

Culture File 9, Unit 9

Greetings

People who meet regularly on business will normally use first names. In North America, they often meet socially too, which is why Josh asks about Michael's wife, Jodie. It is also common to ask about children.

North Americans and British people shake hands on introduction, and if they meet after a long time. In the rest of Europe, people shake hands more often. Business colleagues may shake hands each day or more than once a day.

People don't bow on meeting. Women meeting men acquaintances and friends may kiss them on the cheek or even hug. Women may do the same to other women. This used to be more frequent in non-English-speaking countries in Europe and Latin America, but the custom is increasing rapidly in English-speaking countries.

Culture File 10, Unit 10

Starting conversations

People often start with an ice-breaker. The weather is a good topic (unless you're somewhere like the desert where it never changes!) because it's neutral. People comment on the weather to be friendly and to see if the other person wants to speak.

If you're traveling, the ice-breaker is usually to talk about the journey. (It looks like we're going to be late / on time / early.) At a reception or party, the food or drink is a good topic for an ice-breaker.

Be careful with question intonation. Sound as if you're interested and making friendly conversation. Don't sound like a police detective! If you do, "Why are you here?" may sound rude.

Culture File 11, Unit 11

Lunch

Lunch isn't the main meal of the day for most people in North America, Australia or the U.K. (but Julie is on a business trip and hungry). Lunch breaks are short, and are rarely longer than an hour. Some factories and offices have their own self-service cafeterias.

Many workers in cities just have a sandwich or other snack from a deli or sandwich bar. Some bring a lunchbox from home.

Lunch times are earlier in the U.S.A. than in the U.K., and earlier in the U.K. than in Southern Europe. The lunch break is sometime between 11:30 and 1:30 in the U.S.A.

Culture File 12, Unit 12

Check-in

Since 9.11.01 all airlines have introduced new security checks. They must ask you some questions by law. British airlines must use specific words for this. Always answer clearly and simply with "yes" or "no" plus a short answer.

Regulations about checked and carry-on baggage are also changed frequently and may be out-of-date by the time you read this. You can check on the Internet or phone your airline. Most airline Web addresses are easy to guess. e.g. www.united.com is United Airlines. www.ana.com is All-Nippon Airways. www.ba.com is British Airways.