

C O N T E N T S

UNIT 1 Getting to know you

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UNIT 5 Happy holiday!

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1

UNIT

Getting to know you

We meet, greet and get to know new people all the time, often many times a day, because we're social animals and usually pleased to form new relationships with others. It's often the start of a longer relationship. We meet and greet people we don't know; we also meet and greet friends, family and everyone we love. It's so important for us to make ourselves known to others, and we can get to know each other in writing, in speaking and in our body language. Even though the circumstances change according to the degree of formality or familiarity, and vary from culture to culture, we acknowledge our relationships with others in a variety of rituals, by following a series of unwritten rules.



Starting out

The ways we use to get to know people are instinctive. But what we do depends on our culture, and what we say depends on whether we know the person we meet.



1 Work in pairs. Look at the photos above and discuss:

- who the people are
- what they are doing
- how well they know each other

2 Work in pairs. Discuss which of the words and expressions you can use to describe the photos.

shake hands wave smile kiss
say hello bow hug rub noses

3 Work in pairs. Discuss which of the expressions the people in the photos might use.

Hello! How are you? Pleased to meet you.
Hi! Good to see you again. How do you do?
Hey! I missed you.

Speaking through cultures

We meet and greet people we know as well as people we don't know and would like to know better. Sometimes we just need to know practical things, like how to address people, but on other occasions, we need to engage people in conversation. And that's not always easy.

Listen out

Conversation 1

1 Work in pairs. Look at the photo and discuss:

- who the people are
- where they are



Now watch Conversation 1 and check your answers.

2 Work in pairs. Look at Conversation 1 and decide where the expressions go.

- a A pleasure to meet you
- b Care to join us
- c Have you met
- d How are you
- e Fine, thanks
- f I didn't catch your name
- g Nice to meet you
- h That's alright

Now watch Conversation 1 again and check your answers.

- Richard** Hey.
- Andy** Oh ... Can I help? You must be the new flatmate.
- Richard** Yeah, moving in today. Here, hold this.
- Andy** Moving into the spare room?
- Richard** Yeah. Do you live here too?
- Andy** Been here for about a year now. Where are you from?
- Richard** Canada, Vancouver actually.
- Andy** You didn't fly in today, did you?
- Richard** Oh, no no no, I've lived in London for the past two years. What about you?
- Andy** Oh, actually I'm from London, born and bred. I'm Andy by the way. (1) _____.
- Richard** Sorry, Richard. (2) _____?
- Andy** (3) _____. Oh ... There's someone else you ought to meet. Charlotte!
- Charlotte** Coming!
- Andy** (4) _____ Charlotte?
- Richard** No, I haven't.
- Andy** OK.
- Charlotte** Hello, I forgot you were moving in today.
- Richard** (5) _____. I'm Richard.
- Charlotte** Charlotte, the other flatmate. Great to meet you too Richard.
- Andy** Right, we'd better get moving. We're going out for something to eat.
- Charlotte** (6) _____?
- Andy** Good restaurants in the area.
- Richard** (7) _____. I think I'll just settle in. I'm a bit tired.
- Andy** Right. Well, good to meet you, and uh, see you later.
- Charlotte** (8) _____. Don't forget your keys if you go out.
- Richard** Oh yeah, er, well it was nice to meet you both, and I'll see you guys later.
- Charlotte** Bye.
- Andy** Come on. We're gonna be late.

3 Work in pairs and answer the questions.

- 1 *Hey.* Does Richard say this (a) to attract Andy's attention, or (b) to say hello?
- 2 *You didn't fly in today, did you?* Does this mean (a) Andy thinks Richard can't have arrived today, or (b) Andy is surprised Richard arrived today?
- 3 *Oh, actually I'm from London, born and bred.* Does Andy mean (a) he has lived in London all his life, or (b) London is his place of birth and where he was brought up?
- 4 *There's someone else you ought to meet.* Does this mean (a) you're obliged to meet someone else, or (b) it's a good idea for you to meet someone else?
- 5 *Care to join us?* Does this mean (a) please come with us, or (b) see you later?

