

# Languages at Work



# Languages at work



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# Introduction

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In this course, you will learn how to understand differences in culture and how to make the most of your existing language skills. This will be helpful to you whenever you work with someone whose native language is foreign, or when you go to another country and work as a foreigner yourself. You do not need any knowledge of foreign languages in order to begin.

There are eight sections. You can choose which ones you want to study and you can work through them in any order.

- **Section 1: Languages in the world** – an exploration of the status in the world of the English language and other widely-spoken languages.
- **Section 2: Why study languages?** – reviews the advantages of studying languages and refutes some common preconceptions (such as that everyone speaks English anyway).
- **Section 3: Foreign communication** – an exercise in understanding and communicating, without needing to be fluent.
- **Section 4: Selling your language skills** – how to present your language skills in a CV and at a job interview.
- **Section 5: World tour** – an exploration of the diversity of cultures across the world.
- **Section 6: Let's eat!** – some examples of what people eat in different countries, starting with Britain.
- **Section 7: Etiquette, please** – how to be polite when meeting and greeting.
- **Section 8: 24!** – daily routines and working lives across the world.

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# Learning Outcomes

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After studying this course, you should be able to:

- describe the status in the world of the English language, compared to other widely spoken languages
- identify the reasons why people should study another language
- make best use of existing language skills, no matter how basic, in a practical situation
- present language skills in a written CV
- give examples of critical differences between cultures across the world, including eating habits, etiquette and politeness, and daily routines and working patterns.

# 1 Languages in the world

This section aims to make you aware of a world beyond your current sphere of knowledge.

## Activity 1 English in the world

You should allow 5 minutes

Where is English spoken as an official language? Look at the map below, and highlight the countries where you think English is the official language. What can you notice? What language do you feel would be important to get by in?

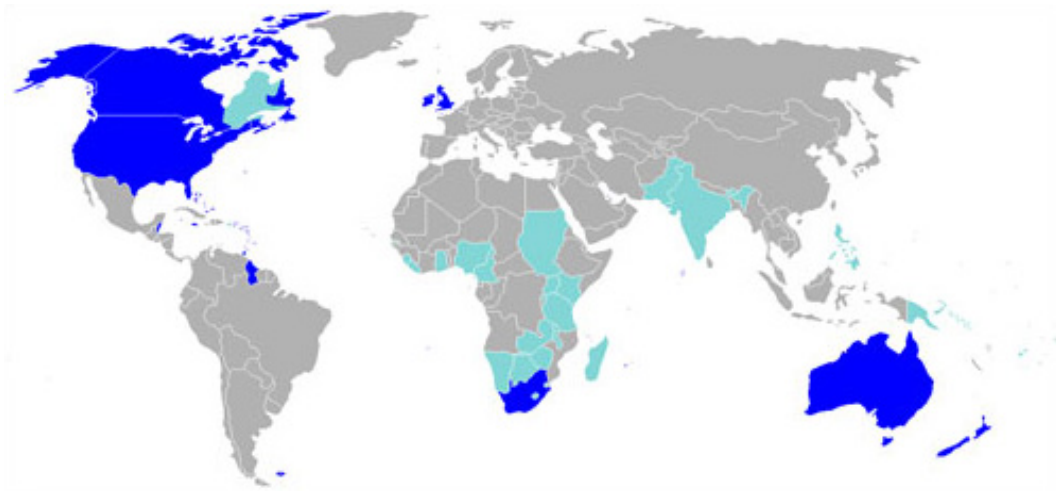


This map shows countries that have English as their official language



On this map, you can see the countries using English as their main language shaded in grey.

Countries in which English is the first language of a large fraction of the population are shown in blue. The light blue shading shows countries where a substantial proportion of the population have adopted English as their main language. You will also see a list of which countries are included.



## Activity 2 Foreign words in the English language

You should allow 5 minutes

Think about the words you use in everyday life, and try to make a list of about 3 words, with their origins, for example, pizza, kebabs etc.

Pizza – Italian

Kebab – Arabic



### Activity 3 Official language

You should allow 10 minutes

In the table below, you will see a list of ten countries. Note down what you think the official language is in these countries.

