

CAREER ETIQUETTE AROUND THE WORLD

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY MICHELIN[®] CAREER CENTER

ARAB AND ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

GREETINGS - Always use your right hand for any contact; the left hand is reserved for personal hygiene. If you are left handed, explain why you are using your left hand. Arabs usually stand very close when talking; do not back away. In social situations, if you are kissed on both cheeks while shaking hands, return the greeting.

ATTIRE - Men should wear suits and women should wear dresses or skirts that fall below the knee. Women should also keep arms covered to the wrist.

BUSINESS - Plan carefully when scheduling meetings; business is not conducted during religious holidays, which usually are observed between June and September. Business also does not take place from Thursday night to Friday night, which is the Sabbath in Persian Gulf countries.

SOCIAL SETTINGS – Alcohol is forbidden. Do not attempt to take alcohol to an Islamic country; the penalty is serious. Be careful about complimenting any possession belonging to business associates in these countries; if you praise any possession, your host will feel obliged to give it to you, and you will be obliged to reciprocate with a gift of similar value. If you are offered a gift of a personal possession, politely but firmly refuse.

AUSTRALIA

ATTIRE – Business dress is more casual than in other countries.

BUSINESS – Somewhat male-dominated and very democratic, so more people may participate in meetings than in other countries.

SOCIAL SETTINGS – The custom is for each person to take a turn paying the tab for rounds of drinks.

CHINA

GREETINGS - Bow head slightly when introduced, as a sign of respect. Do not attempt body contact. Chinese who are used to interacting with Westerners will shake hands. A lack of eye contact should not be interpreted as a lack of assertiveness. Do not attempt to become too friendly too soon. Do not insist that they call you by your first name. The American pattern of quick informality should be resisted. Chinese point at objects with an open hand instead of the index finger. Beckoning to someone is done with a palm facing down. Avoid beckoning with your index finger facing up (this is the way to call a dog). If a Chinese business associate gives you a compliment, it is polite to deny it graciously. Modesty is highly valued in China.

ATTIRE – Business dress should be conservative. Men should wear suits and women should never wear all white, the color of mourning.

BUSINESS - Business cards are exchanged when people meet, but formal business may not begin immediately. Accept a business card with both hands and place it in front of you, not immediately in your pocket or briefcase. Be patient. Chinese business associates prefer to avoid the truth rather than offend. The head or leader of a group will be the first to enter a room, so Americans should follow this

custom when in China. Wait until the end of a presentation to ask questions; it is considered rude to interrupt.

SOCIAL SETTINGS – During meals, be prepared to use chopsticks. Do not eat or drink until your host does. When toasts are made, it is expected that everyone will empty his or her glass. Be prepared to respond to a toast, if one is given by your host. Always leave something on your plate at the end of a meal, so that your host does not think you are still hungry. A gift should always be wrapped, but avoid plain black and white paper because these are the colors of mourning. Present the gift with both hands as a sign of courtesy and always mention that this is only a small token of appreciation. Do not expect your gift to be opened in your presence. This indicates that it is the thought that counts more than the material value. Do not give a clock, handkerchief, umbrella or white flowers, particularly chrysanthemums, as a gift, as all of these signify tears and /or death. Do not give sharp objects such as a knife as it would signify the cutting of a relationship.

FRANCE

GREETINGS – Shake hands upon arrival and departure. Address business associates in a formal manner.

BUSINESS – Formality is the rule in business in France. Be punctual; it is interpreted as a sign of courtesy. In conversation, avoid topics of a personal nature, politics, and money. Confirm appointments in writing when possible. The business day usually begins at 8:30 AM, with a lunch break from 12:30 to 3:00 PM, and concludes at 6:30 PM. Do not schedule breakfast meetings.

SOCIAL SETTINGS – If you are invited to the home of a business associate, take a gift of candy or flowers. (Do not take roses or chrysanthemums). Meals are a very important aspect of French culture. If you take a French business associate out for dinner or lunch, suggest that he or she select a wine. The French are proud of their wine; be sure to praise it.

GERMANY

GREETINGS – It is customary to shake hands on meeting and when leaving. Do not use a first name until invited to do so; titles are important. Use a title if one is indicated.

BUSINESS – The business day begins early and extends until the late afternoon. During business hours, Germans prefer not to use small talk or humor, and spontaneity is not favored. Be punctual for appointments and meetings. Business entertaining is often formal, with a formal dinner followed by a concert, or other event.