Conversation 2

4 Work in pairs. Listen to Conversation 2 and find out who the following people are:

- Janet
- Fan Xiping
- Bob Armstrong

5 Listen to Conversation 2 again and check (✓) the statements which are likely to be true, according to what you can learn from it.

- 1 It's rare to call a boss by their given name.
- 2 It's usual to add Mr, Mrs or Miss to a given name in a formal situation.
- 3 It's essential for Chinese people to have a Western name.
- 4 Westerners may prefer to call you by your Chinese name.
- 5 It's important to notice what other people call each other before you decide what to call them.

Cultural information

Given name, first name, Christian name, and family name – what do they mean? Your given name is the name your family gave you, but it's usually only people who are culturally aware who use this expression. In Christian countries, Christian name is often used to mean first name. Many Westerners don't know that the Chinese family name goes before the given name.

6 Work in pairs. Listen to Conversation 2 again and find one or two expressions which go under the headings:

- Welcoming people

- Asking and saying what people like to be called

- Talking about what you're going to do

Conversation 3

7 Work in pairs. Look at some sentences from Conversation 3 and answer the questions.

- a That was good, wasn't it?
- b But I found it a bit difficult to follow.
- c He has quite a strong accent.
- d Where are you from?
- e Why don't you sit beside me for his lecture next week?
- f ... let's go and have some coffee?

- 1 Where does the conversation take place?
- 2 How many people are speaking?
- 3 How well do the people know each other?
- 4 What might the conversation be about?

Now listen to Conversation 3 and check your answers.

8 Work in pairs. Listen to Conversation 3 again and find one or two expressions which go under the headings:

- Saying you enjoyed something

- Saying you found something difficult

- Offering to help someone

- Inviting someone to do something

Speak out



Conversation 1



Conversation 2



Conversation 3

1 Work in pairs and talk about your answers to the questions.

- 1 What are the differences in formality in Conversations 1, 2 and 3?
- 2 How is the language different in each conversation? Think about:
 - saying hello
 - introducing people
 - saying what you'd like people to call you
 - making invitations
- 3 How many expressions are there to greet people in China? Which expressions can you use with your family and friends? Which ones can you use in more formal situations?
- 4 Which of the following factors might alter the way you greet someone in China?
 - how old they are
 - how well you know them
 - what they do
- 5 What differences do you notice in the way people greet and get to know others in other cultures? Which of the factors in Question 4 might change the way people greet each other?

Cultural information

In **formal and less formal situations**, you'd expect the language to be very different, but in English-speaking countries, the language is similar in formal and less formal situations. It's common for the boss or superior to show their friendliness by using first / given names, and to talk in a fairly informal way.

Remember that in English, there's only one form for the second person *you*, so it's not possible to show the relationship between two people by the choice of form.

In other situations, such as at a party, in the dining hall, at a concert, or at a sports event, if you meet new people, you can also use informal but polite language.

There are some words we use a lot in English: *please*, *thank you* and *sorry*. It may seem peculiar when you hear English speakers using these words with people they know well, such as their family and close friends. But if you don't use them as much, you may sound insensitive to this cultural difference, or even a little rude.

However, people from other cultures, even when speaking English, may be more influenced by their own cultural behaviour.

It may feel strange to you at first, but just remember to be very polite and try to respond to people in the way they speak to you.

Act out

1 Work in groups of three. You're meeting people with whom you're going to share a dormitory room for the first time. Follow the instructions and act out the following conversation.

- Student A** Greet Student B. *Hey! How are you?*
- Student B** Respond to Student A's greeting. *I'm fine, thanks.*
- Student A** Ask for Student B's name. *I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name.*
- Student B** Introduce yourself to Student A. *I'm ...*
- Student A** Respond to Student B's greeting. *Good to meet you.*
- Student B** Introduce Student C to Student A. *Oh, there's someone else you ought to meet.*
- Student C** Greet Student A. *Hi!*
- Student A** Respond to Student C's greeting, and introduce yourself.
- Student C** Invite Student A to join you. *We're going to get something to eat.*
- Student A** Refuse Student C's invitation.