	Country	Language
1	Brazil	
2	India	
3	South Africa	
4	Switzerland	
5	Egypt	
6	Ukraine	
7	Philippines	
8	Andorra	
9	Chile	
10	Malaysia	

### Answer

Answers

	Country	Language
1	Brazil	Portuguese
2	India	Hindi
3	South Africa	Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Sotho, Swati, Tsongo, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, Zulu
4	Switzerland	German, French, Italian and Romansh (descending from Vulgar Latin)
5	Egypt	Arabic
6	Ukraine	Ukrainian
7	Philippines	Filipino, English
8	Andorra	Catalan
9	Chile	Spanish
10	Malaysia	Malay

### Activity 4 Most spoken languages in the world

You should allow 10 minutes

The image below shows a list of the most spoken languages around the world. Try to put them in order of popularity and estimate the number of **native** speakers.



### Answer

Position	Language	No. of speakers (in millions)
1	Chinese	1,120
2	English	480
3	Spanish	332
4	Arabic	235
5	Bengali	189
6	Hindi	182
7	Russian	180
8	Portuguese	170
9	Japanese	125
10	German	98

(Source: [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com))

### Activity 5 English words of international origin

You should allow 15 minutes

The following list of words comes from what could be called “common languages”, as opposed to obscure ones. Think about the possible origins of each word, and note

down what language you think they come from. In total you will there are 5 different languages.

Word	Origin
Alcohol	
Bonanza	
Cafeteria	
Casserole	
Hamburger	
Jungle	
Muesli	
Shampoo	
Tartare	
Tobacco	

### Answer

#### Answers

Word	Origin
Alcohol	Arabic
Bonanza	Spanish
Cafeteria	Spanish
Casserole	French
Hamburger	German
Jungle	Hindi
Muesli	German
Shampoo	Hindi
Tartare	French
Tobacco	Arabic

### Activity 6 Reflection

Note down a couple of sentences about what you have learnt about languages and English in the world. You may wish to share your thoughts in the Comments section below.

## 2 Why study languages?

This section aims to demonstrate the importance of learning languages and give you a taste of a variety of different languages.

### Activity 7

You should allow 10 minutes

Before we begin, think about the reasons why people should learn languages in the first instance. Write down some of your ideas.

### Activity 8 Reactions

You should allow 5 minutes

Listed below are a set of statements and reactions. Read through them all and match each one with the appropriate response.

#### Statements:

1. It is pointless to learn another language – everyone speaks English anyway!
2. I'll study a language later on in life only if I need it for work
3. What is the point of learning another language ... I won't earn any more money.
4. I never go abroad on holiday, so I don't need to learn another language.
5. Learning a language is too difficult.
6. I won't need another language for the work I want to do.

#### Reactions:

Reactions [These will need to be placed in a random order. At the moment, they are placed in order to identify that the correct reaction to 1 is A, 2 is B, 3 is C, 4 is D, 5 is E, 6 is F – answers to be provided after activity as collapsible text.]

A. Certainly not *everyone* speaks English. According to the CIA World Fact Book, only 5.6% of the world's total population speaks English as a primary language. That number doubles when people who speak English as a second or third language are counted. By conservative estimates, that means that well over four-fifths of the world's population does **not** speak English. *Source: <http://www.vistawide.com>*

B. Though you can learn a language later in life, it is more difficult; learning a language is different than learning a factually-based subject like geography: it is still like riding a bike, and, like riding a bike, it is easier when you're young. Also like riding a bike, although you may be a bit wobbly when you get on after not having practised for a long time, you never really forget it. *Source: © CILT, Languages Work, 2008*

C. Anyone can learn a language – you do not need to be 'clever'. There are all sorts of ways to learn and you'll be able to find one that suits you. If you find learning in class difficult then visit <http://www.linguanet-europa.org> which will give you some exciting ideas on how to study online. *Source: © CILT, Languages Work, 2008*

