

Cross-Culture Cafe

# GERMAN BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

*crossculturecafe.com*



READ



CONNECT



AUDIO



WATCH



DISCUSS



APPLY

# CONNECT



*Look at the following picture. Is this a typical picture you have in mind when thinking of Germans?*



*Share some things you know or have heard about Germany.  
Do you believe that stereotypes are always accurate?*

# AFTER THIS TRAINING, YOU WILL...



be more aware of cultural differences between Germany and your own country;



use vocabulary to describe (German) culture;



be better prepared for business travels and negotiations with German business partners.



# VOCABULARY



MATCH THE VOCABULARY TO THE CORRECT DEFINITIONS.

faux pas reserved thorough reliable conservative understated rigid inflexible

rigid

firmly fixed or set

reliable

that may be relied on or trusted, dependable, accuracy, honesty

reserved

formal or self-restrained in manner and relationship

faux pas

a slip or blunder in etiquette, manners, or conduct

conservative

to restore traditional ones, and to limit change

understated

restrained in design, presentation

thorough

executed without negligence or omissions

inflexible

not permitting change or variation



## AUDIO



LISTEN TO THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN GERMAN AND CHINESE BUSINESSMEN.

- Where do you see the cultural clash in this short conversation?
- Do you think the German businessman is rude or was it just his “culture”?
- Was he rigid, inflexible, or reserved?
- How could Mr. Lee have handled the situation better?





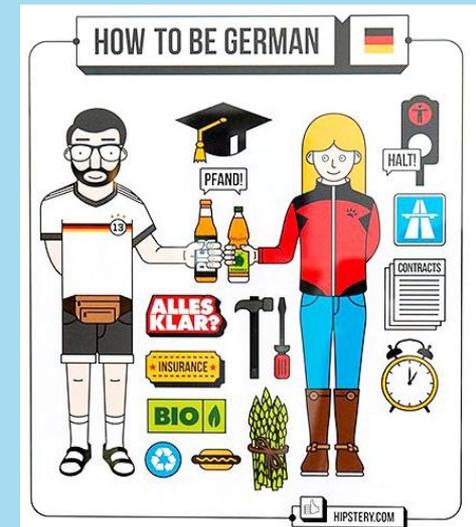
# READ



## GERMAN EVERYDAY ETIQUETTE

READ THE ARTICLE ON GERMAN ETIQUETTE IN YOUR HANDOUT. EXPLAIN THE FOLLOWING UNDERLINED PHRASES FROM THE TEXT:

- Time and space are very important ...
- ... wait for permission to enter.
- People tend to look down on those who are not organized or behave casually.
- ... but not open spaces.



## AUDIO



LISTEN TO THE AUDIO ON GERMAN BUSINESS ETIQUETTE.

Write down at least three characteristics that were mentioned.

What is considered important and what is frowned upon?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



## AUDIO



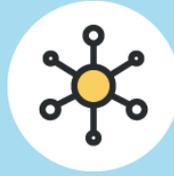
LISTEN TO THE AUDIO ON GERMAN BUSINESS ETIQUETTE.

Are the following statements true or false:

1. German people are always willing to include humour in their business meetings. *false*
2. Gift-giving at business meetings is considered important. *false*
3. German people do not like tardiness or being late. *true*



# CONNECT



## ADVICE ON CULTURAL ETIQUETTE IN GERMANY

MATCH THE PHRASES ON THE LEFT TO THE SENTENCE ENDINGS ON THE RIGHT.

1. It is good etiquette to remain standing...

understated, formal and conservative. 3

2. When invited to a German home, ...

until shown where to sit. 1

3. Business dress in Germany is...

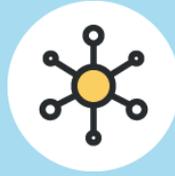
it is appropriate to bring a gift of flowers, wine, chocolates, or a small gift that represents your home country or region. 2

4. Indicate you have finished eating...

by lying the fork and knife parallel across the right hand side of the plate. 4



# CONNECT



## ADVICE ON CULTURAL ETIQUETTE IN GERMANY

MATCH THE PHRASES ON THE LEFT TO THE SENTENCE ENDINGS ON THE RIGHT.

