

**OAS 125 The Professional Office
International Business Etiquette Unit**

**Paradise Valley Community College
Phoenix, Arizona**

This unit has been developed for OAS 125 -- The Professional Office. It is designed to help the student develop an awareness of international etiquette and an appreciation for cultural differences. Americans must learn to adjust and adapt their behavior if they have any hope of success within the new global business environment. (I have also included a unit on "Reservation Etiquette"...it fits!)

~~Hopefully, the presentation of etiquette in a culturally diverse world will motivate students to avoid common social and cultural errors when initiating business contacts.~~

Contents:

Pretest

Discussion Cards

Essay Quiz

Bibliography

Pre/Test

International Business Etiquette

Please answer True (T) or False (F) to the following statements.

- _____1. The "OK" sign with the thumb and forefinger touching is considered an obscene gesture in Greece.
- _____2. Even though you are not thirsty, refusing a drink from your Dutch business associate would be considered improper etiquette.
- _____3. Leaving a bit of rice at the bottom of your bowl in Japan is an indicator to the server that you are finished eating.
- _____4. Be sure to tip an international flight attendant at least \$20 for good service.
- _____5. The appropriate German handshake is pumping the arm up and down.
- _____6. Be sure to shake hands with business associates when you arrive in India.
- _____7. Tip your waiter at least 15% when dining in Japan.
- _____8. Slurp your noodles in Japan; its OK.
- _____9. Business is not transacted on Fridays in Saudi Arabia.
- _____10. In Japan you may only pick up your bowl to drink the soup if it has handles.

INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOL
Questions and Answers

Yes or No.

- You are at a business dinner in Mexico. When you are not eating it is appropriate to place your hands below the table.

No. When dining formally in Mexico always keep your hands above the table.

- When doing business with a client in an Arab country. Should you apologize for being left-handed?

Yes. In Arab countries, the left hand is used for "essentials". When handing or reaching for something, use your right hand.

- You are in China on business. As you are traveling through the city, the people in the streets applaud you. You think that they have mistaken you for a movie star. Should you offer to give your autograph?

No. When people in the streets of China applaud you, it is a sign of welcoming you to their country. Smile and applaud them back.

- You have just checked into a hotel in China. After the bell captain takes your luggage to your room should you tip him as you would in the U.S.?

No. Tipping is prohibited in hotels in China. It is appropriate to personally thank all of the people who served you. A gift to the hotel or a letter of appreciation to the hotel manager would also be welcomed.

- You are in Greece on a business trip. You would like to quietly indicate to your Greek business associate that you think things are going well. It is acceptable to use the OK sign with the thumb and forefinger touching in a circle?

No. This is an obscene gesture in Greece.

- In Denmark a visitor invited to a business associate's home for dinner should bring a bottle of wine.

No. The appropriate gift would be a delicacy.

- In Holland, your Dutch business associate offers you a drink. You are not thirsty. Should you politely refuse?

No. It doesn't matter whether you drink it or sip it. With the Dutch, the offering and taking of a small drink is an essential part of their business hospitality.

- You are in Israel and order a corned beef sandwich in a kosher restaurant. You are accustomed to having butter on the bread and a glass of milk with your sandwich. Should that be ordered?

No. Kosher rules prohibit the eating of meat and dairy products at the same meal.

- In Japan, you know you will be exchanging business cards. How should they be printed?

In English on one side and Japanese on the other side. It is a good idea to order a larger quantity than you normally would as business cards are exchanged frequently in Japan.

• You are in Egypt and waiting in a restaurant for an 11:00 a.m. appointment. It is now 11:20 a.m. and the other party has not arrived. Should you call his office to see if there has been a misunderstanding of the time?

No. Wait at least another half hour. Traditionally, promptness is not a part of normal business procedures in Middle Eastern countries.

• When dining in a Japanese restaurant how can you indicate that you wish to be served more rice?

Leave a bit of rice in your bowl, indicating that you wish more. Tradition dictates that if you do not wish more, you should not leave a single grain in your bowl.

• In Saudi Arabia, when making up your schedule of appointments for the week, should you include Friday in your business meetings?

No. Friday is the Islamic Holiday and business is not transacted on that day.

• A flight attendant on the international flight you have just completed has given outstanding service. Should you tip him/her \$20.00?

No. Write a letter to the airline that he/she represents commending this fine employee.

• When visiting Japan, a bow is the most traditional greeting.

Yes. The Japanese are becoming accustomed to the western greeting of the handshake. However, their society still prefers the custom of bowing, based on the importance of the individual to whom he is bowing.

• In Germany, what is the most appropriate method of shaking hands is pumping hands.

