

Australia Cultural Etiquette



Meeting and Greeting

- Shake hands with everyone present upon meeting and before leaving. Allow women to offer their hands first.
- Women generally do not shake hands with other women.
- Use titles, Mr., Mrs., and Miss when first introduced.
- Australians generally move to a first-name basis quickly. Still, wait to use first names until invited to do so.
- Academic or job-related titles are downplayed.

Body Language

- To beckon a waiter use a quiet hand motion.
- When yawning, cover your mouth and excuse yourself.
- Winking at women is considered rude.
- The "V" sign (made with index and middle fingers, palm facing inward) is a very vulgar gesture. The "thumbs up" gesture is also considered obscene.

Corporate Culture

- Personal relationships are important in the Australian business world. Connections are valued. An introduction by an established representative may be helpful in establishing a relationship with an Australian firm.
- Australians take punctuality seriously. If possible, arrive fifteen minutes early for a business meeting.
- Australians will quickly get down to business. Communications will be direct, good-humored and to the point.
- Australian businesspeople tend to be pragmatic, efficient and profit-oriented. They appreciate straight-forward, open presentations.
- Australians dislike one-upmanship. Don't overplay qualifications, rank or titles.
- Negotiations proceed quickly. Bargaining is not customary. Proposals should be presented with acceptable terms. Leave some allowance for some give and take.

- Australians will often negotiate major issues without over-emphasis on details. However, contracts are generally detailed and firm.

Dining and Entertainment

- Always arrive on time or a few minutes early for a dinner.
- The person who makes the invitation generally pays the bill in restaurants. However, it isn't unusual for friends to split the bill.
- Australians follow continental-style dining etiquette (fork held in the left hand; knife in right).
- Barbecues -- very informal "cook outs" -- are popular in Australia. Sometimes guests bring their own meat or other items.
- The guest of honor is generally seated to the right of host.
- Soup should be eaten by moving the spoon away from you, not toward you.
- Lay knife/fork parallel on plate at 5:25 position when finished eating.
- Keep your hands above the table and elbows off the table.
- Offer to help with meal preparation and clean-up when being entertained in a home.
- Do not say "I'm stuffed" after a meal. This means you are pregnant.

Dress

- Australians wear fashions similar those worn by Europeans and North Americans
- For business, men should wear conservative jackets and ties. During the summer months, jackets are often removed. Women should wear skirts and blouses or dresses.

Gifts

- It is not customary to exchange business gifts during initial meetings.
- When invited to an Australian's home, bring a small gift (flowers, chocolates, or books about your home country or region) for your hosts.
- Australia produces excellent wine. Taking wine would be like taking sand to the desert.

Helpful Hints

- Stick with standard English, not Aussie terms.
- Aussies dislike class distinctions and have a history of "cutting down the tall poppy." This grew out of the Australian prisoners' hatred of their British overseers. Many Australian

politicians have declined the designation of knighthood for fear of alienating their constituents.

- Australians sit in the front seat of a taxi/limousine. A single passenger sitting in the back seat is viewed as "putting on airs."
- Australians respect people with strong opinions, even if they don't agree.
- Avoid discussions about the treatment of the aboriginal people.
- Don't comment on anyone's accent. Accents often distinguish social class.
- If you are teased, you are expected to reply in kind, with good humor. Such self-confidence will increase an Australian's respect for you. They do not admire a subservient attitude.
- Do not sniff or blow your nose in public.

Resource: http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/ce_au.htm