



Cultural Competence

Quick Reference Card

What is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence is the ability to effectively interact and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Five Elements of Cultural Competence

Symbols, Rituals, and Traditions

Flags, religious icons, repetitive actions or ceremonies, food, clothing, music.

Social Norms and Etiquette

Greetings, gift-giving, appropriate attire, rules, and manners governing social interactions.

Cultural History and Context

Current social, political, and economic awareness



Language & Communication Styles

Distinct ways to express emotions, non-verbal cues like body language and facial expressions.

Values, Beliefs, and Worldviews

Family, community, individualism, or collectivism, religion, spirituality, philosophy, and the relationship between humans and the environment.

Why is Cultural Competence Important?

You're likely to interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds at work, in a community, or during international travel. So, it's vital for several reasons:

- Enhanced communication
- Build genuine relationships
- Grow global business
- Promote diversity & inclusion
- Avoid cultural missteps
- Boost personal growth
- Successful cross-cultural collaboration
- Adherence to ethical practices

Avoid Stereotyping

Stereotypes are oversimplified and generalized beliefs about a particular group of people.

To develop cultural competence, it's essential to avoid them by:

- Educating yourself** about different cultures through books or documentaries.
- Questioning** yours and other's assumptions
- Interacting** with people from diverse backgrounds and being mindful of media portrayals (movies, TV, & news).



Skills for Cross Cultural Communication

The ability to communicate effectively across cultures has become a valuable skill.



- ✓ **Attend cultural events** or gatherings to expand your network.
- ✓ **Educate yourself** about different cultures, their values, beliefs, and customs.
- ✓ Adjust your **communication style** to match your audience's preferences.
- ✓ Show **respect for other cultures'** customs and traditions.
- ✓ **Avoid imposing your own cultural norms** on others.
- ✓ **Use humor cautiously**, as it can be easily misinterpreted across cultures.
- ✓ **Familiarize yourself with the cultural etiquette** of the regions you interact with.
- ✓ **Learn about common gestures**, greetings, and taboos.

Travel with Cultural Sensitivity

Enrich your experiences by being a culturally sensitive traveler.



Research Your Destination

- Learn local customs and traditions. E.g: Removing shoes in Indian homes shows respect.
- Know basic language/greetings. E.g: "Arigatou gozaimasu" in Japan shows politeness.

Embrace Local Etiquette

- Dress modestly at religious sites. E.g: Cover shoulders and knees at Middle Eastern mosques.
- Adapt to local greeting styles, like handshakes, bows, or hugs.

Respect Cultural Norms

- Show respect; follow religious site guidelines. E.g: Remove shoes at Thai temples.
- Try local dishes and respect food traditions.

Communicate Respectfully

- Use "please" and "thank you". E.g: In South Korea, give and receive with both hands.
- Be aware of local body language and eye contact norms (non-verbal cues).

Respect Nature & History

- Be eco-conscious; dispose of trash correctly.
- Don't damage or take items. E.g: Don't touch/climb on Mexican ancient ruins.

Cultural Competence Resources

Books: "When Cultures Collide" - Cultural business guide.

Online Courses: LinkedIn Learning, CustomGuide Diversity or Leadership courses

Podcasts: The Culture Factor" Podcast for business culture insights

Organizations: SIETAR (Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research)

YouTube Channels: TED Talks for Cultural perspectives.



Cultural Etiquette and Manners

1. Greetings

Handshakes: Firm in West, lighter with bows in Asia, lengthy in Middle East.

Verbal: Use region-specific greetings (e.g., "Hello" in English, "Ni hao" in Mandarin).

Physical Contact: Avoid/minimize in some cultures.



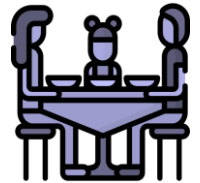
2. Dining

Manners: Napkins on your lap is Western etiquette, slurping noodles in Asia is polite.

Eating Style: Hand-eating varies in acceptability.

Tipping: Expected in USA, not always elsewhere.

Offered Food: Accepting or declining varies by culture.



3. Body Language

Eye Contact: Respectful or confrontational, depends on culture.

Pointing: Prefer open-handed gestures.

Thumbs Up: Positive or offensive, location dependent.

Feet: Mind posture in certain cultures.



4. Gifts

Presentation: Ranges from elaborate to simple.

Receiving: Gratitude expression varies.

Selection: Consider cultural sensitivities (e.g., no alcohol in Islamic regions).



5. Respect

Elders: Show respect through actions (standing when they enter a room) and addressing using titles.

Authority: Attitudes towards questioning authority differ.

Punctuality: Generally respected.



Adapt in Multicultural Workspaces

Multicultural teams can offer unique perspectives and creative solutions.

Recognize the strengths/skills of each team member and assign roles accordingly.

Address conflicts promptly and respectfully. Don't forget to foster an inclusive environment.

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