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*Business etiquette: true or false*

- 1 **JAPAN.** When someone offers you their business card, it is a mark of respect to turn it over and to write the date of your first meeting them on the other side.
- 2 **THE USA.** Subordinates will usually call their bosses by their first names: John, Diane...
- 3 **SAUDI ARABIA.** Do not stand too close to people when you are speaking to them. A distance of two metres is normal.
- 4 **ITALY.** If you have a lunch with a client do not discuss business. The conversation will be about sport, the arts, food, current affairs and mutual acquaintances rather than work.
- 5 **GREECE.** A business lunch will tend to be a fairly short affair – about 45 minutes to an hour – and conversation is focused exclusively on business.
- 6 **SPAIN.** No matter how crowded a restaurant or club may be you should never try to share a table with someone you do not know.
- 7 **HUNGARY.** When travelling alone by taxi it is usual to sit in front with the driver rather than in the back.
- 8 **JAPAN.** If you are the first to enter an elevator you should always stand at the back on the left.
- 9 **BRITAIN.** It is fairly normal to have breakfast meetings.
- 10 **GERMANY.** It is very common for colleagues to go out together after work for a drink.
- 11 **SWITZERLAND.** In meetings, the agenda is regarded as a rough guide. If other points come up you should feel free to discuss them.
- 12 **SCANDINAVIA.** People rarely work extra hours and are very unwilling to take work home with them.
- 13 **FRANCE.** If you are invited to dinner it is considered normal to bring a bottle of wine as a contribution.
- 14 **RUSSIA.** Many people are still suspicious of private enterprise and see businessmen as legalised criminals.
- 15 **CANADA.** Canadians like to think of their country as part of the USA.



**Answers**

- 1 **JAPAN.** False. It is very bad form to write on or otherwise deface someone's business card.
- 2 **THE USA.** True.
- 3 **SAUDI ARABIA.** False. In the Arab world people stand closer than in Europe or Japan: one metre or less.
- 4 **ITALY.** False. But you should not talk business all the time.
- 5 **GREECE.** False. Lunches tend to be long and conversation discursive.
- 6 **SPAIN.** True.
- 7 **HUNGARY.** True.
- 8 **JAPAN.** False. In traditional companies, this space is reserved for the most important person present. If this is you, you should not show that you are conscious of it but wait to be invited.
- 9 **BRITAIN.** False. This is more usual in the USA.
- 10 **GERMANY.** False. It is unusual to socialise with colleagues
- 11 **SWITZERLAND.** False. It is not professional to deviate from the agenda.
- 12 **SCANDINAVIA.** True.
- 13 **FRANCE.** False. On the other hand, this is good practice in Britain.
- 14 **RUSSIA.** True.
- 15 **CANADA.** False. Canadians dislike being confused with people from the USA.

Teacher's Notes

*Business etiquette – true or false?*

Worksheet

3

**ACTIVITY**

Groupwork or pairwork and whole class: speaking

**AIM**

To discuss cultural norms, in business and in general.

**GRAMMAR AND FUNCTIONS**

Expressing opinions  
Agreeing and disagreeing

**VOCABULARY**

*etiquette, cultural norms, business card, to work extra hours, to take work home, business lunch*

**PREPARATION**

Make a copy of the worksheet for each student in the class.  
Cut it in two as indicated.

**TIME**

20–30 minutes

**PROCEDURE**

1 Tell the students that they are going to talk about some cultural differences.

2 Write on the board:

True or false? In Britain, if you are invited to dinner it is normal to arrive about 15 minutes late.

3 Ask the students' opinions and hold a class vote before telling them the answer. (The sentence is true: it is considered polite to give your host a margin in case anything has gone wrong.)

4 Explain the procedure: to look at items of information about expectations and norms in different cultures and decide if each is true or false. The answers are given in the second part of the worksheet. *It is important not to be dogmatic about the answers. The sentences on the sheet describe cultural norms, not individual personalities.*

5 Divide the class into pairs or small groups.

6 Give out the copies of the first part of the worksheet.

7 Ask the students to discuss the statements and decide whether each one is true or false.

8 As each group finishes, tell them there are five true and ten false statements and ask them to check they have the right numbers.

9 In whole class discussion, students compare their conclusions. If the students wish, the teacher may give the 'correct' answers, that is to say the ones given on the second part of the worksheet.

10 If you wish, once the discussion has finished, give out the sheet with the answers on it for the students' own reference.

**FOLLOW-UP 1: Golden rules**

Either as homework or through discussion in class, students prepare a set of 'golden rules' for an American or British person visiting their country to do business.

**FOLLOW-UP 2: Lies**

This follow-up is for multilingual classes.

1 Ask the students to write a sentence or two about norms of etiquette in their own countries or other countries they know. They can write true sentences or lies. Each sentence should include the name of the country and should be on a separate slip of paper.

2 Collect the sentences and put them up around the walls of the classroom.

3 Students walk around reading the sentences and decide if each one is true or false.