Language to help you

Greeting people and responding to greetings

– How are you? – I'm fine, thanks.
A pleasure to meet you.
Nice / Great / Good to meet you.

Asking for people's names

I didn't catch your name.

Introducing yourself and others

I'm ...
Have you met ...?

Accepting or refusing invitations

That's alright, ...
Thanks. But I'm a bit tired.

2 Work in groups of three and act out the following conversation.

- Student A** You're a new student in a class. Greet Student B, your classmate.
- Student B** Student A is a new student in your class. Respond to Student A's greeting and ask how they'd like to be called.
- Student A** Say how you'd like to be called.
- Student B** Say what you're going to do. Introduce Student A to Student C, your teacher.
- Student C** Greet Student A, and welcome them to your class.
- Student A** Respond to Student C's greeting and welcome.

Language to help you

Asking and saying what people like to be called

– How would you like me to call you?
– ... is fine.
You can use my Western name ...
Everyone calls me ...

Talking about what you're going to do

I'll show you around.
I'll introduce you to everyone.
Let's go and meet ...

Welcoming people

Welcome to the school!



3 Work in pairs and act out the following conversation.

You are both new students and have just listened to a lecture. Say if you enjoyed it and if it was difficult to follow. If you found the lecture difficult, offer to help each other. Invite and accept / refuse the invitation to do something after the lecture.



Language to help you

Saying you enjoyed something

That was good, wasn't it?
Yes, it was great.

Saying you found something difficult

I found it a bit difficult to follow.

Offering to help

Why don't you ...?

Inviting someone to do something

If you've got a moment right now, let's go and ...
Care to join me?

4 Work in groups of four or five. Choose one of the following situations and act out a "Getting to know you" conversation.

- at a party
- at a sports event
- at the swimming pool
- at a concert
- in the dining hall

Cultural information

There are many **ways of saying hello** in English. *How do you do?* is the expression you may have learnt to use with English speakers you don't know, but it's quite formal and isn't very friendly. When we meet people, we usually want to appear informal even if the situation is formal.

Among friends, there are many expressions for greetings, such as *How are you?* and *How's it going?* But remember that these are not real questions, and if you reply with anything more than *Fine, thanks!* or *I'm good* you're going onto a stage in your relationship which is beyond the meeting and greeting ritual.

Howdy! is a common US English expression, short for *How do you do?* *G'day* is an Australian English expression, and is short for *Good day*. It's more common than *Hello*.



Speaking about cultures

The early stages of getting to know someone for the first time are very important for creating the impression you wish to convey. The formalities of the meeting and greeting rituals are designed to take you through these early moments as easily as possible, but it's not always easy to be entirely relaxed. Between people of different cultures, even in rituals, there can be tiny incidents which draw attention to the differences between you, and which may cause confusion or an unintended impression of rudeness.

Find out



The handshake is the most common gesture of greeting in most Western cultures, and it has been adopted in many other cultures as well. It's thought to come from soldiers in ancient Greece, to show that neither person was armed. Today's handshaking ritual is usually done with the right hand, and always indicates peace, trust and respect. It's used when meeting and leaving people, as well as for congratulations and sometimes when agreeing a deal.

But there are subtle variations around the world, which sometimes cause surprise or an impression of rudeness when people of two different cultures meet. In France, Italy and Latin America, it's usual to greet everyone in an office with a handshake on arrival in the morning and again on departure in the evening. In English-speaking countries, men are more likely to shake hands than women. In German-speaking countries, people often shake hands with children. In Russia, it's unusual for a man to shake hands with a woman. He would kiss her hand in social situations, but not in a business context. In Islamic countries, women tend not to shake hands with men, so even men extending the hand to women, which would be refused, may cause some temporary embarrassment. Arab men often give each other a kiss, or place their hand briefly on their heart after the handshake. In the US, men often grasp the other person's forearm with their left hand, to emphasize the warmth of the gesture. Many cultures, especially in East Asia, prefer a weaker handshake than Westerners might expect, who associate a strong handshake with warmth and honesty.

