week from Monday to Friday. Saturdays are a busy time for [shops](#) with many families going shopping.



Sundays used to be a very special day of the week in Britain. It was the one day of the week for 'worship and rest'. The shops were closed and most people were at home or at church. Popular leisure activities on Sunday used to be going to church and doing odd jobs around the home such as gardening and DIY.



Until a few years ago shops were not permitted to open on a Sunday. Sundays today are becoming like any other day other week with [shops](#) open. Some families will now spend their time shopping rather than going to church or they will combine the two activities.

Britain is becoming a far less Christian country with fewer people regularly attending Church. Many Christian's believe that Sunday should be kept special, as a time given to worshipping God. They think it is important for Christians to meet together, listen to readings from the Bible and celebrate Holy Communion. Others believe that it is important that families have time to be together. (The [shopping hours](#) on a Sunday are less than on any other day of the week.)

## How do people spend their free time?

People enjoy various indoor and outdoor activities in Britain.

An Euro stat survey, the EU's statistical office, discovered that people in Britain spend about 45% of their free time watching television, 24% of their free time socializing, 22-23% on sport and hobbies, and 10% on other activities. Other popular leisure activities are listening to the radio, listening to pre-recorded music, reading, DIY, gardening, eating out and going to the cinema.

### Television

The most common leisure activity in the UK is watching [television](#). The average viewing time is 25 hours per person per week. Almost all households have at least one television set. The proportion of households using satellite, cable or digital television was 44 per cent in 2002. Many television programmes are about wildlife, animals, holidays, cooking and gardening. All these things are much cherished by British people.

[What television programmes do British people watch?](#)

### Radio

People in Britain listen to an average 15 hours and 50 minutes of radio each week. The only radio I listen to is the Top 40. I like to find out who is number one in the pop charts each week.

### Digital Devices

In 2005/06, 88 per cent of UK households had a CD player and 79 per cent a mobile phone. In April to June 2006, 26 per cent of people aged 15 and over owned an MP3 player.

In January to April 2006, 56 per cent of households in Great Britain had a desktop computer, 30 per cent had a portable or laptop computer, and 7 per cent had a handheld computer.

statistics.gov.uk

### Entertaining

The second most popular activity in Britain is visiting or entertaining friends or relations.

### Cinema (Movie house)

Britons made 123 million visits to the cinema in 1998 making it the most popular cultural activity in the UK.

### Eating out

Eating out has grown in popularity, with British people spending in 1999 an average of £5.63 per person per week on food (excluding alcohol) outside the home.

### Homes and Gardens



The British are known as a nation of gardeners. Most people have a garden on their property. Gardening has been a popular pastime since Roman times. Many people in Britain are proud of their houses and gardens. They want their houses and gardens to look nice. Every town in Britain has one or more DIY (Do it Yourself) centres and garden centres. These are like supermarkets for the home and garden. These places are very popular with British homeowners at the weekends.

### Activities outside the home

Saturday is traditionally the day for shopping and watching sports.

Retail Therapy ([Shopping](#))



A [newspaper](#) survey found that 20 per cent of women are compulsive shoppers.

Saturday is the main day when we go shopping. Sometimes we will go into town after school.

### Sports and Physical Recreation



Sports and physical recreation have always been popular. Local governments provide cheap sport and leisure facilities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, parks and golf courses. People go to watch other people play sports like football or take part in sports themselves.

### Pubs (Public Houses)



Going to the pub is the most popular leisure activity outside the home.

### United Kingdom - Great Britain - England Appearance

- Business attire rules are somewhat relaxed in England, but conservative dress is still very

important for both men and women.

- Dark suits, usually black, blue, or gray, are quite acceptable.
- Men's shirts should not have pockets; if they do, the pockets should always be kept empty. Additionally, men should wear solid or patterned ties, while avoiding striped ties.
- Men wear laced shoes, not loafers.
- Businesswomen are not as limited to colors and styles as men are, though it is still important to maintain a conservative image.



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## United States Introduction

The United States is the third largest country in the world with a population of more than 320 million, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#). Because of this, the United States is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. Nearly every region of the world has influenced American culture, as it is a country of immigrants, most notably the English who colonized the country beginning in the early 1600s. U.S. culture has also been shaped by the cultures of Native Americans, Latin Americans, Africans and Asians.



The United States is sometimes described as a "[melting pot](#)" in which different cultures have contributed their own distinct "flavors" to American culture. Just as cultures from around the world have influenced American culture, today American culture influences the world. The term Western culture often refers broadly to the cultures of the United States and Europe.

The way people "melt" in the United States differs. "Different groups of immigrants integrate in different ways," De Rossi told Live Science. "For example, in the United States, Catholic Spanish-speaking communities might keep their language and other cultural family traditions, but are integrated in the urban community and have embraced the American way of life in many other ways."

The Northeast, South, Midwest, Southeast and Western regions of the United States all have distinct traditions and customs. Here is a brief overview of the culture of the United States.

The United States of America consists of 50 states governed on a federal level, as well as a state level. Laws are written at both levels, and when doing business in the United States one must make sure to meet the requirements mandated by these laws. The country is very litigious so legal resources are available and specialists can be found to assist with any transaction.

The culture and geographic location of an area will influence how business is done. Traditionally, the East Coast is more conservative and formal in their dress and manners than the West Coast. That is not to say a West Coast meeting carries any less importance. The climate and lifestyle are just more relaxed, which is reflected in the pace and informality.

