



## Project Britain

Your Guide to  
British Life, Culture and Customs

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## Acceptable Behaviour in England and the rest of Britain

[Greetings](#)

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**Please note:** We have mainly written about England, as that is the country within the UK where our students live. We would be very happy for schools and visitors to send us information we can add to our website on Wales and Scotland.

### Which of the following social customs are similar or different to your country?

The English are said to be reserved in manners, dress and speech. We are famous for our politeness, self-discipline and especially for our sense of humour. Basic politeness (please, thank you, excuse me) is expected.

### How to greet someone

English people are quite reserved when greeting one another. A greeting can be a bright 'Hello' 'Hi' or 'Good morning', when you arrive at work or at school. text taken from and copyright of [projcetbritain.com](#)

[Find out more about greetings ....](#)

### Terms of Endearment - Names we may call you

You may be called by many different 'affectionate' names, according to which part of the England you are visiting. Do not be offended, this is quite normal. For example, you may be called dear, dearie, flower, love, chick, chuck, me duck, me duckie, mate, guv, son, ma'am, madam, miss, sir, or treacle, according to your sex, age and location. text taken from and copyright of [projcetbritain.com](#)

#### Message from one of our visitors

*"In Staffordshire and the West Midlands both men and women use the term 'duck' when speaking to another person irrespective of their sex. I was quite shocked when I first arrived here in Staffordshire from London to be called 'Duck' by a man and now I find it very endearing and reassuring and far better than that awful term 'Mate'."*

Jim  
Staffordshire

### Interesting Fact

The 'affectionate' name 'duck' is thought to come from the **Anglo-Saxon** word '**ducis**' which was meant as a term of respect; similar to the Middle English 'duc', 'duk' which denotes a leader, commander, general; from which

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comes the title 'Duke' and the Old French word 'duchéé' - the territory ruled by a Duke.

## Visiting people in their houses

When being entertained at someone's home it is nice to take a gift for the host and hostess. A bottle of wine, bunch of flowers or chocolates are all acceptable.

See also our other page on [Social Customs](#)

Sending a thank you note is also considered appropriate.

## Eating

We eat continental style, with fork in the left hand and the knife in the right.

[Eating Etiquette](#) - rules for eating in England

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# Manners are Important

## DOs and DON'TS (Taboos) in Britain

See also our other page on [Social Customs](#)

### In Britain...

**Do stand in line:** text taken from and copyright of [projcetbritain.com](#)

In England we like to form orderly queues (standing in line) and wait patiently for our turn e.g. boarding a bus. It is usual to queue when required, and expected that you will take your correct turn and not push in front. 'Queue jumping' is frowned upon.

**Do take your hat off when you go indoors** (men only)

It is impolite for men to wear hats indoors especially in churches.

Nowadays, it is becoming more common to see men wearing hats indoors. However, this is still seen as being impolite, especially to the older generations. text taken from and copyright of [projcetbritain.com](#)

**Do say "Excuse Me":** text taken from and copyright of [projcetbritain.com](#)

If someone is blocking your way and you would like them to move, say excuse me and they will move out of your way.

**Do Pay as you Go:**

Pay for drinks as you order them in pubs and other types of bars.

**Do say "Please" and "Thank you":**

It is very good manners to say "please" and "thank you". It is considered rude if you don't. You will notice in England that we say 'thank you' a lot. text taken from and copyright of [projcetbritain.com](#)

**Do cover your Mouth:**

When yawning or coughing always cover your mouth with your hand.

**Do Shake Hands:**

When you are first introduced to someone, shake their right hand with your own right hand.

**Do say sorry:**

If you accidentally bump into someone, say 'sorry'. They probably will too, even if it was your fault! This is a habit and can be seen as very amusing by an 'outsider'.

**Do Smile:** text taken from and copyright of projcetbritain.com

A smiling face is a welcoming face.

**Do Drive on the left side of the road**

**Find out more about driving** text taken from and copyright of projcetbritain.com

**Do open doors for other people**

Men and women both hold open the door for each other. It depends on who goes through the door first.

**In Britain...****Do not greet people with a kiss:**

We only kiss people who are close friends and relatives.

**Avoid talking loudly in public****It is impolite to stare at anyone in public.**

Privacy is highly regarded. text taken from and copyright of projcetbritain.com

**Do not ask a lady her age**

It is considered impolite to ask a lady her age

**Do not pick your nose in public:**

We are disgusted by this. If your nostrils need de-bugging, use a handkerchief.

**Avoid doing gestures such as backslapping and hugging**

This is only done among close friends.

**Do not spit.**

Spitting in the street is considered to be very bad mannered.

**Do not burp in public**

You may feel better by burping loudly after eating or drinking, but other people will not! If you can not stop a burp from bursting out, then cover your mouth with your hand and say 'excuse me' afterwards.

**Do not pass wind in public** text taken from and copyright of projcetbritain.com

Now how can we say this politely? Let's say that you want to pass wind. What do you do? Go somewhere private and let it out. If you accidentally pass wind in company say 'pardon me'.

**Belinda sent us an email on the indelicate subject of 'passing wind' in public:**

"The expression 'pardon me' would be considered by the upper classes to be rather common. When I was growing up, I was told by my mother, at school and by my aunt who was a nanny to an aristocratic family that the correct thing to do if this happens is to carry on as if nothing's happened and for the entire company to ignore it completely as if they've never noticed. ( even if it's very obvious). I think young people nowadays would probably be more inclined to laugh it off but certainly the older generation in 'polite company' would never, ever draw attention to the incident by apologising. **Basically the advice is say 'excuse me' for mouth burps, ignore bottom burps.**"

### **It is impolite speak with your mouth full of food**

### **Do not ask personal or intimate questions**

We like our privacy. Please do not ask questions such as "How much money do you earn?" "How much do you weigh?" or "Why aren't you married?". text taken from and copyright of projcetbritain.com

### **Never eat off a knife when having a meal.**

### **In all countries in Britain ...**

Women in Britain are entitled to equal respect and status as men (and indeed vice versa) in all areas of life and tend to have more independence and responsibility than in some other cultures. Women are usually independent and accustomed to entering public places unaccompanied. It is usual for women to go out and about on their own as well as with friends. Men and women mix freely.

- It is ok for women to eat alone in a restaurant.
- It is ok for women to wander around on their own.
- It is ok for women to drink beer.

### **Suggested Student Activity**

Why not make a similar list for visitors to your country?

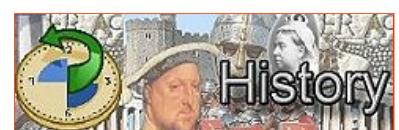
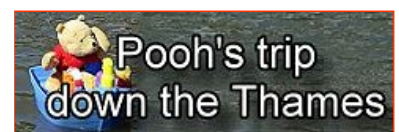


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Mandy is the creator of the Woodlands Resources section of the Woodlands Junior website.

The two websites [projectbritain.com](http://projectbritain.com) and [primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk](http://primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk) are the new homes for the Woodlands Resources.

Mandy left Woodlands in 2003 to work in Kent schools as an ICT Consultant.

She now teaches computers at [The Granville School](#) and [St. John's Primary School](#) in Sevenoaks Kent.

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