你好 or 您好? As an American, neither my hopeless Chinese nor my often inappropriate wish to build friendships with Chinese co-workers helped me on the many occasions when I made a mistake between 你 and 您. The problem is that in English, we simply don't have this distinction between the informal and formal *you*, so the chances of me getting it wrong are high.

But it's not as if the concept is unknown. All other European languages have at least two ways to say *you*. In French, there are the familiar and formal words *tu* and *vous*. So far, so good. In German, there are three ways to say *you*. *Du* is a singular, familiar *you*, and *ihr* is the plural. *Sie* is the formal, singular and plural *you*. In Italian, there are four ways to say *you*. The familiar form is *tu* for one person and *voi* for two or more; *lei* is more formal for one person, and *loro*, formal for more than one.

But the real problem is not what the correct form is, but when to use it. Strange as it may seem, English-speaking people don't need to distinguish friends, equals, relatives, and older people, someone in authority or someone they don't know well. In very traditional French families, the husband and wife use *tu* for their children but *vous* for each other. They use the formal *vous* for people they don't know, but may use the familiar form with servants, immigrants or others to show they don't respect them.

In a train compartment in Russia, a passenger, who was already rather drunk, addressed me as *ty* instead of *vy* as he offered to share his bottle of vodka. Why was I nervous? The term of address didn't indicate friendship, it felt more like trouble. In Germany, using the given name of my female secretary and using the familiar *du* suggested something which went beyond the formal workplace relationship.

So is English easier or better? Of course, linguistically it's very simple. It's also fine when you're comfortable within the culture. But it's not easier or better when you're aware that there's a difference between your own culture and someone else's. It takes years of patience and sensitivity to learn what these cultural differences are, and to show others that you understand them.

Eye contact varies from culture to culture. In English there's an expression, *He looked me in the eye (and said "I didn't do it.")* which suggests complete honesty or a lack of fear or shame. North Americans feel that a failure to make eye contact suggests you're shy, you're not to be trusted or you're bored. The skill of being able to look someone in the eye is considered to be extremely useful when attending a job interview. A face-to-face meeting is considered helpful in business contexts, and superior to phone calls and written communication, and the expression *face time* refers to direct personal interaction, not over a distance, but at the same time and in the same place.

But in many other cultures, such as in Europe, it's uncomfortable to maintain eye contact for long. In the Middle East, only a brief glance is considered acceptable, and in many other countries it's considered disrespectful to look someone in the eye, especially someone who is considered to be the superior. This is especially common in people from East Asia and West Africa.

But when eye contact becomes staring, its meaning changes even in cultures which feel comfortable with eye contact. Of course you can stare into the distance when you concentrate, but when you stare at someone, it makes them uncomfortable. Even between two people who know each other very well, it's difficult to stare at each other for too long. Staring also suggests facing the inevitable, and to stare something unpleasant in the face means it's causing you pain and suffering.

Speak out

1 Look at the photos and think about what is culturally similar or different to what happens in China.



Asian people bowing and shaking hands



Two French businesswomen kissing each other's faces



A Nepalese giving a namaste greeting



Smile of a hotel receptionist

Now work in groups of three or four. Talk about your answers and discuss cultural similarities and differences.