5. Casual or sloppy attire is...

until the host signals to do so. 6

6. Do not begin eating until...

frowned upon. 5

7. Gifts are usually...

should be eaten on the plate. 8

8. Everything...

opened when received. 7



# DISCUSS



HOW CULTURE CAN AFFECT YOUR BUSINESS DEAL  
DISCUSS HOW IMPORTANT THE FOLLOWING BUSINESS ETIQUETTE ASPECTS ARE IN  
YOUR CULTURE:

- punctuality

- bribes

- gift giving

- small talk

- drinking



How could it affect a business deal if a foreign client did not adhere to the cultural principles of business etiquette in your country?



# WATCH



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## DOS AND DON'TS IN GERMANY

WATCH THE VIDEO ON WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE IN GERMAN  
BUSINESS CULTURE.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yB7CjUXldg>

Do you notice any similarities to your culture?  
What do you think would be the most challenging aspect for you  
personally?



# APPLY



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## BUSINESS ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOL IN GERMANY

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BASED ON WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED TODAY, ARE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS TRUE OR FALSE?

- Germans need a personal relationship in order to do business. *false*
- Germans will be direct to the point of bluntness. *true*
- Expect a great deal of written communication, both to back up decisions and to maintain a record of decisions and discussions. *true*
- Meetings do not adhere to strict agendas, including starting and ending times. *false*
- There is no protocol to follow when entering a room. *false*



# APPLY



## BUSINESS ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOL IN GERMANY

BASED ON WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED TODAY, ARE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS TRUE OR FALSE?

- Germans like to engage in small talk before getting down to business. *false*
- Diplomas increase economic worth and/or self- respect. *true*
- Once a decision is made, it will not be changed. *true*
- Appointments can be made last-minute. *false*
- Maintain direct eye contact while speaking. *true*



# DISCUSS



## GERMANY VS. YOUR COUNTRY

FILL IN THE FOLLOWING TABLE TO MAKE COMPARISONS BETWEEN GERMAN CUSTOMS AND CUSTOMS OF YOUR COUNTRY. DISCUSS IN CLASS.

Your Country	Germany
	Germans almost always address people they have just met (or people they work with) with their last name. They may not even know that person's first name.
	The term <i>Freund</i> in German implies a long, deep friendship, not a casual acquaintance.
	Germans rarely eat food with their hands. Even pizza is eaten with a knife and fork! Eating with your hands is considered barbaric.
	Once a decision has been made, Germans are very reluctant to change it later.



# APPLY



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## ROLE-PLAY

YOU ARE IN A MEETING WITH GERMAN BUSINESSMEN.

Your colleague was not aware of the cultural etiquette in Germany. He was late for the meeting and dressed in casual attire. The meeting was about the project you did last week.

In groups of 4 (2 Germans, 2 from your country), role-play a business meeting and how you handle the “mistakes” your colleague made and how it affects the outcome of your business deal.

Faux pas to keep in mind could be:

- time

- dress

- asking too private questions

-dining



# APPLY



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## SUMMARY

- How is your culture similar to German culture? How is it different?
- How does German culture view time, dress and relationships?
- Describe typical German business protocol.



Cross-Culture Cafe

# GERMAN BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

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MATERIALS FOR ESL LEARNERS!



## Slide 7

## GERMAN EVERYDAY ETIQUETTE

READ THE ARTICLE ON GERMAN ETIQUETTE IN YOUR HANDOUT. EXPLAIN THE FOLLOWING UNDERLINED PHRASES FROM THE TEXT:

People in Germany tend to be reserved and a bit formal. Time and space are very important in German culture. Germans value their privacy. For this reason, it is bad manners to ask Germans about personal details such as age, income and personal beliefs. This includes politics and religion. Always knock and wait for permission to enter. It is important to be on time in Germany. If you have an appointment at 1:15, you should arrive at 1:15 and not a minute after. It is better to be one or two minutes early, if possible. Only close friends and family are invited to one's home. It is important to be neat and tidy at all times. People tend to look down on those who are not organized or behave casually. One must never litter in Germany, but throw out trash in a bin. You are also expected to clean up any mess you make right away. Shake hands with everyone, including children. If you are invited to take part in a meal in someone's home, arrive on time. Also, keep your elbows off the table at dinner. Written communication is important. It is polite to send thank you notes if you receive a present or are invited to a meal. It is typical to greet strangers in elevators and at tables, but not open spaces.

## Slide 5

## Audio 1

Muller : Good morning Mr. Lee, I thought our meeting was supposed to start 10 minutes ago.

Lee : Yes, good morning Mr. Muller. Sorry, there was heavy traffic on my way here.

