

Mind Your Manners

"Social tact is making your guests feel at home, even though you wish they were."

Read these extracts, which describe what is considered the polite things to do when invited to a social occasion in Britain. Discuss these questions.

1. Are any of the 'rules' the same in your country? Are any completely different?
2. Which of the rules seem sensible? Do any seem ridiculous?
3. Decide whether the given sentences are true (T) or false (F).
 - A. If you are invited for 8 pm, you should arrive about 10–15 minutes later.
In fact, it's impossible to arrive exactly on time. F - (we should be on time, punctually)
 - B. It's not necessary to bring a gift for the hosts, but flowers or chocolates will always be appreciated. T
 - C. The host should introduce you to other guests you don't know, but you can introduce yourself if he/she doesn't do this. A smile and 'Hello' is enough at an informal party – you don't have to shake hands. F - (you have to shake hands)
 - D. Smokers should ask the host and other guests before lighting up at the table, and should be prepared to take no for an answer. No one should smoke until the end of the meal. T
 - E. Say thank you, by telephone or letter, but say it promptly, within a couple of days at the most. T

Decide what it would be good manners to do in these situations.

- a. Someone starts to tell you a story they've already told you before.
- b. A friend asks you to give your honest opinion of a new item of clothing they've bought. (you think it's awful)
- c. You have been invited to dinner but miscalculate the journey and arrive half an hour early.
- d. You have invited friends to dinner but they arrive before you've finished cooking.

TEXT PREDICTION

Before you read the text on the next page, decide which of the following would cause offence.

1. Which gift would a Chinese friend consider to be in bad taste?

an alarm clock a laptop computer a calculator

2. Which gift could offend a Hindu colleague in India?

a silver pen and pencil set a cut glass vase a feather duster/rope

3. Which gesture would cause offence in Greece?

tapping one side of the nose with the index finger
the US and British OK sign, thumb and finger touching in a circle
fixing the fingertips

4. Which way of calling the waiter is considered rude in Japan?

raising and moving the index finger towards you