

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE – INDIA

APPEARANCE

- Men are generally expected to wear a suit and tie for business, although the jacket may be removed in the summer. Women should wear conservative dresses or pantsuits.
- When dressing casual, short-sleeved shirts and long pants are preferred for men; shorts are acceptable only when exercising. Women must keep their upper arms, chest, back, and legs covered at all times.
- Women should wear long pants when exercising.
- The use of leather products including belts or handbags may be considered offensive, especially in temples. Hindus revere cows and do not use leather products.

BEHAVIOR

- The head is considered the seat of the soul. Never touch someone else's head, not even to pat the hair of a child.
- Beckoning someone with the palm up and wagging one finger can be construed as an insult. Standing with your hands on your hips will be interpreted as an angry, aggressive posture.
- Whistling is impolite and winking may be interpreted as either an insult or a sexual proposition.
- Never point your feet at a person. Feet are considered unclean. If your shoes or feet touch another person, apologize.
- Gifts are not opened in the presence of the giver. If you receive a wrapped gift, set it aside until the giver leaves.
- Business lunches are preferred to dinners. Hindus do not eat beef and Muslims do not eat pork

COMMUNICATIONS

- There are more than fourteen major and three hundred minor languages spoken in India. The official languages are English and Hindi. English is widely used in business, politics and education.
- The word "no" has harsh implications in India. Evasive refusals are more common, and are considered more polite. Never directly refuse an invitation, a vague "I'll try" is an acceptable refusal.
- Do not thank your hosts at the end of a meal. "Thank you" is considered a form of payment and therefore insulting.
- Titles are very important. Always use professional titles.