

Business cultural differences and related phrases

What cultural differences can you think of about doing business?

Are the following things true about your country or not? Tick the ones that you think are, then compare with someone else.

Meeting people

1. It is normal to turn to people or walk up to them and introduce yourself
2. You need to find a smooth and natural way to start conversations with people
3. New employees are taken round the company and introduced to people one by one
4. When you walk into your office, you should say a different thing to each person there
5. When you meet a large group of people, you should use different phrases with each
6. It is best to avoid the standard phrases and say more personal things instead
7. When given a business card, you should read it carefully and make a comment
8. Endings to conversations tend to be quite long

Small talk

9. It is good to talk about the other people's families
10. Sport is a good small talk topic
11. Their journey there is a good small talk topic

Gifts

12. You should make disparaging remarks about gifts that you give
13. Presents are not usually opened in front of the giver

Business meetings

14. Meetings start on time, even if some people aren't there
15. There is a clear distinction between small talk and the business of the meeting
16. People will try to link smoothly between the small talk and meeting proper
17. There is no silence between speaking, so you have to interrupt if you want to speak
18. People usually disagree with a positive statement with "but"
19. The chair is usually quite strict about staying on topic

Corporate entertaining

20. There are many toasts and for most you down your drink in one
21. There is a lot of arguing about who will pay the bill
22. The host always decides what will be eaten

Apologising

23. When apologising, you should give excuses
24. When apologising, you should explain future action
25. You should apologise even for being a couple of minutes late

Rejections

26. When turning down an invitation, you should say why you can't come in as much detail as possible (even if it's a lie)
27. Rejections are generally indirect

What countries are the other ones true about? Try to think of at least one country for each one.

What phrases could you (or the person you are talking to) use to do each thing above? Brainstorm at least two phrases for each and then compare with the next page.

Meeting people

1. It is normal to turn to people or walk up to them and introduce yourself – **“Please allow me to introduce myself...” “Hi, I’m John”**
2. You need to find a smooth and natural way to start conversations with people – **“Is anyone sitting here?” “Is this the right room for...?” “I see you are also...”**
3. New employees are taken round the company and introduced to people one by one – **“You’ll also need to know who... is” “This is John. It’s his first day today” “I’ll take you round and introduce you to a few people I think you need to know” “This is Steve Smith. He starts tomorrow/ He is the replacement for.../ He’ll be taking...’s position” “Now I’ll take you over to meet...”**
4. When you walk into the office, you should say a different thing to each person there – **“Morning” “How’s it going?” “How was your weekend?”**
5. When you meet a large group of people, you should use different phrases with each – **“Pleased to meet you” “How’s it going?” “It’s really nice to meet you”**
6. It is best to avoid the standard phrases and say more personal things instead – **“It’s so nice to finally meet you” “I’ve heard so much about you” “A colleague told me that you’d be here” “You’re much younger than I expected”**
7. When given a business card, you should read it carefully and make a comment – **“Your office is quite close to ours” “Systems Engineer? Does that mean that you...?”**
8. Endings to conversations tend to be quite long – **“Well, I’ll let you get on” “I can see you’re very busy, so...”**

Small talk

9. It is good to talk about the other people’s families – **“How’s your son getting on at school?” “Pass on my regards to...”**
10. Sport is a good small talk topic – **“Did you see the (...) match?” “How did your team do?” “Bad luck on Saturday”**
11. Their journey there is a good small talk topic – **“Did you have any trouble finding us?” “How was your flight?” “Was my map okay?” “How were the roads?”**

Gifts

12. You should make disparaging remarks about gifts that you give – **“This is just a little something that I picked up at the airport” “Don’t get too excited!”**
13. Presents are not usually opened in front of the giver – **“I’ll open it later, if you don’t mind” “Can I open it now?”**

Business meetings

14. Meetings start on time, even if some people aren't there – **"Well, let's get started and we can fill latecomers in when they arrive"**
15. There is a clear distinction between small talk and the business of the meeting – **"Let's get down to business, shall we?" "Right, let's get started"**
16. People will try to link smoothly between the small talk and meeting proper – **"That brings me on to..." "... which ties in nicely with why we are here today, which is..."**
17. There is no silence between speaking, so you have to interrupt if you to speak – **"Can I just..?" "Can I come in here?" "I have something to say on that point"**
18. People usually disagree with a positive statement with "but" – **"I can see why you might think that, but..." "I respect your opinion, but..." "That's a good point, but..."**
19. The chair is usually quite strict about staying on topic – **"Can we leave that until AOB?" "I think that is the topic for another meeting"**

Corporate entertaining

20. There are many toasts and for most you down your drink in one – **"I'd like to propose a toast." "Bottoms up" "(Let's drink) to..." "Please raise your glasses to..."**
21. There is a lot of arguing about who will pay the bill – **"No, please allow me" "I insist" "You paid last time" "It's my turn to pay"**
22. The host always decides what will be eaten – **"What do you recommend?" "I'll have whatever you're having" "I don't know this kind of food, so I'd rather you chose"**

Apologising

23. When apologising, you should give excuses – **"... this was because/ due to ..."**
24. When apologising, you should explain future action – **"It won't happen again" "I'll be more careful next time"**
25. You should apologise even for being a couple of minutes late – **"Sorry, the lifts were really busy" "Sorry, I couldn't get a client off the phone"**

Rejections

26. When turning down an invitation, you should say why you can't come in as much detail as possible (even if it's a lie) – **"I have to meet my boss at just that time" "I'll be out of the country that week and won't be back till late Friday"**
27. Rejections are generally indirect – **"I'll think about it" "I'll ask around and get back to you"**

Reply to some of the phrases above, then do the same but extending the conversation.

Do the same, but this time with your partner explaining the situation rather than saying the phrase and you starting the conversation.