

International Conversation Afternoon

Understanding Britain

Look at the following list of British rules, habits and customs.

Have you ever heard of them?

How do they compare with behaviour in your country?



- British people love to queue! We queue for everything, even buses! It is important to check if there is a queue and if so, to join the back of it. Otherwise people can get very annoyed!
- Do not throw litter on the floor – there is a fine for this!
- Do not use your mobile phone whilst driving – there is a fine for this!
- Don't cycle on the pavement.
- Ladies before gentlemen
- The average family has 2 children
- Generally, British people do not like to talk about money, religion, politics or age!
- Small talk – British people love to talk about the weather! So if you don't know what to talk about, comment on the weather! (e.g. 'It's a lovely day today, isn't it?')
- If someone is blocking your way and you would like them to move, say 'excuse me' and they will move out of your way.
- Always say 'please' and 'thank you' when asking for and receiving things.
- When you meet someone for the first time, shake their hand with your right and say 'It's nice to meet you'.
- Do not ask a lady her age.
- Do not ask personal questions when you first meet someone e.g. "Are you married?", "Why don't you have children?", "How much do you earn?"
- In many cities in Britain (particularly in London), there are many people of different nationalities.
- Since July 2007 there has been a law that no-one is allowed to smoke in public places e.g. bars, restaurants etc
- When friends have dinner together in a restaurant, each person will pay for the food they ordered or they will split the bill equally.
- If you want to smoke around other people you should always ask them if it's ok, as smoking is not that popular now in Britain and a lot of people don't like to be in a smoky atmosphere.
- When addressing an elderly person you should call them Mr..... or Mrs..... unless they invite you to use their first names. For other people it is usually fine to use first names.

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- In schools, pupils call their teacher Mr/Mrs/Miss... or in secondary schools they often call them 'Sir' and 'Miss' (always 'Miss', even if the teacher is married.)