## **Language**

Although English is the predominant language, there is no official language of the United States, according to the [U.S. government](#). While almost every language in the world is spoken in the United States, Spanish, Chinese, French and German are among the most frequently spoken non-English languages. Ninety percent of the U.S. population speaks and understands at least some English, and most official business is conducted in [English](#).

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that more than 300 languages are spoken in the United States. The bureau divides those languages into [four categories](#): Spanish; other Indo-European languages, which includes German, Yiddish, Swedish, French, Italian, Russian, Polish, Hindi, Punjabi, Greek and several others; Asian and Pacific Island languages, including Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Tamil and more; and "all other languages," which is a category for languages that didn't fit into the first three categories, such as Hungarian, Arabic, Hebrew, languages of Africa and languages of native people of North, Central and South America.

## **Religion**

Nearly every known religion is practiced in the United States, which was founded on the basis of [religious freedom](#). About 83 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians, according to an [ABC poll](#), while 13 percent replied that they had no religion at all. Another [poll in 2012](#) reported similar findings. It also found that Judaism is the second most-identified religious affiliation, at about 1.7 percent of the population. Only 0.6 percent of respondents identified as Muslim.

## **American style**

Clothing styles vary by social status, region, occupation and climate. Jeans, sneakers, baseball caps, cowboy hats and boots are some items of clothing that are closely associated with Americans.

American fashion is widely influenced by celebrities and the media, and fashion sales equal around \$200 billion per year, according to a paper published by [Harvard University](#).



A pair of blue jeans

Fashion in the United States is eclectic and predominantly informal. While Americans' diverse cultural roots are reflected in their clothing, particularly those of recent immigrants, [cowboy hats](#) and [boots](#) and leather [motorcycle jackets](#) are emblematic of specifically American styles.

[Blue jeans](#) were popularized as work clothes in the 1850s by merchant [Levi Strauss](#), a German-Jewish immigrant in San Francisco, and adopted by many American teenagers a century later. They are worn in every state by people of all ages and social classes. Along with mass-marketed informal wear in general, blue jeans are arguably one of US culture's primary contributions to global fashion.<sup>[44]</sup>

Though informal dress is more common, certain professionals, such as [bankers](#) and [lawyers](#), traditionally dress formally for work, and some occasions, such as [weddings](#), [funerals](#), [dances](#), and some parties, typically call for [formal wear](#).

Business suit and tie are appropriate in all major cities. Wear dark colored business suits in classic colors of gray and navy. For an important formal meeting, choose a white dress shirt, for less formal a light blue shirt will still give you a conservative appearance.

Women should wear a suit or dress with jacket in major cities. Wearing classic clothing and classic colors of navy, gray, ivory, and white will ensure you give a confident and conservative appearance.

Rural areas and areas with extremely warm summers have more informal wardrobe requirements.

Clothing, whether formal or casual, should be clean and neat in appearance.

## **American food**

American cuisine has been influenced by Europeans and Native Americans in its early history. Today, there are a number of foods that are commonly identified as American, such as hamburgers, hot dogs, potato chips, macaroni and cheese, and meat loaf. "As American as apple pie" has come to mean something that is authentically American.

There are also styles of cooking and types of foods that are specific to a region. Southern-style cooking

is often called "American comfort food" and includes dishes such as fried chicken, collard greens, black-eyed peas and corn bread. Tex-Mex, popular in Texas and the Southwest, is a blend of Spanish and Mexican cooking styles and includes items such as chili and burritos and relies heavily on shredded cheese and beans.

Jerky, dried meats that are served as snacks, is also a food that was created in the United States, according to [NPR](#).

## **The Arts**

The United States is widely known around the world as a leader in mass media production, including television and movies. According to the [U.S. Department of Commerce](#), the United States comprises one-third of the worldwide media and entertainment industry.

The television broadcasting industry took hold in the United States in the early 1950s, and American television programs are now shown around the world. The United States also has a vibrant movie industry, centered in Hollywood, California, and American movies are popular worldwide. The U.S. film industry earned \$31 billion in revenues in 2013, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The United State's arts culture extends beyond movies and television shows, though. New York is home to Broadway, and Americans have a rich theatrical history. American folk art is an artistic style and is identified with quilts and other hand-crafted items. American music is very diverse with many, many styles, including rhythm and blues, jazz, gospel, country and western, bluegrass, rock 'n' roll and hip hop.

## **Sports**

The United States is a sports-minded country, with millions of fans who follow football, baseball, basketball and hockey, among other [sports](#). Baseball, which was developed in colonial America and became an organized sport in the mid-1800s, is known as America's favorite pastime, although its popularity has been eclipsed by football for the past three decades, according to the [Harris Poll](#).



Baseball is called America's favorite pastime.

## United States Fun Fact

The U. S. was founded on the work ethic that good, honest, hard work is rewarded. Because of this work ethic, time is money and punctuality is highly regarded, so a cellular phone *can* save the day when automobile traffic in a major city causes unexpected delays.

## Geert Hofstede Analysis for United States of America

The Geert Hofstede analysis for the United States is very similar to other World Countries that have their heritage founded in Europe with strong ties to the British Isles (see Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). Individualism ranks highest and is a significant factor in the life of U.S. Americans.

The high Individualism (IDV) ranking for the United States indicates a society with a more individualistic attitude and relatively loose bonds with others. The populace is more self-reliant and looks out for themselves and their close family members.