SOCIAL SETTINGS – If invited to the home of a business associate, take flowers for the hostess, and unwrap them before presenting them. Avoid red roses (which indicate romance) and do not give an even number of flowers. Being invited to the home of a business associate is a special privilege. Gifts, in general, should be modest and elegantly wrapped. A small box of chocolates is appropriate.

GREAT BRITAIN

GREETINGS – Shake hands when meeting and address business associates formally. Avoid any other physical contact.

ATTIRE - Business dress is formal. Men should not wear striped ties that could be construed as school or regimental ties, which are never worn unless one has served in the regiment or attended the school.

BUSINESS – The business day is generally from 9:00 AM to 5:00 or 5:30 PM. Business conversation does not usually extend into the evening. Business is often conducted during afternoon tea, which includes small sandwiches, cakes, and other sweets. Eat delicately with small bites.

ISRAEL

GREETINGS – It is correct to say “Shalom” for hello and goodbye.

ATTIRE – Dress is less formal in Israel than in many countries. Suit jackets may be left off; shirt sleeves are acceptable. Have a suit jacket with you, but you will most likely not be expected to wear it in most meetings.

BUSINESS – Do not be late or waste time during meetings; business is brisk and to the point in Israel. The work week begins on Sunday morning, and work is not conducted from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday, for the Sabbath.

ITALY

GREETINGS – Shake hands and be formal. Use professional titles.

BUSINESS – Business is conducted with formality. Most businesses are not open during August when vacations are taken. It is very difficult to make contacts during this month. Businesses close for a long lunch hour, which usually lasts from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. Business hours can extend until 8:00 PM.

SOCIAL SETTINGS - Plan on several courses during meals and remember that the salad is served after the main course.

JAPAN

GREETINGS – The customary form of greeting is a long, low bow, rather than a handshake. Do not use first names in greetings; always address a Japanese person by the last name and a title, such as “mister”. Direct eye contact and body contact convey arrogance and should be avoided. Keep your voice and demeanor quiet.

BUSINESS – It is appropriate to exchange business cards. This exchange should be marked with respect by both parties. It is considered, by the Japanese, to be an indication of status of the owner. Cards should be read on both sides and put away carefully. Business is very important and might extend into the dinner hour. Men dominate the business world and very few women hold executive positions. Formality is very important. Be very punctual to meetings. Most Japanese are early to appointments.

SOCIAL SETTINGS – A Japanese associate will expect a gift, but will never open it in front of you. Do not wrap gifts in white paper (it is a color of mourning). Write a thank you note for a gift right away. Shoes should be removed when entering a Japanese home and restaurant, but not in an office. Place shoes facing outward. Do not step on the door sill or point your feet at another person. When invited to a home for dinner, it is not polite to stay longer than forty-five minutes, even when encouraged to stay longer.

LATIN AMERICA

GREETINGS – Shaking hands is common and occurs often. The distance between people when speaking is usually closer than most North Americans are accustomed to; do not back away.

ATTIRE – In business, dress is very formal.

BUSINESS – Business may be conducted at a slower pace than Americans are used to. Your Latin American business associate may be late for a meeting; you should still be on time.

SOCIAL SETTINGS – Dinner is served late in the evening; be prepared. Have a snack in the afternoon if necessary.

THE NETHERLANDS

ATTIRE – Dress is conservative.

BUSINESS – Be punctual. Vacations are taken between June and August. Privacy is respected; do not discuss personal or business dealings in front of other people.

SOCIAL SETTINGS – When offered a drink, accept it, but do not touch it until your host proposes a toast. Be prepared to reply with your own toast. Do not refer to The Netherlands as Holland; Holland is only a part of The Netherlands. Do not call business associates “Dutch”; they are Netherlanders.

RUSSIA

BUSINESS – Punctuality is important. Be sure to know how long it takes to get from place to place, to be sure to arrive on time. The business day is generally from 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon and 1:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Travel arrangements are still subject to government approval, so be sure to confirm your plans in writing and submit proper documentation before your trip.

SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES

ATTIRE – Dress is formal for men and women.

BUSINESS – Privacy and punctuality are important.

SOCIAL SETTINGS – Be prepared to be toasted in social situations and have a toast ready to return. Do not drink until a toast has been proposed. The honored guest usually sits to the left of the host.

SPAIN

BUSINESS – Status is important and business is generally very formal. Time and punctuality are not always observed. Be prepared to wait and be patient.

Sources: Emily Post's Etiquette; On the Job Internationally, Oregon Economic & Community Development Department; Oregon International Resource Center