

# 10 Tips for Good Cross-Cultural Communications

1. **Beware of making assumptions** about people based on physical characteristics: race, ethnicity, age, ability, gender, etc. (That can't be reiterated enough!)
2. **Do research in advance, but do not take "country guides" as the final word.** Individual preferences vary and override any group customs. Although it would be helpful to know that the clock you are about to give as a gift to your Chinese host might imply death.
3. **Welcome feedback as a gift.** Thanking someone for his or her suggestions and even corrections is a great way to solicit insider knowledge. Once you say thanks for the insight, they may be willing to share more. When a business deal is at stake that could be just the ticket to your success.
4. **Embrace your own identity** and use that as a platform to communicate with others. Use I statements instead of you statements, as in "That's so interesting. I do it this way, how do you do it?"
5. **Ask questions** to understand what motivates others.
6. **Be open to learning, and learn to teach without being judgmental** or making the learner feel embarrassed. Remember Emerson (sic) Everyone is my master because I can learn something from everyone.
7. **Be an Anthropologist.** Ethnographers or Participant Observers are keen to watch the interactions of others closely when approaching new communities or situations. How are items being used? How do people greet one another? It's a chance to really listen with your whole being. Think: *Don't drink the water in the finger bowl.*
8. **Be sure to try new things, particularly foods, when in another country.** And allow a little latitude when ordering food in restaurants. You may understand "lasagna," for example, but it may not be served as you expected. Seeing how similar concepts are enacted in different countries is part of the fun (If you have allergies or dietary restrictions, however, bring a dictionary to be clear).
9. **Be patient with yourself and others.** Anger, unease, defensiveness, etc. may come with the territory. Just remember, that moment of discomfort is usually when you are at the cusp of learning! Kind of like in weight lifting—the moment the weight is too much and the muscle fails is the moment the muscle gets stronger.
10. **Be brave but safe, confident but humble.** Don't be afraid to simply open the dictionary to the right page and just show it to the person with whom you are speaking; learn where the street signs are; sometimes they are on the corner, sometimes on the side of the building, etc. If you go out alone, bring a piece of paper with the phone number and address for where you are staying.