## United States Behavior

- Business conversation *may* take place during meals. However, many times you will find more social conversation taking place during the actual meal.
- Business meetings may be arranged as breakfast meetings, luncheon meetings, or dinner meetings depending on time schedules and necessity. Generally a dinner, even though for business purposes, is treated as a social meal and a time to build rapport.
- Gift giving is discouraged or limited by many US companies. A gracious written note is always appropriate and acceptable.
- If you do give a gift, it should not appear to be a bribe.
- If you are someplace with a line or queue, go to the end and wait your turn.
- Do not use or chew on a toothpick in public.
- Many public places and private homes do not allow smoking. In some areas laws have been passed to prevent smoking in public places.

## United States Communications

- Offer a firm handshake, lasting 3-5 seconds, upon greeting and leaving. Maintain good eye contact during your handshake. If you are meeting several people at once, maintain eye contact with the person you are shaking hands with, until you are moving on to the next person.
- Good eye contact during business and social conversations shows interest, sincerity and confidence.
- Good friends may briefly embrace, although the larger the city, usually the more formal the behavior.
- Introductions include one's title if appropriate, or Mr., Ms, Mrs. and the full name.
- Business cards are generally exchanged during introductions. However, they may be exchanged when one party is leaving.
- A smile is a sign of friendliness, and in rural areas you may be greeted with a "hello" rather than a handshake.
- Ask permission to smoke before lighting a cigarette or cigar. Due to health concerns, you may or may not be given permission.

# China

## Facts and Statistics

China is a large country, with rich and diverse culture and traditions. Chinese people are also very aware of the Western culture and have adopted many Western ways of doing things.

Location: Eastern Asia bordering Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, India, Kazakhstan, North Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia (northeast), Russia (northwest), Tajikistan, Vietnam

**Capital:** Beijing

**Climate:** extremely diverse; tropical in south to subarctic in north

**Population:** 1,355,692,576 (July 2014 est.)

**Ethnic Make-up:** Han Chinese 91.9%, Zhuang, Uygur, Hui, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Manchu, Mongol, Buyi, Korean, and other nationalities 8.1%

**Religions:** Daoist (Taoist), Buddhist, Muslim 1%-2%, Christian 3%-4%

**Government:** Communist state

## The Chinese Language

Chinese is a family of closely-related but mutually unintelligible languages. These languages are known regional languages, dialects of Chinese or varieties of Chinese. In all over 1.2 billion people speak one or more varieties of Chinese.

All varieties of Chinese belong to the Sino-Tibetan family of languages and each one has its own dialects and sub-dialects, which are more or less mutually intelligible.

Why not learn some useful Mandarin or Cantonese phrases before your visit?

## Non-Verbal Communication

- Chinese non-verbal communication speaks volumes.

- Since the Chinese strive for harmony and are group dependent, they rely on facial expression, tone of voice and posture to tell them what someone feels.
- Frowning while someone is speaking is interpreted as a sign of disagreement. Therefore, most Chinese maintain an impassive expression when speaking.
- It is considered disrespectful to stare into another person's eyes. In crowded situations the Chinese avoid eye contact to give themselves privacy.

## **Chinese Society & Culture**

### **The Importance of "Face"**

The concept of 'face' roughly translates as 'honour', 'good reputation' or 'respect'. There are four types of 'face':

- 1) Diu-mian-zi: this is when one's actions or deeds have been exposed to people.
- 2) Gei-mian-zi: involves the giving of face to others through showing respect.
- 3) Liu-mian-zi: this is developed by avoiding mistakes and showing wisdom in action.
- 4) Jiang-mian-zi: this is when face is increased through others, i.e. someone complementing you to an associate.

It is critical you avoid losing face or causing the loss of face at all times.

### **Confucianism**

Confucianism is a system of behaviours and ethics that stress the obligations of people towards one another based upon their relationship. The basic tenets are based upon five different relationships:

- Ruler and subject
- Husband and wife
- Parents and children
- Brothers and sisters
- Friend and friend
- Confucianism stresses duty, sincerity, loyalty, honour, filial piety, respect for age and seniority. Through maintaining harmonious relations as individuals, society itself becomes stable.

### **Collectivism vs. Individualism**

- In general, the Chinese are a collective society with a need for group affiliation, whether to their family, school, work group, or country.
- In order to maintain a sense of harmony, they will act with decorum at all times and will not do anything to cause someone else public embarrassment.
- They are willing to subjugate their own feelings for the good of the group.
- This is often observed by the use of silence in very structured meetings. If someone disagrees with what another person says, rather than disagree publicly, the person will remain quiet. This gives face to the other person, while speaking up would make both parties lose face.

### **Greetings and meetings etiquette in China**

Greetings are formal and the oldest person is always greeted first. The most appropriate and common business greeting is a firm hand shake with the words Ni Hao. Ni Hao, colloquially translates to 'Hello', and sometimes you may also hear variations such as, Ni Hao Ma, meaning 'How are you?' and Ni Hao Ba meaning 'How do you do?'

For male to male greeting, you can emphasise that you really value the person you are greeting by a double-hand shake, where you place your left hand over their right hand. This is not advisable for greeting females, as it can be misinterpreted for being over bearing or forceful. Many Chinese will look towards the ground when greeting someone.

The Chinese have a terrific sense of humour. They can laugh at themselves most readily if they have a comfortable relationship with the other person. Be ready to laugh at yourself given the proper circumstances.

