

Ireland Cultural Etiquette



Meeting and Greeting

- Shake hands with everyone present -- men, women and children -- at a business or social gathering. Shake hands again when leaving.
- A firm handshake with eye contact is expected.

Body Language

- The Irish are not very physically demonstrative and are not comfortable with public displays of affection.
- The Irish are uncomfortable with loud, aggressive, and arrogant behavior.
- A "Reverse V for victory" gesture is considered obscene.

Corporate Culture

- Business is best initiated through a well-connected third party. Who you know may be vital to your business success.
- The Irish are not very time conscious and may not be punctual for business and social meetings. They have a relaxed sense of time and may be a little late for meetings. However, a foreigner should be on time for business meetings.
- Business cards are exchanged, but not necessarily immediately upon meeting.
- Irish people tend to be creative and calm in a crisis. They prefer to improvise rather than follow a rigid plan.
- Outwardly the Irish accept authority but inwardly have strong displeasure in accepting it. They also dislike bureaucracy.
- Planning and strategy are short term. Irish tend to be poor in long-range planning.
- Don't be misled by the easy going and amiable attitudes of the Irish. In negotiations, the Irish are astute and tenacious.
- The golf course is a major venue for conducting business in Ireland.

Dining and Entertainment

- Business entertainment is commonly conducted in restaurants.

- Business dinners are usually considered more of a social occasion and a good way to develop relationships.
- Spouses may or may not be invited to a business dinner.
- The small plate next to a dinner plate is for peelings removed from boiled potatoes.
- It is polite to eat everything served to you in a private home.
- Table manners are the same as in England, only a bit more relaxed.
- Refusing a drink can be perceived as insult in Ireland.
- Always buy your round of drinks.

Dress

- Dress modestly and conservatively. Flashy colors and styles, white pants, nylon running jackets, etc. do not blend into Irish style.
- Tweeds, wools and subdued colors are recommended.
- A raincoat is needed year around.
- For business meetings, men should wear suits or sport coats and ties; women should wear suits or dresses and blazers (women wear pants less often than in America).

Gifts

- Gift giving and receiving is unusual in a business setting. Small gifts may be exchanged, but are not expected, at the successful conclusion of negotiations.
- When invited to someone's home, always bring a small gift for the hostess. Give flowers (lilies are for religious occasion's only; red and white flowers symbolize death), chocolates, a bottle of wine or continental cheeses.
- Do not give expensive or ostentatious gifts.

Helpful Hints

- The Irish respect reserved behavior. Initial meetings should be low key.
- Assume that children will be included in family entertaining.
- Send a thank-you note after receiving a gift or being a dinner guest.
- Always be sincere. The Irish dislike pretentious behavior.
- Remember the Irish want to do things their way. You will not succeed if you insist on doing it "your way."

Especially for Women

- A foreign woman will be accepted easily in the Irish business community.
- The 'Old Boys Club' still exists. Whom you know is vital to getting the job done.
- It is considered more proper for a woman to order a *glass of beer or stout rather than a pint*.
- It is acceptable, but may be misconstrued for a foreign woman to invite an Irishman to dinner. It is best to stick with lunch.
- If a woman would like to pay for a meal, she should state so at the outset.

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