Meeting People - Cultural Differences and Useful Phrases

Which things below are true in your country? Write the first letter of your country’s name next to them (e.g. “J” if you are from Japan).

- It’s normal to walk up to someone, for example at a conference, and say “Let me introduce myself”.
- It’s common to find more indirect ways of starting a conversation, e.g. commenting on the weather.
- You usually say your company name before your own name and job.
- Your company name is more important than your job title.
- You usually say something meaning “Nice to meet you” after saying your name, even if that is much later in the conversation.
- You should bow when saying “Nice to meet you” etc.
- You should shake hands when saying “Nice to meet you” etc.
- How you shake hands is very important.
- A good handshake is firm (but not too firm), dry, brief and has eye contact during it.
- You should avoid using the same standard phrases all the time, for example when being introduced to a large group of people.
- A good introduction is like a couple of short speeches.
- A good introduction is like a tennis match, with questions and comments meaning who is speaking changes often and rapidly.
- New employees are usually taken round and introduced to people one by one, and should try to have a short two-way conversation with each.
- New employees often stand up and give a brief introductory speech.
- People often have a brief speech to introduce themselves that they use in many situations.
- There isn’t much difference between formal and informal introductions.
- Business cards which you receive should be handed over with both hands and with the text the right way up for the other person to read.
- It’s good to comment on something about the business cards you receive.
- Business cards should be placed on the table during the meeting and then put in a dedicated business card holder.
- Never write anything on another person’s business card.
- It is fairly easy to signal the end of a conversation.
- Conversation endings are fairly or very short.

Which things are true for another country that you often do business with? Do the same thing with the first letter of its name.

Compare ideas with someone else in the group.

What language could you use to do the things which are good/ avoid the things which are bad, e.g. those things in italics above?

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2014
What cultural differences and useful language can you think of for business entertaining?

How might these things vary by culture?

Choosing suitable places for business entertaining

Inviting

Replying to invitations

Conversation during business entertaining

Who pays

Brainstorm useful phrases for each of those situations above.