If you are meeting someone in an office or meeting room, don't just take a seat. You should always wait for gestures indicating for you to be seated. Your host will usually show you to your seat. Sometimes your host may say 'sit down'. This is not a command or an order. It is a simple and most direct translation, meaning for you to take a seat.

## **Titles and names etiquette in China**

When addressing someone it is more appropriate to use Professor, Dr, Mr or Ms and their surname. Never use Miss as it has negative connotations associated with it. The Chinese do not generally use the term Mrs. If they want to move to a first-name basis, they will advise you which name to use.

## **Exchanging gifts etiquette in China**

In general, gifts are given at Chinese New Year, weddings, births and more recently (because of marketing), birthdays.

The Chinese most appreciate souvenirs and products from your country or organisation. They also like food and a nice food basket will make a great gift.

There are some products that are not suitable for giving as gifts to a Chinese person; these are:

- **Umbrella** – the Chinese word for umbrella sounds similar to being separate or to depart
- **Books** – as it can sometime symbolise losing
- Scissors, knives or other cutting utensils as they indicate the severing of the relationship.
- Clocks or time devices, handkerchiefs or straw sandals as they are associated with funerals and death.
- Flowers, as many Chinese associate these with funerals.

Beware of the following:

- Do not wrap gifts in white, blue or black paper.
- Four is an unlucky number so do not give four of anything. Eight is the luckiest number, so giving eight of something brings luck to the recipient.
- Always present gifts with two hands.
- Never give a Chinese person, items that are made in china.

In China, tradition suggests that the recipient should not appear greedy. Therefore, sometimes, particularly with a very traditional person, when you offer a gift, they may decline. If this is the case, offer it for second or third time, until it is accepted. Usually, after a third time they will accept. Similarly, to appear not greedy, once accepted, they may not open your gift. So when you give a Chinese person a gift and they don't open it immediately, do not be offended by this, and

do not suggest that they open it in front of you. Most Chinese, are aware of Western culture and tradition and they may ask, “Shall I open this?”, in which case indicate accordingly so that they feel comfortable to open the gift.

When you have been offered a gift, it is not necessary to refuse as the Chinese are aware of Western traditions. It is up to you, if you’d like to open it in front of them. If you do, you will need to show appreciation. If you decide not to open the present in front of them, make sure to acknowledge and thank them the next time you see them.

### **Dining Etiquette**

- The Chinese prefer to entertain in public places rather than in their homes, especially when entertaining foreigners.
- If you are invited to their house, consider it a great honour. If you must turn down such an honour, it is considered polite to explain the conflict in your schedule so that your actions are not taken as a slight.
- Arrive on time.
- Remove your shoes before entering the house. However, this isn’t always necessary, particularly in business settings, so it is advisable to observe what your host is doing and emulate this.
- Bring a small gift to the hostess.
- Eat well to demonstrate that you are enjoying the food!

Table manners:

- The Chinese will most often use a round dining table to host a meal or banquet. In formal and business settings, the host will sit at the head of the table and have their VIP on their right and second VIP on their left. At the opposite end of the table, the second host will usually sit with third VIP on their right and fourth VIP on their left. As a guest, always wait to be seated so you that you don’t have to guess where you should sit.

In most cases, if you are the VIP, the host or a waiter will put some food in your plate or bowl, sometimes with their own chopsticks. Typically, until the VIP has been served or taken the food from the middle, the food will not be passed to the other diners. When you have finished what’s in your bowl, the host or the waiter may offer more. Generally, take a little bit to show

appreciation of the food. If you are full, politely indicate that you are full and compliment the food.

When you are recommended to try something you are not used to, try a little bit. You may offend the hosts if you plainly refuse. When you've tasted that food, your colleagues will usually ask for your feedback. Try to say something complimentary.

If you are not fond of the food, then suggest that you will help yourself, so that the host won't put any more in your bowl/plate.

- It is recommended to use chopsticks when dining with your Chinese colleagues, even if there is knife and fork available. This indicates that you appreciate the Chinese culture and that you are making an effort
- The host begins eating first.
- Remember not to place your chopsticks in your plate or bowl. They should be returned to the chopstick rest on the side of your bowl after every few bites and when you drink or stop to speak.
- Be aware that guests around the table may use their own utensils to serve from the main dishes that are placed in the middle.
- The host offers the first toast.
- Do not put bones in your bowl. Place them on the table or in a special bowl for that purpose.
- Hold the rice bowl close to your mouth while eating.
- Do not be offended if a Chinese person makes slurping or belching sounds; it merely indicates that they are enjoying their food.
- There are no strict rules about finishing all the food in your bowl.

Tipping Etiquette:

Tipping is becoming more commonplace, especially with younger workers although older workers still consider it an insult. Leaving a few coins is usually sufficient.

### **Taboo and sensitive subjects etiquette in China**

Death is generally not openly talked about in China, so to avoid accidentally offending anyone, do not say phrases such as "my mobile phone is dead" or "my watch just died". Rather rephrase by saying "my mobile battery is not charged" or "my watch is not working".

On the other hand, the Chinese tend to build relationships and show they care for you by asking what may be deemed too personal by westerners. The Chinese may sometime ask about your personal details, such as how many children you have, their age, if you are married, what your spouse does for work. Do not be offended by such questions and equally do not offend by not responding to such questions. If you are not comfortable to give detailed information, answer in general, and ask them about them and their family. This will indicate to them that you also care for them, and that you want to build relationships with them.