Muller : Ok, let's start our meeting right away.

Lee : Alright, I would like to ask for your feedback on our project last week. I would like to know what are your thoughts on how it was handled and delivered to our clients.

Muller : To be honest with you Mr. Lee, I was not very impressed. We set a deadline and the deadline was not met. The work was quite bad and very unsatisfactory. I would like to have a written outline of how the work was done and who was responsible for this mess.

Lee : Oh, I am sorry maybe we can meet again tomorrow with my colleague who was in charge of the project.

Muller: That is unfortunately too last minute for my liking. Please schedule an appointment two weeks ahead of time.

Lee : I understand sir. I will schedule an appointment right away for the next two weeks.

## Slides 10+11

### ADVICE ON CULTURAL ETIQUETTE IN GERMANY

MATCH THE PHRASES ON THE LEFT TO THE SENTENCE ENDINGS ON THE RIGHT.

1. It is good etiquette to remain standing...
2. When invited to a German home, ...
3. Business dress in Germany is...
4. Indicate you have finished eating...
5. Casual or sloppy attire is...
6. Do not begin eating until...
7. Gifts are usually...
8. Everything...

- a. until the host signals to do so.
- b. understated, formal and conservative.
- c. frowned upon.
- d. it is appropriate to bring a gift of flowers, wine, chocolates, or a small gift that represents your home country or region.
- e. should be eaten on the plate.
- f. until shown where to sit.
- g. by lying the fork and knife parallel across the right hand side of the plate.
- h. opened when received.

**Audio 2**

In many respects, Germans can be considered the masters of planning. This is a culture that prizes forward thinking and knowing what they will be doing at a specific time on a specific day. The German thought process is extremely thorough, with each aspect of a project being examined in great detail. Most aspects of German living and working are defined and regulated by structure, through laws, rules, and procedures, which are evident in all economic, political and even social areas. Germans believe that maintaining clear lines of demarcation between people, places, and things is the surest way to lead a structured and ordered life. In German business culture, this is reflected in the obedience to prescribed business rules resulting in, a low degree of flexibility and spontaneity in attitudes and values.

Germans do not like surprises. Sudden changes in business transactions, even if they may improve the outcome, are unwelcome. Business is viewed as being very serious, and Germans do not appreciate humour in a business context. Work and personal lives are rigidly divided, and Germans subscribe to the ideal that there is a proper time and place for every activity.

When doing business in Germany, it is essential that you appreciate that business etiquette is of great importance to your German counterpart. Germany is a nation that is strongly individualistic, and demands the utmost respect at all times, therefore the highest of standards are expected. Any unethical behaviour will seriously diminish all future business negotiations.

Germans are most comfortable when they can organise their world into controllable units. Time, therefore, is managed carefully, and calendars, schedules and agendas must be respected. Trains arrive and leave on time to the minute, and projects are carefully scheduled.

Gift giving among business associates is not common in Germany. There has recently been a move towards concentrating much more on the actual business at hand, and less on formalities and rituals like gift giving when travelling on business. However, for more social occasions, gift giving is relatively customary.

Germans take great pride in dressing well, regardless of where they are going or what position they hold. Appearance and presentation is very important to Germans, particularly with regard to business. Even when dressed informally, they are neat and conservative; their clothes are usually modest.

## Slides 14+15

## BUSINESS ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOL IN GERMANY

***Based on what you have learned today, are the following statements true or false?***

1. Germans need a personal relationship in order to do business.
2. Germans will be direct to the point of bluntness.
3. Expect a great deal of written communication, both to back up decisions and to maintain a record of decisions and discussions.
4. Meetings do not adhere to strict agendas, including starting and ending times.
5. There is no protocol to follow when entering a room.
6. Germans like to engage in small talk before getting down to business.
7. Diplomas increase economic worth and/or self- respect.
8. Once a decision is made, it will not be changed.
9. Appointments can be made last-minute.
10. Maintain direct eye contact while speaking.

## Slide 16

## GERMANY VS. YOUR COUNTRY

***Fill in the following table to make comparisons between German customs and customs from your country.***

Your Country	Germany
	Germans almost always address people they have just met (or people they work with) with their last name. They may not even know that person's first name.
	The term Freund in German implies a long, deep friendship, not a casual acquaintance.
	Germans rarely eat food with their hands. Even pizza is eaten with a knife and fork! Eating with your hands is considered barbaric.
	Once a decision has been made, Germans are very reluctant to change it later.

