

What To Do Where:



In North America and Europe, a firm handshake is an appropriate form of greeting. In Asia and the Middle East the customary grip is gentler; a too-hearty grip could be interpreted as aggressive. In some Islamic countries, women do not shake hands. Since this prohibition varies country to country and region to region, rather than offering your hand to a woman, wait for her to extend her hand first. If no handshake is offered, greet the woman respectfully: "I am so pleased to meet you." In many Latin countries—South America, Spain, and Italy, for example, a handshake may be accompanied by a touch on the elbow or forearm. In Japan and some other Asian nations, the bow is the equivalent of the handshake. In India and Thailand, placing the hands together at chest-level, prayer-like, and bowing is a traditional form of greeting, although the handshake is now more prevalent in both countries.

What about touching?

Latin Americans and southern Europeans engage in casual touching more than North Americans do, so if someone touches your arm in conversation, don't take offense. The same is true in Africa, the Middle East, and India.

Personal space also comes into play.

In the United States, we're comfortable standing about two to three feet apart when conversing. Northern Europeans and Asians expect more space in between, while southern Europeans, Latinos, and people from Middle eastern countries prefer standing closer, less than eighteen inches apart.