It is best not to talk about religion, politics, sex and sexual orientations in general.

If you are a lecturer, sometimes the student may challenge you by asking your opinion on controversial or political hot topics. Acknowledge their question, take a neutral position and do not get into discussion about the subject. Some subjects to avoid are Japan, Taiwan, Tibet and Dalai Lama. The local newspaper, China Daily is a good guide for Westerners, as it provides the country's position on many issues.

### **Sacred animals etiquette in China**

Dragons are highly revered creatures in Chinese culture. They are regarded as heavenly creatures, considered helpful and wise and seen as a sign of good fortune.

Another animal, highly admired in China is the Panda. Apart from being cute and adorable, traditionally Panda represents peace because it does not feed on living creatures. As such Pandas have a long history as Chinese gifts, presenting symbol of peace and friendship.

There are a number of animals that you should not mention in conversations. Snakes and cats are seen as being untrustworthy; and a sparrow can represent stealing or theft. Under any circumstances do not compare anyone to a dog, even if you mean well, by saying they are as cute as a puppy.

### **Hygiene etiquette in China**

In China, people are able to smoke everywhere, even in restaurants. They will also ash and throw cigarette butts on the ground. Do not be surprised or offended by this.

You will also find, some Chinese hawk to clear their throat, spit, pick their nose or ears in public. Whilst these may be unacceptable social behaviours in Western culture, they are all acceptable

practices in China. Again, don't be surprised or offended by this. It is unlikely that any of your colleagues will display such behaviours during your business encounters. You may see some of this behaviour in your class perhaps. If this is the case, it's an opportunity for you to advise and educate your Chinese students of Western culture and practices. If you see this in wider general public, you may not have much choice other than to look away.

## **Business Etiquette and Protocol in China**

### **Relationships & Communication**

- The Chinese don't like doing business with companies they don't know, so working through an intermediary is crucial. This could be an individual or an organization who can make a formal introduction and vouch for the reliability of your company.
- Before arriving in China send materials (written in Chinese) that describe your company, its history, and literature about your products and services. The Chinese often use intermediaries to ask questions that they would prefer not to make directly.
- Business relationships are built formally after the Chinese get to know you.
- Be very patient. It takes a considerable amount of time and is bound up with enormous bureaucracy.
- The Chinese see foreigners as representatives of their company rather than as individuals.
- Rank is extremely important in business relationships and you must keep rank differences in mind when communicating.
- Gender bias is nonexistent in business.
- Never lose sight of the fact that communication is official, especially in dealing with someone of higher rank. Treating them too informally, especially in front of their peers, may well ruin a potential deal.
- The Chinese prefer face-to-face meetings rather than written or telephonic communication.
- Meals and social events are not the place for business discussions. There is a demarcation between business and socializing in China, so try to be careful not to intertwine the two.

### **Business Meeting Etiquette**

- Appointments are necessary and, if possible, should be made between one-to-two months in advance, preferably in writing.
- If you do not have a contact within the company, use an intermediary to arrange a formal introduction. Once the introduction has been made, you should provide the company with information about your company and what you want to accomplish at the meeting.
- You should arrive at meetings on time or slightly early. The Chinese view punctuality as a virtue. Arriving late is an insult and could negatively affect your relationship
- Pay great attention to the agenda as each Chinese participant has his or her own agenda that they will attempt to introduce.
- Send an agenda before the meeting so your Chinese colleagues have the chance to meet with any technical experts prior to the meeting. Discuss the agenda with your translator/intermediary prior to submission.
- Each participant will take an opportunity to dominate the floor for lengthy periods without appearing to say very much of anything that actually contributes to the meeting. Be patient and listen. There could be subtle messages being transmitted that would assist you in allaying fears of on-going association.
- Meetings require patience. Mobile phones ring frequently and conversations tend to be boisterous. Never ask the Chinese to turn off their mobile phones as this causes you both to lose face.
- Guests are generally escorted to their seats, which are in descending order of rank. Senior people generally sit opposite senior people from the other side.
- It is imperative that you bring your own interpreter, especially if you plan to discuss legal or extremely technical concepts as you can brief the interpreter prior to the meeting.
- Written material should be available in both English and Chinese, using simplified characters. Be very careful about what is written. Make absolutely certain that written translations are accurate and cannot be misinterpreted.
- Visual aids are useful in large meetings and should only be done with black type on white background. Colours have special meanings and if you are not careful, your colour choice could work against you.
- Presentations should be detailed and factual and focus on long-term benefits. Be prepared for the presentation to be a challenge.

## **Business Negotiation**

- Only senior members of the negotiating team will speak. Designate the most senior person in your group as your spokesman for the introductory functions.
- Business negotiations occur at a slow pace.
- Be prepared for the agenda to become a jumping off point for other discussions.
- Chinese are non-confrontational. They will not overtly say 'no', they will say 'they will think about it' or 'they will see'.
- Chinese negotiations are process oriented. They want to determine if relationships can develop to a stage where both parties are comfortable doing business with the other.
- Decisions may take a long time, as they require careful review and consideration.
- Under no circumstances should you lose your temper or you will lose face and irrevocably damage your relationship.
- Do not use high-pressure tactics. You might find yourself outmanoeuvred.
- Business is hierarchical. Decisions are unlikely to be made during the meetings you attend.
- The Chinese are shrewd negotiators.
- Your starting price should leave room for negotiation.