2 Work in pairs and talk about the best answers to the questions.

- 1 You meet an American for the first time, and you shake hands with him. His handshake is very firm and almost painful, and he also touches your right arm at the same time. What do you think or say?
 - (a) This is just his way of being friendly.
 - (b) I wish he'd keep his hands to himself.
 - (c) Ouch, that hurts!
 - (d) "I'm sorry. Have we met before?"
- 2 You're sitting in a café with a friend, and you see someone you find attractive looking at you. He comes over and says to you, "Good to see you. So how was your weekend?" What do you think or say?
 - (a) I'm so embarrassed. What do I say?
 - (b) "I'm sorry. Have we met before?"
 - (c) "It was great. Thank you. How about you?"
 - (d) "My memory is awful. I can't remember if we already met."
- 3 You're on an exchange visit to St Petersburg. At the student accommodation office, you smile, say hello, show a booking form, and say there's accommodation booked in your name. The receptionist looks at your booking form and gives you a key, says "Fifth floor." and turns away. What do you think or say?
 - (a) How rude!
 - (b) It feels strange, but here, it's considered superficial to smile at everyone.
 - (c) "Thank you very much. Have a nice day!"
 - (d) "Can I speak to the manager? I'd like to make a complaint."
- 4 An English exchange student in your college is learning Chinese, but he often uses 你好 when he speaks to your professors. What do you think or say?
 - (a) Isn't he funny when he makes silly mistakes?
 - (b) I wonder if he knows the professors really well.
 - (c) "It's very rude to use 你好 when you speak to a professor. You should show more respect."
 - (d) "Your Chinese is excellent. By the way, you might like to say 您好 when you speak to your professors."

- 5 A Canadian professor has joined the teaching staff at your college. In small discussion groups and seminars, she tries to make sure everyone gets a chance to speak and share their ideas. But when she asks you a question, she looks at you directly and waits for you to reply. What do you think?
 - (a) She's very disrespectful.
 - (b) She makes me feel very uncomfortable.
 - (c) This is her way of showing me she's interested in my ideas.
 - (d) Please stop staring at me! It's embarrassing.

3 Work in pairs and talk about your answers to the questions.

- 1 Do you think the handshake is used by people in China more often than in the past? Think about how older friends or members of your family might answer.
- 2 If there has been a change in the way people shake hands, what is the reason?
- 3 Can you think of situations where smiling suggests fear / dishonesty / nervousness?
- 4 Have you ever been surprised by someone who smiles or doesn't smile?
- 5 What idioms or proverbs are there in Chinese about eye contact or staring? What do they suggest about attitudes towards the eye, eye contact, feelings etc?
- 6 Which cultural points interest or surprise you most?
- 7 What might be the biggest difficulties facing the Chinese in cross-cultural communication? Look back at the cultural points in Find out to help you.

Try out

As we've seen, the cultural situations and language described so far in this unit concern the early stages of a relationship. While the unwritten rules may be understood implicitly between people of the same culture, what happens when people from different cultures go beyond the stage of meeting and greeting, and start to explore their relationship with others? In this section we'll consider how visitors get to know the Chinese, and by doing so, allow you to reflect on your own culture and its characteristics.

SCENARIO

Your friend Joseph and his colleagues get a job transfer from America to China, and Joseph asks for your help on the greeting issue as they made some mistakes in greeting the Chinese during their previous visits to China. To help them, you are preparing a 10-minute presentation on meeting and greeting the Chinese.



1

Read the Cultural information.

Cultural information

The **rituals of welcoming a visitor** in some cultures, such as in the Middle East, take longer than, for example, in the West. Westerners working in China become aware that establishing a good relationship is more important than getting down to business too soon. Furthermore, the length of each phase is usually fairly constant within a culture, whoever the individuals may be. Business training often covers the different phases of an early relationship, to ensure that cultural expectations are understood.

Now work in groups of four and discuss what aspects to include in your presentation.

2

Read the questions about meeting and greeting the Chinese. Check whether your ideas in Step 1 cover the issues related to the questions.

- 1 What to say when meeting the Chinese?
- 2 What facial and body language can be used in greeting the Chinese?
- 3 What do you say or do immediately after you've greeted them?
- 4 How long does the meeting and greeting stage take? When should you get down to business, or get to know each other better?

3

Prepare your presentation.

1 Discuss and make a list of words and expressions you use in Chinese when you meet and greet different people. Write them in Chinese characters and *pinyin*, with the English meaning.

