

Culture File 21, Unit 21

Maintaining a conversation

If you just answer "yes" or "no" a conversation soon stops. Notice that in the conversation,

Keiko adds an opinion or extra information:

It's a nice pool.

I'm visiting my company's Los Angeles office.

It's a very interesting place.

Keiko also asks questions:

Have you heard of it?

Have you ever been there?

Always try to add a statement or a question after "yes" and "no" answers.

Culture File 22, Unit 22

Business events

Business events (conferences, training courses, seminars etc.) are good opportunities for socializing. People value informal contacts and many people believe that the social side of these events is as important as the course or conference.

You meet people doing similar jobs with similar problems. The contacts may be useful later. During courses and conferences try to socialize – and remember that it shouldn't all be business conversation.

Culture File 23, Unit 23

Topics of conversation

The safest topics are the weather and food and drink. The most dangerous topics are religion and politics, which should be avoided unless you know someone well. Medical problems aren't usually interesting to strangers. Before you talk about personal interests, try to find out what the other person's interests are. Jokes are a difficult area. Always avoid jokes about sex, ethnic origin, sexist jokes, religion or politics.

Talking about your country and about business acquaintances who you both know are useful topics. In business lunches, always begin with social conversation. At some point, the host can introduce business. The guest should wait for that.

Culture File 24, Unit 24

Food taboos

Airlines say that chicken is the most popular international food, because few people have taboos about it. People who have taboos won't eat certain foods. It is usually polite not to eat these things in front of them, even if you do not share their taboos.

Religious taboos

Muslims and Jews don't eat pork, pork products or some kinds of seafood. Hindus don't eat beef or beef products.

Animal welfare

Some people only eat 'cruelty-free' foods out of concern for animal welfare. They won't eat veal or factory-farmed chicken. Most Americans will not eat meat from whales or dolphins.

Health

Some people will avoid some food for health reasons. People on a low-cholesterol diet avoid red meat.

Vegetarians

Vegetarians don't eat meat. Most vegetarians don't eat fish, either.