## **What to Wear?**

- Business attire is conservative and unpretentious.
- Men should wear dark coloured, conservative business suits.
- Women should wear conservative business suits or dresses with a high neckline.
- Women should wear flat shoes or shoes with very low heels.
- Bright colours should be avoided.

## **Business Cards**

- Business cards are exchanged after the initial introduction.

- Have one side of your business card translated into Chinese using simplified Chinese characters that are printed in gold ink since gold is an auspicious colour.
- Your business card should include your title. If your company is the oldest or largest in your country, that fact should be on your card as well.
- Hold the card in both hands when offering it, Chinese side facing the recipient such that the person receiving can read the card without turning it around.
- Similarly, when you are handed a business card, receive with both hands, pause, read the card and put it away in your business card holder, wallet or purse, or somewhere respectable, such as inside your compendium. Never put a Chinese person's business card in your trousers pocket, especially the back pocket.
- Never write on someone's card unless so directed.

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## India's Culture

The Taj Mahal is one of the finest examples of Islamic architecture in the world. Two important works of world literature came from India: the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. These epic poems tell about the growth of Hinduism. India has several styles of music. Each style is unique to a region. India makes more films each year than any other country.

India has 18 official languages, but Indians speak hundreds of other languages and dialects. Most languages come from one of two families: Indo-Aryan or Dravidian. The Indo-Aryan family includes almost all European languages. About 75 percent of northern and central Indians speak Indo-Aryan languages. About 25 percent of all Indians speak Dravidian languages. Dravidian was the language spoken centuries ago in India. As invaders moved north, Dravidian speakers moved south. Less than five percent of India's population speaks English. Because English is the language of business, government, and science, knowledge of English is considered valuable.

## Religion and Family

Most people in India are Hindus. Some Hindus perform daily rituals to their gods. The caste system is still in place, but the system is less rigid than it was. Many Muslims who had been living in India moved to Pakistan and East Pakistan, which is now Bangladesh. Today, 14 percent of Indians are Muslims.

## Family is important to Indians

Parents choose a bride or a groom for their children from a family of the same caste. A woman's parents may look at her potential mate's education, financial status, or horoscope to help them make a decision.

When a woman marries, her parents must provide her with a dowry. As India modernizes, this is beginning to change.

A typical meal varies from region to region. In the south and east, a meal usually includes rice. In the north and northwest, people eat bread called chapati. Meals also include beans or lentils, vegetables, and yogurt. Meat is rarely eaten, either because it is forbidden by religion or because it is too expensive.

Knowing how to conduct yourself within the framework of a specific culture can be crucial to the success of your business in any foreign country and India is no exception. This is why it is important to study the country's culture and background before doing business on the ground, and one of the keys to conducting yourself successfully among the local people is by practicing and refining business etiquette in India.

## **Appearance**

First impressions are important. In India, men and women are expected to dress in certain ways, sometimes adhering to religious beliefs and practices. Men for example are usually expected to wear a suit and tie for business, although in the summertime, they are allowed to remove the jacket due to the heat. Women, on the other hand, are expected to dress conservatively, with practical dresses and pantsuits as the general preference. It is also important to note that leather belts or bags may be considered offensive to some Indians since they consider cows to be

holy. Hindus venerate cows and this bovine reverence often means refraining from the use of leather products.

### **Manners**

Belief in certain religious ideas often dictates how Indians conduct themselves both personally and professionally. For example, it is considered insulting to call someone over by gesturing with the palm up and a finger wagging. Standing upright with hands on the hips is also considered to be an angry or aggressive posture and should be avoided if possible. Whistling, though unintentional, is impolite and winking thought of as insulting especially to women. It may be misconstrued as a form of sexual provocation. Pointing feet is impolite as well, as Indians believe that feet are unclean, so that if your feet or shoes accidentally touch a person, it is necessary to apologize.

Gift-giving is also a common practice among Indians. However, wrapped gifts must not be opened in front of the giver. It is customary in India to set aside wrapped gifts and open them when the giver has already left.

### **Communication**

In a country as big as India, there are bound to be a profusion of different languages and dialects, but the good thing about doing business in India is that here, English is used as their primary means of communication when doing business. Take note, however, that although English is used, there are words in the language that may take on a different meaning when used in the context of an Indian culture. The word "no" for example, can be a very harsh word for the local people. As such, refusing an invitation directly is often avoided. Indians prefer to be evasive in replying negatively, often preferring to say "I'll try" rather than being outright in declining. "Thank you" is another curiosity when used in India. In general, Indians find it offensive when their guests thank them at the end of a meal. Saying "thank you" is considered a form of payment and unacceptable among hosts when said by their guests. Finally, it is important to note that titles are important in India so that it when communicating with business partners, it is a must to address them using the correct titles. Keeping these simple tips in mind can make a big difference when conducting business in India, so before hitting the ground, get to know the people and their way of life, and this little investment on knowledge will do you a world of good in this fascinating and culturally rich country.

We hope that our Doing Business in India Guide will help answer some of the routine questions we get asked. Please Contact Us if you need more in-depth assistance when looking to do business with India. We'll be glad to help.

## Japan

### MULTICULTURALISM IN JAPAN

Japan is an island nation and therefore does not share borders with any countries. However, the Japanese embrace the cultures of other nations, particularly in the areas of food and fashion. There are Italian, Chinese, Korean and American style (diners) restaurants in most Japanese cities.

