



## The People

Four countries make up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland -- England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Residents of any of these countries may be called "British." Use "English," "Scot" or "Scotsman," "Welsh" and "Irish" or "Northern Irish" only when certain of a person's heritage. While the four countries share many customs, each has its own set of cultural nuances.

In England, politeness, reserve, and restraint are admired. The English are courteous, unassuming and unabrasive and are very proud of their long and rich history.

Scots are passionate about their country, guarding its uniqueness and refusing to go along with English ideas. While cool and aloof externally, they are extremely sentimental about their family and their country. Overall Scots are free of class consciousness and social elitism, except in religion.

Generally, Protestants mix only with Protestants and Catholics mix only with Catholics.

Scots have a keen, subtle sense of humor and value generosity, respectability.

Wales has been part of the United Kingdom for more than 400 years, but has kept its own language, literature and traditions. Most residents of Wales are of Welsh or English heritage. Many immigrants from former British colonies and other parts of U.K. Welsh take great pride in their country and their heritage. The Welsh love to sing and talk and spend much of their free time at with their families.

Two-thirds of the Northern Irish have Scottish or English roots. The others are of Irish descent. Irish value friendliness, sincerity and nature. They dislike pretentious behavior and possess a strong work ethic. Family ties are very important in Northern Ireland.

## Meeting and Greeting

- The British are reserved, which may cause them to appear cool and indifferent or overly formal. In fact, they are very friendly and helpful to foreigners.
- Shake hands with everyone present -- men, women, and children -- at business and social meetings. Shake hands again when leaving.
- Handshakes are light -- not firm.
- Women should extend their hand to men first.
- Use last names and appropriate titles until specifically invited by your British hosts or colleagues to use their first names.

## Body Language

- The British are not back slappers or touchers and generally do not display affection in public.
- Hugging, kissing and touching is usually reserved for family members and very close friends.
- The British like a certain amount of personal space. Do not stand too close to another person or put your arm around someone's shoulder.
- Staring is considered rude.

## Corporate Culture

- In Great Britain, punctuality is important for business meetings. Be on time.
- Brits prefer a congenial business relationship, but tend to get right down to business after a few moments of polite conversation.
- Business is best initiated through a well-connected third party.
- The Board of Directors is the source of power and the principal decision making unit in a company. Formal approval of the board is required for most decisions. Decisions may be slow in the making.
- Expect formalities and protocol to be observed in business, especially in London.



- Business organization traditionally is multi-layered with a vertical chain of command. A network of committees, formal and informal, exists in larger companies. Group consensus is preferred to individual initiative.
- In older companies, business still centers around the "old boy network" with prep schools, universities and family ties being of great importance. Newer companies are more progressive.
- Meetings should be scheduled well in advance.
- Meetings generally have a concrete objective, such as: making a decision, developing a plan or arriving at an agreement.
- Presentations should be detailed and subdued.
- Scots are known for being skilled businesspersons, priding themselves for being internationalists. They also are suspicious of "go-getters" and respect success only when it is achieved over time.

## Dining and Entertainment

- Summon a waiter by raising your hand. Don't wave or shout.
- Most business entertaining is done restaurants or pubs over lunch. The host, the one who extends the invitation, pays the bill.
- A British business associate may invite you to watch cricket or to the regatta. Both are prestigious events. Wear your tweed sport coat or blue blazer.
- An invitation to someone's home is more common in England than in the rest of Europe.
- Do not discuss business at dinner in someone's home unless the host initiates the conversation.
- In England, when invited to someone's home, arrive at least 10-20 minutes after the stated time. Never arrive early. In Scotland and Wales, arrive on time.
- A male guest of honor is seated at the head of the table or to the right of the hostess. A female guest of honor is seated to the right of the host.
- Wait for your host to begin eating before you eat.
- Host or hostess always initiates first toast, which is usually only given at a formal dinner.
- At a formal dinner, do not smoke until after the toast to the Queen or until otherwise indicated by the host.
- Keep your hands on the table at all times during the meal -- not in your lap. However, take care to keep your elbows off the table.
- When finished eating, place knife and fork side by side on the plate at the 5:25 position.
- You should leave a very small amount of food on your plate when finished eating.
- The guest of honor should initiate leaving a party.
- When the host folds his napkin, this signals that the meal is over.
- Leave a dinner party shortly after dinner ends.
- Write a thank you note to the hostess.
- It is considered impolite to ask for a tour of your host's home.
- Entertain anyone who has entertained you, but don't try to impress British guests with an extravagant dinner. The Brits prefer understatement.

## Dress

- People in the larger cities dress more formally, especially in London.
- Men and women wear wools and tweeds for casual occasions. Slacks, sweaters and jackets are appropriate for men and women.
- Avoid striped ties that are copies of British regimentals.
- Men's clothing often expresses affiliation rather than style. Ties are important symbols. School, army, university or club ties are worn.
- For business meetings, men should wear dark suits and ties. Women should wear suits, dresses or skirts and blouses.
- Do not wear a blazer to work. A blazer is country or weekend wear.
- For formal events men may wear black ties, business suits, morning coats or tails. Inquire which is required. Women generally wear cocktail suits or dresses.

## Gifts

- Gifts are normally not exchanged in business settings.
- When invited to someone's home, always bring a small gift for the hostess. Give flowers, chocolates, wine, champagne or books. Present the gift upon arrival.
- Gifts are opened upon receiving.



- It is polite to send flowers in advance of a dinner party. Do not send white lilies, which denote death.

### Helpful Hints

- Men should open doors for women and stand when a woman enters a room.
- Always hold the door for a person following behind you.
- Honor rank when entering a room. Allow higher rank to enter first.
- Don't insult the royal family or show great interest in their private lives.
- Respect the British desire for privacy. Don't ask personal questions, such as where a person lives or what a person does for a profession or job. Don't talk about money.
- Do not violate a queue. It is considered very rude to push ahead in a line.
- Do not shout or be loud in public places and don't use excessive, demonstrative hand gestures when speaking.
- Staring is considered impolite.
- Do not be too casual, especially with the English language.
- The English avoid speaking in superlatives. "I am quite pleased," means they are extremely happy.
- Never try to sound British or mimic their accent.
- Humor is ever-present in English life. It is often self-deprecating, ribbing, sarcastic, sexist or racist. Try not to take offense.
- In Scotland, kilts are worn by men at formal occasions (i.e., black tie, weddings, etc.). Don't make jokes about or ask a Scot what he wears under his kilt.
- In Northern Ireland, religion and politics have created conflict in for many years. Avoid these discussing topics if possible.

### Especially for Women

- The 'Old Boy Network' is alive and well in the United Kingdom. However, women are becoming more common in managerial positions in the United Kingdom than in most EC countries, especially in service industries and public sector jobs.
- Foreign women will have little difficulty conducting business in Great Britain.
- Don't be insulted if someone calls you love, dearie, or darling. These are commonly used and not considered rude.
- It is acceptable, but may be misconstrued, for a foreign woman to invite an English man to dinner. It is best to stick with lunch.
- If a woman would like to pay for a meal, she should state this at the outset.
- Crossing your legs at the ankles, not at the knees, is proper.