Yes. The most appropriate handshake is a pumping up and down greeting.

• You are on a world tour and have just arrived in India. Traditionally, what shaking hands is the greeting used?

No. The palms together salutation, as in prayer.

TRUE/FALSE

• You are dining in Japan and you are eating with chopsticks. The correct place to put the chopsticks when you are not using them is in the bowl.

False. The correct place to put them is across your rice bowl.

• When you are in Japan you should make certain you do not have holes in your socks when visiting someone's home.

True. Worn socks or sock holes may leave you quite embarrassed since it is customary to take off your shoes when entering someone's home.

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- You are visiting Japan, since it is customary to use chopsticks with even soup, you are permitted to pick up your bowl to drink the liquid part of your soup.

True. You may pick up your bowl whether or not it has handles.

- You notice that the Japanese students with whom you are dining are slurping their noodles. You should make certain that you don't slurp yours.

False. When in Japan, it is appropriate to slurp your noodles as you pick them up with your chopsticks.

- After dining in Japan a 15% tip is appropriate to leave your waiter.

False. Tipping is prohibited in Japan. Instead, thank the person who served you, and make a special point of thanking the restaurant manager.

- You are staying in Spain for the summer at a hotel. The hotel room key says 200, but your room will be on the third floor.

True. In Europe and many other parts of the world, floors are counted differently than they are in the United States. In Spain, the floor on which you enter is considered the ground floor. Therefore, the third floor is considered the second floor in Spain and in some other European countries.

- As you walk down the street in Mexico, you pass some people who you met a few days ago and they say, "Adios" (Goodbye) to you instead of "Hola" (Hello). They must be giving you the message that they don't like you.

False. When passing on the street without stopping to talk in Mexico, one says, "Adios". It literally means "Go with God".

- You have purchased three books in Uruguay and notice that two of them have some uncut pages. You decide that the books must be imperfect, and feel ripped off.

False. Many books in Latin America especially paperbacks come with uncut pages. It signifies that it is indeed a new book.

- You are in Santo Domingo and want to buy some postcards to send to your friends at home. You can easily find them at the corner drugstore.

False. A drugstore in Latin America typically sells only pharmaceuticals, rather than containing a variety of items as our U.S. drugstores do. You would be more successful finding postcards in a stationery store.

- You have visiting friends in Mexico and have recently been introduced to "Juan Maria Villa Hernandez". You realize that a boy couldn't have Maria as part of his name and you must have heard it wrong.

False. It is very common for boys in Mexico to have Maria as their second name. It is interchangeable as a name for a male or female, as Chris or Pat would be in the United States.

- Europeans customarily use utensils to eat sandwiches.

True. Europeans may use utensils to eat things, such as sandwiches, that Americans generally eat with their hands. Americans probably use utensils less than much of the world, probably because of the lack of formality that is associated with eating in America.

- Your European host is rambling incessantly about the history and traditions of her European country. Your best bet is to let your mind wander.

False. Europeans love the past ... they have a rich historical tradition of respect for history. U.S. business people should be sincere and interested in the cultural heritage of their host. Listening carefully when traditions, places or events are described is a sure way to impress.

- You are visiting a beautiful home in Europe. You mention to your European host ... "This must have cost a bundle to build." This may be considered a "tacky" statement.

True. Money is power within the American social system; money brings class, prestige, and social status. This is not necessarily the case in Europe. For Europeans material possessions are not considered adequate indicators of someone's worth. Comments attaching material values to possessions or heirlooms is considered--TACKY or unattractive.

- You have just met your European business counterpart at a meeting. You are each introduced by your last names. The best idea is to disregard formal titles and call each other by first names.

False. Exercise restraint when first meeting people on business. Avoid the rush to use first names. Let conversation develop naturally. Ask sincere questions and show interest in the answers.

- You are joking around with a Japanese female business associate. If she sticks out her tongue it is a good sign that she is embarrassed.

True. In Japan women stick out their tongues to indicate embarrassment.

- It is a sign of respect to shake hands in Ecuador.

False. You would not shake hands in Ecuador in order to show a person special respect.

- In China lifting a food bowl to one's lips and spitting gristle on the floor is OK.

False. It is not acceptable dining behavior in China.

OAS 125 THE PROFESSIONAL OFFICE
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ETIQUETTE QUIZ

On a separate sheet respond to the following essay questions.

1. What is etiquette?
2. Explain why it is necessary to examine the etiquette of different cultures?
3. Compare two specific examples of U.S. and European etiquette.
4. Compare two specific examples of U.S. and Asian etiquette.
5. Site three important concepts of reservation etiquette and explain the reasoning behind each concept.
6. How can you apply etiquette concepts in your professional life?

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