However, regarding laws and regulations, Japan is dominantly a country with protectionist ideologies. An example of this is that foreigners must relinquish citizenship of their home country in order to become Japanese. There are several difficult steps in the process to gaining Japanese citizenship including being a resident in Japan for five years and being proficient in Japanese (assessed by an interview with a Ministry of Justice official). Only Japanese citizens can purchase property. Other laws also restrict what foreigners can do in Japan.

Social behaviour and etiquette are considered very important in Japan. While certain rules of courtesy are supposed to be universal, quite a few Japanese manners and habits are unique and should also be respected by foreigners.

### GENERAL CUSTOMS

#### GREETINGS

When meeting someone for the first time and in most formal situations in Japan, it is customary to bow when greeting the other party/parties. Men bow with arms extended and hands flat against their thighs and women bow with hands crossed in front, placing the right hand over the left hand. Be careful not to mix these up. The way of bowing reflects each person's social status, and the social position towards one another, resulting in bows of up to 90 degrees in angle, when very deferential, to a slight nod, when greeting someone of lower social standing or of junior rank. A bow may be followed by a handshake in some situations as a sign of the Japanese wanting to show knowledge of Western customs.

Hugging and kissing are not common in Japan as open public displays of affection are discouraged.

When addressing others in formal situations, you should always call the other party by their last name followed by *san*.

**Shoes:** upon entering a house or a Japanese inn (旅館 *ryokan*), take off your shoes in the entryway (玄関 *genkan*). You will usually be provided with slippers. Slippers have to be taken off when stepping on *tatami* floor though. In *ryokan* and sometimes in private homes as well, you will be provided with toilet slippers, which are only to be used inside the toilet. A lot of Japanese restaurants (居酒屋 *izakaya*) also request their guests to take off their shoes. You will be offered a shoe locker to store your shoes.

**Blowing your nose:** most Japan travel guides emphasize the fact that it is considered very rude to blow your nose in public. Don't be mistaken: if you – as a matter of general courtesy that applies to other countries than Japan as well – blow your nose discreetly, no one will mind, even in a crowded restaurant. You will however find many Japanese people loudly sniffing and snorting on trains or in other public spaces, a behaviour considered to be quite rude in most Western countries.

#### Table manners

**Chopsticks:** while most restaurants in Japan do offer Western-style cutlery, you might encounter situations, where you have no choice but to use chopsticks (箸 *hashi* or お手元 *otemoto*). The pointed ends of the chopsticks are often placed on chopstick rests (箸置き *hashioki*), where you place them back when interrupting your meal. Chopsticks are never to be stuck into food vertically or crossed on the table, as this is only done when food is offered to the dead. When handling food from a dish shared with others, many Japanese turn their chopsticks to hand out portions, which – according to some – is not considered proper etiquette. It is best to use a new set of chopsticks for that purpose. Needless to mention, you should never use your chopsticks to point at people or objects. Whether disposable chopsticks (割箸 *waribashi*) made of splittable wood should be placed back into their paper wrappers after a formal meal remains a controversial issue.

**Eating habits:** start your meal by stating the phrase “*itadakimasu*” (いただきます, lit. “I humbly receive”, “bon appetit”) to show your gratitude to whoever contributed to your meal by hunting, fishing, cultivating and/or preparing it, conclude it with “*gochisōsama deshita*” (ごちそうさまでした, “Thanks for a good meal”). Contrary to some other Asian nations, it is considered rude to belch at the table. Slurping Japanese noodles on the other hand, is not only socially accepted, but often expected. Italian pasta, such as spaghetti, etc, however should not be slurped. It is also polite custom to clear your plates down to the last grain of rice and put the dishes back into the same position they were initially served in. *Sushi* should be eaten in one piece, soup is consumed by holding the bowl with both hands and to drink from it, while other ingredients can be picked up with your chopsticks. Some dishes, such as Japanese curry or fried rice, are eaten with spoons.

## **JAPANESE FOOD -**

There are a great variety of foods that you will be able to sample in Japan. Many restaurants and families adapt their diet in accordance with the change of season. As the seasons change you will notice the different types of fresh produce that become available.

Traditionally Japanese have rice with every meal (even breakfast) however this is slowly changing as more international food options are introduced. Some international restaurants attempt to put a Japanese spin on dishes, providing some interesting options for you to try.

Typically Japanese dishes include rice or noodles as the staple, accompanied by a variety of smaller dishes such as grilled fish or meat, Japanese style vegetables, pickles and sometimes tofu.

The Japanese style of eating usually consists of a medium sized main dish accompanied with many smaller side dishes, with the idea being to eat them all together, rather than in succession.

A typical traditional Japanese breakfast consists of rice, miso soup, grilled fish and fruit.

## **EATING OUT**

When going out for a coffee or a meal with friends, you will never be short of choices. There are plenty of reasonably priced restaurants with wide varieties of food available. One major difference you will notice between Australian and Japanese restaurants is the speed of service – do not be surprised if your meal is on the table less than 5 minutes after you order.

American diners (Family restaurants: *Famiri-resutoran* - ファミリーレストラン) and ramen stalls are very popular amongst students, especially as they are a fast, cheap and convenient option. At festivals (*matsuri* - まつり／祭り) and markets you will find stalls selling many kinds of easily prepared Japanese foods such as *okonomiyaki* and *yakisoba*. In large cities you will also find affordable international food and take away.

