

## Indonesia Cultural Etiquette



### Meeting and Greeting

- Shake hands and give a slight nod when meeting for the first time. After the first meeting, a handshake is not necessary; a slight bow or nod of the head is sufficient. Shake an Indonesian woman's hand only if she initiates the greeting.
- Greet people with "Selamat" (sell-a-mat), which means peace. Say it slowly and sincerely.

### Body Language

- Good relationships involve a great deal of physical contact and touching. But, foreigners should allow time to be accepted and to develop good relationships before this is acceptable.
- Indonesians are used to an overcrowded society; they tend to ignore inadvertent invasions of space. Allowing for personal space is a sign of respect.
- A man does not touch a woman in public except to shake hands. Do not display affection in public.
- The head is where the spirit resides and is considered sacred. Do not touch a person's head.
- Keep both feet on the floor when sitting. Do not cross your legs, especially not with an ankle over the knee. Sitting with good posture (rigid) and both feet on the floor is a sign of respect. Don't allow the bottom of your feet to face or point at another person.
- Looking someone straight in the eyes is considered staring. Avoid prolonged eye contact, which may be viewed as a challenge and may cause anger.
- Point with your thumb, not your index finger. Never beckon with one finger.
- The left hand is considered unclean. Do not touch food, pass or receive anything, touch anyone or point with your left hand.
- Approval is sometimes shown with a pat on the shoulder, but American-style backslapping is considered offensive.

### Corporate Culture

- Westerners are expected to be punctual for business appointments. Call if you are delayed. It is very common for Indonesians to arrive late.

- Present your business card to the receptionist immediately upon arrival; otherwise, there could be long delays. Exchange business cards when being introduced. Present and receive the card slowly with much interest. Cards in English are acceptable.
- Negotiations should start at the top of a corporation and then move down to the operating level to discuss technical matters. Later on, discussions will return once again to the top level of the company.
- It is best to conduct a first meeting with the highest ranking person of a company. An introduction from a local associate or bank representative is helpful.
- Indonesians don't get right down to business. An initial meeting may last 45-60 minutes without accomplishing much. After this amount of time, the visitor should initiate leaving.
- Patience is a necessity when doing business in Indonesia. Business dealings are usually slow, long and frustrating. Business relationships must be allowed to develop over time. Several visits are generally necessary to complete a contract.
- Indonesians love to bargain. Giving concessions too quickly will be viewed as naivete.
- Clarification and feedback are a necessity throughout negotiations. Avoid disagreement and, especially, arguments with Indonesians.
- To Indonesians, insisting on a written contract is a breach of trust, though many understand a Westerner's need for such documents. A contract should be viewed as a guideline rather than a statement of duties and responsibilities.
- Personal visits are important to Indonesians. They do not take well to faxes, telephone calls or messages. Show up in person whenever possible.
- Indonesians want very much to please. An untruthful answer may be given so as not to disappoint anyone.
- Indonesians rarely disagree in public. To succeed in negotiations with Indonesians, do not apply pressure or be confrontational.

### Dining and Entertainment

- Social events generally start late. Indonesians usually arrive thirty minutes after the stated time.
- Any business discussions at social events should be initiated by Indonesians.
- A fork and spoon are used for dining. The fork is held in the left hand and the spoon in the right. Use the fork to push food onto the spoon.
- Most Indonesians are Muslim and consume no liquor or pork.

- Indonesians are known for their hospitality. Do not reject their hospitality, as it will be viewed as a personal rejection. Never refuse food or drink, but never finish either completely. Compliments about the food are appreciated. It is a special honor to be invited to an Indonesian's home.
- The host is always the last to sit and eat. Men are generally served first. Wait to be invited to eat or drink.
- The guest of honor or senior person begins the meal; this is a distinct honor. If you are asked to begin the meal, you should refuse twice and then begin.
- Fingers are still used for eating in some places. Both hands are kept above the table while eating.
- The person who invites is expected to pay the bill in a restaurant. Request the bill by making a scribbling gesture on the palm of your hand.
- When finished with the meal, place the fork (tines down) on your plate with your spoon (down) crossed over the fork.
- If possible, reciprocate with a dinner before you leave the country. A lavish dinner may be criticized; be generous and hospitable, but don't overdo it.

### Dress

- Men should wear a suit and jacket for the first business meeting.
- Women should wear skirts and blouses (never sleeveless) or dresses. Avoid extreme fashions. Muslim rules of modesty should be honored.

### Gifts

- Business gifts are generally not exchanged. A small token of appreciation may be given to secretaries. Gifts to colleagues should be given after most business has been concluded.
- Receive a gift appreciatively. It is impolite to refuse a gift. Gifts are not opened in the giver's presence except at a ceremony, where the gift is opened in front of an assembled group.

### Helpful Hints

- Taking photographs is a way of honoring someone. Indonesians may ask to take your picture.
- Civil servants are respected. Be very respectful to government workers. Never treat them as though they are your servants.

- Don't assume tomorrow means tomorrow. Tomorrow may mean sometime in the future. Set specific dates and times for arrangements.
- Do not chew gum or yawn in public.

### **Epecially for Women**

- Indonesia is a Muslim society and very male-oriented, but most female visitors experience very few hassles with men. However, blond-haired, blue-eyed women may be hassled more often than dark women. It helps if you dress modestly.
- Businesswomen may invite an Indonesian businessman and his wife to dinner. Arrange payment in advance to avoid embarrassment (loss of face) to your male guest.
- A woman is expected to initiate a handshake.

Resource: [http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural\\_etiquette/ce\\_id.htm](http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/ce_id.htm)