

Hi, this is Ross from Learning without Borders and today we're going to learn about British manners and etiquette.

Of course, every country in the world has their own idea of what we call manners, but the problem is often that what is considered polite in one country is not so important in another, whilst something that might seem fantastically rude in some parts of the globe is big deal in others. It is with this in mind that we British use the saying "When in Rome, do as the romans do" – in other words, you should respect the local idea of manners wherever you are, even if it's very different to your own.

So what kind of things to the British consider to be the height of good manners? Let's start from the beginning.

If you're thinking of visiting your British friend, remember that It is customary to visit people at a pre-arranged time and day. As a generalization, people are not comfortable if you just drop in. They like time to prepare. Nevertheless, if someone says to drop in at anytime, feel free to do so as long as it is not in the middle of the night.

When you go into someone's house, do take your hat off. 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. Shoes should also be removed unless you are told otherwise.

Once you're through the door, the handshake is the common form of greeting. When you meet people for the first time, it is normal to shake hands. A firm handshake is the norm; there are no issues over gender in Britain. We usually greet each other by saying "How are you?", although be aware that this isn't really a question so much as another way of saying "hello", and that the expected reply is simply "fine thanks". It is not necessarily an invitation to tell someone all about your day.

In Britain, Unlike some other European Countries, men do not usually kiss. However, it is common for male friends to hug, often with a pat on the back. Women do kiss, usually two times. The British might seem a little stiff and formal at first but after a while they will relax as you get to know each other.

Avoid prolonged eye contact when you meet people for the first time, as it might make them feel uncomfortable. In Britain, there still some protocol to follow when introducing people in a business or more formal social situation. Introduce a younger person to an older person and a person of lower status to a person of higher status. When two people are of similar age and rank, introduce the one you know better to the other person.

That's all for now. Check out my other podcasts to find out more about British manners and etiquette.