## **BARS AND CLUBS**

If you feel like going clubbing there are many options to suit all tastes in music and atmosphere (in larger cities). The larger and more popular clubs with famous and special guest DJs will almost always have a

cover charge. Many famous international artists tour Japan and play in nightclubs – be sure to keep an eye out for these gigs.

Japanese bar dress restrictions are pretty relaxed. However, if you are going to a nightclub it is always preferable to be smartly dressed. The dress code isn't overly strict but as the Japanese are usually dressed nicely and fashionably you will rarely feel overdressed. To be on the safe side, dress up!

Japanese society is based on a hierarchical structure and rank system. When dining out, it is usually the custom for the most senior or highest rank individual to pick up the bill. If you are the guest, it is polite to offer to pay your share – however you will almost always be denied. If you are out for a meal with friends or fellow classmates, usually everyone will pay for himself or herself. If visiting someone's home it is customary to bring a small gift such as fruit, Japanese sweets or a local specialty food. In Japan, each region has its own speciality/renowned produce.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

There are many widely practised methods of energy conservation and recycling in Japan (listed below). Should you fail to adhere to these accepted practices, you may be gently reminded of them.

- Ensure you correctly use recycle bins. (There are separate bins for different kinds of rubbish, e.g. burnable rubbish, cans, plastics, newspapers etc.)
- Do not pull off labels or put other rubbish inside cans/bottles to be recycled.
- Be sure to switch off lights and electrical appliances when not in use.
- Re-use containers and other items that can be re-used before recycling them, and do not litter.

## PUNCTUALITY

Punctuality is very important in Japanese society. It is polite to call ahead and let someone know, even if you will only be five minutes late. With Japan having such a large and dense population, one small hiccup in a timetable (i.e. public transport) can have a domino effect. Japanese people understand this by nature, so it is important that you are aware of such issues.

**Bathing habits:** Japanese are pretty passionate about taking baths (風呂 *furo* or polite お風呂 *ofuro*). Despite the introduction of Western-style bathrooms equipped with showers, it is still customary for a Japanese family to take a bath at night, not only in winter, but also on sultry summer nights. Bathing is not only a matter of bodily hygiene, but of physical and mental repose.

**Shower first:** when taking a bath in a private Japanese home or in the shared bath of a *ryokan* or a hotel, you will need to take a shower first. Japanese inns, hotels as well as hot springs (温泉 *onsen*) offer communal shower facilities satisfying all imaginable needs of body hygiene, often providing even shavers and tooth brushes. Private bathrooms are often furnished with small plastic stools and wash bowls. Once sponged and scrubbed, make sure to rinse your body thoroughly before stepping into the bath! After soaking, shower your body once again. It is quite common for Japanese families to share the same bath: one after another that is, usually with the pater familias in the lead. Guests will usually be given the honour of being first to enjoy the tub. Make sure not to empty the tub after you have soaked, the rest of the family will still use your water.

The majority of Japanese students work while they are studying with the most popular jobs being cram school tutor (tutor at an after-hours extra study school for high school students), waiter/waitress, shop assistant, bartender and convenience store attendant.

International students are permitted to work only after obtaining permission from their university and a permit for extra-status activities from the Immigration Bureau. Permission will only be granted if it is clear

that working will not affect your studies, and you will only be allowed to work up to 28 hours per week (research students only up to 14 hours per week).

## **LEISURE**

Generally Japanese students are quite active, with many either playing or following some kind of sport. The national sport of Japan is Sumo wrestling and many tournaments are still being held today. However baseball and soccer are by far the most popular sports in terms of both participants and spectators. Other popular sports played in Japan are volleyball, tennis and basketball. The Japanese are generally competitive when it comes to sports, especially in matches with neighbouring countries.

Compared to Australia, there isn't so much of a partying, clubbing and drinking culture amongst Japanese university students. As the legal age for drinking in Japan is 20, many students aren't able to go out drinking or to go into nightclubs.

Some of the typical leisure activities enjoyed by Japanese university students include shopping, going to the movies, playing sports, going to gaming arcades/playing console games, visiting local festivals and going to karaoke

## **THINGS TO DO**

Local cinemas, concerts, theatres, gaming arcades and sporting events are fun places to spend an evening. By far the most popular recreational activity for young Japanese is karaoke (カラオケ).

During the day you can visit places such as local temples and shrines, museums, art galleries, parks, shopping districts and markets. Alternatively, get involved in local sports and outdoor activities.

Each city should have a local event guide online that will give you tips on what to see and do in the area.

## **JAPANESE**

The official language of Japan is Japanese. There is a great interest in the English language in Japan especially amongst the younger generations. English lessons are compulsory in junior and senior high schools and, are also compulsory in primary schools. Most people speak at least some English in Japan, and many will take any opportunity to strike up a conversation and practise their English – don't be afraid, they are just being friendly.

## **DIALECTS** (*Hougen* - ほうげん／方言)

Throughout Japan there are many dialects. Most regions, cities and even some suburbs have their own special way of speaking. Someone from the north of Japan could be speaking to someone in the south and have no idea what he or she is trying to say. The accepted standard form of Japanese and most widely understood dialect is the Tokyo dialect. If people are having trouble understanding one another, they will usually revert to the Tokyo form. Japanese dialects are differentiated by the use of different words (nouns, adjectives and verbs), the changing endings of sentences and verbs and by adapting existing words. If possible avoid learning a dialect as it may limit your ability to communicate within Japan.