你好吗?	吃饭了吗?
ni hao ma?	chi fan le ma?
Hello! / How are you?	Have you eaten?

Think about the different words and expressions (formal or informal) you use with:

- elder people
- superiors
- friends
- colleagues
- strangers

2 Discuss and make notes about the facial and body language you may use when greeting the Chinese.

You may refer to what you have learnt in previous parts:

- shaking hands
- smiling
- eye contact

You may also do some research on some unusual body language in China, eg, hugging, kissing.

3 Read the case study. Discuss and make a list of the topics you can and can't talk about immediately after you have greeted the Chinese.

Wang Yu was an exchange student from China. When he met with his Australian host family for the first time, he had dinner together with them. During the dinner, he learnt that the host was working in the IT industry. He was so excited as he himself wanted to be a software engineer after graduation, so he directly asked the host about how much he could earn. After a short but awkward silence, the host taught Wang Yu the first lesson since he arrived in Australia – it's not a wise thing to ask about the salary during the first meeting.



Cultural information

Low- and high-contact cultures are terms used to describe how much body contact there is when people greet each other. China and other East Asian countries are often referred to as low- or no-contact cultures, where it's unusual for people to touch others, and even the handshake is a relatively recent cultural import. English-speaking countries are low-contact cultures, where people greet or say goodbye with some forms of body contact in appropriate circumstances, for example, a kiss or a hug, but avoid any other body contact during formal or informal social situations. But Brazil, for example, is a high-contact culture, where people often maintain different forms of body contact, such as touching people's shoulders, even during an ordinary conversation. As a result, a Chinese person meeting someone from a high-contact culture may experience some physical embarrassment, while a Brazilian meeting someone from a low-contact culture may feel a lack of friendliness and warmth. While both may be speaking English fluently, communication may be compromised, and may lead to a culture clash.

Topics of conversation to avoid vary from culture to culture. We tend to avoid politics and religion as topics of conversation. But in some cultures there may be some topics to avoid which surprise you. For example, some cultures may feel that talking about their family reveals too much personal information to someone they don't yet know very well.

4

Decide who will give each part of your presentation, and give your presentation to the whole class.

Communication tips

Giving a presentation

Giving a presentation is one of the most common activities we will do in our speaking classes. When you give a presentation, you should use notes rather than write it out and read it aloud. It's also a good idea to plan your opening and closing remarks, so your presentation begins and ends naturally and not suddenly. Remember to smile and look at the audience.

Attracting your audience's attention

Could I have your attention, please?
Hello / Good morning, everyone.

Beginning a presentation

It's a great pleasure to be invited to speak to you today about ...
As you know, I'm here to talk about ...

Ending a presentation

Thank you for listening.
That's all I have to say, so ...
If you have any questions, I'd be pleased to answer them.

5

Listen to other presentations. Pay attention to whether other groups include the information you overlooked.

Reviewing

Cultural information

Given name, first name, Christian name, and family name

Formal and less formal situations

Ways of saying hello

The handshake

Smiling

你好 or 您好?

Eye contact

Rituals of welcoming a visitor

Low- and high-contact cultures

Topics of conversation to avoid

Language to help you

Greeting people and responding to greetings

– How are you? – I'm fine, thanks.

A pleasure to meet you.

Nice / Great / Good to meet you.

Asking for people's names

I didn't catch your name.

Introducing yourself and others

I'm ...

Have you met ...?

Accepting or refusing invitations

That's alright, ...

Thanks. But I'm a bit tired.

Asking and saying what people like to be called

– How would you like me to call you?

– ... is fine.

You can use my Western name ...

Everyone calls me ...

Talking about what you're going to do

I'll show you around.

I'll introduce you to everyone.

Let's go and meet ...

Welcoming people

Welcome to the school!

Saying you enjoyed something

That was good, wasn't it?

Yes, it was great.

Saying you found something difficult

I found it a bit difficult to follow.

Offering to help

Why don't you ...?

Inviting someone to do something

If you've got a moment right now, let's go and ...

Care to join me?

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