D. It is true that not employer pays more to employees who have a language qualification; but many do. And even more importantly, you are more likely to get a good job if you have another language: school leavers in Europe often have their own

language, English and one other language, as well as other qualifications like business studies; and they can come and work here, just as easily as you could go and work abroad – if you have a language! *Source: © CILT, Languages Work, 2008*

E. Whatever your career goals, knowing a language certainly *won't hurt* your employability. Chances are that knowing languages will open up employment opportunities that you would not have had otherwise. *Source: <http://www.vista-wide.com>*

F. You do not just need a language to go on holiday; you can use languages in the UK as part of your job. Have a look at the CILT website: [http://www.languageswork.org.uk/career\\_choices/case\\_studies.aspx](http://www.languageswork.org.uk/career_choices/case_studies.aspx) for some examples of ways in which people use their languages at work. And if you get a good job using your language, maybe you'll get a chance to go on holiday abroad! *Source: © CILT, Languages Work, 2008*

### Answer

#### Answers

The answers are:

1. E
2. A
3. D
4. F
5. C
6. B

### Activity 9 Holiday talk

You should allow 30 minutes

Write down three words (in English) that you think you would have to learn if you went abroad, to a country of your choice. Now use the internet to find translations for those words. Write down the language, the word in English and the translation. If you can find it, also write down the pronunciations of each word you have translated.

## 3 Foreign communication

In this section you will see how fluency in a foreign language is not necessary in order to communicate.

### Activity 10 Everyday languages

You should allow 10 minutes

Think about where and when you have encountered foreign language. On these occasions, how much were you able to understand – nothing, a few words, the general meaning to the whole conversation? You may have experienced this watching television, listening to the radio, or reading the newspaper, perhaps in a foreign country. Write down some examples.

### Activity 11 Brain stretcher

You should allow 10 minutes

Now it's your turn. Using the following vocabulary list, translate the sentences below.

Vocabulary

Vélo cycle (French)

Queso cheese (Spanish)

Spinaci spinach (Italian)

Sentences

1. If 'Jene ferai pas de skateboard dans les couloirs' means 'I will not skateboard in the corridors', how would you say 'I will not cycle in the corridors'?
2. If 'Comer chocolate todo el día' means 'Eat chocolate all day', how do you say 'Eat cheese all day'?
3. If 'raviolini de carne' means 'ravioli with meat', what would 'ravioli with spinach' be called?

### Answer

Answers

1. 'Je ne ferai pas de vélo dans les couloirs.'
2. 'Comer queso todo el día.'
3. 'Raviolini de spinaci.'

You will see from these answers that, in the foreign languages we've used, there are structures that are very similar to English. Languages are accessible to all.

### Activity 12 Promotion

You should allow 60 minutes

Have a go at designing a poster to promote a product of your choice to a foreign market. First establish what produce is going to be marketed, and where. Then create an advertising poster that includes a picture of the item and also a slogan. Use dictionaries or online translators to help you.

Online translators

<http://www.reverso.net>

<http://www.worldlingo.com>

<http://babelfish.yahoo.com>

### Activity 13 Closing session

You should allow 15 minutes

Write down, in one sentence, what you have learnt in this session. You may wish to post your findings in the Comments section below. Talk about the usefulness and the accessibility of foreign languages.

## 4 Selling your language skills

In this section you will learn how to present your language skills on your CV. You will also be given the opportunity to research different types of language learning opportunities in your region.

### Activity 14 What a CV should contain

You should allow 15 minutes

(a) What information can you normally have in a CV? Use this checklist to tick off what you think should be included

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Name                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary work        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Address                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Interests and hobbies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nationality                  | <input type="checkbox"/> References            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Marital status        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile number                | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer skills       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook, Myspace, Bebo etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Languages             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Pets                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Qualifications               | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal qualities    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work experience              | <input type="checkbox"/> Driving licence       |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal record       |

(b) If you think language skills should be included, where would you place them on your CV, and how would you present them? In such a situation, do you think experience of foreign travel or residence could also be relevant? In which section would you include this information?

(a) Information that should appear on a CV includes: name, address, nationality, mobile number, education, qualifications, work experience, voluntary work, interests and hobbies, references, computer skills, languages, personal qualities, and driving licence.

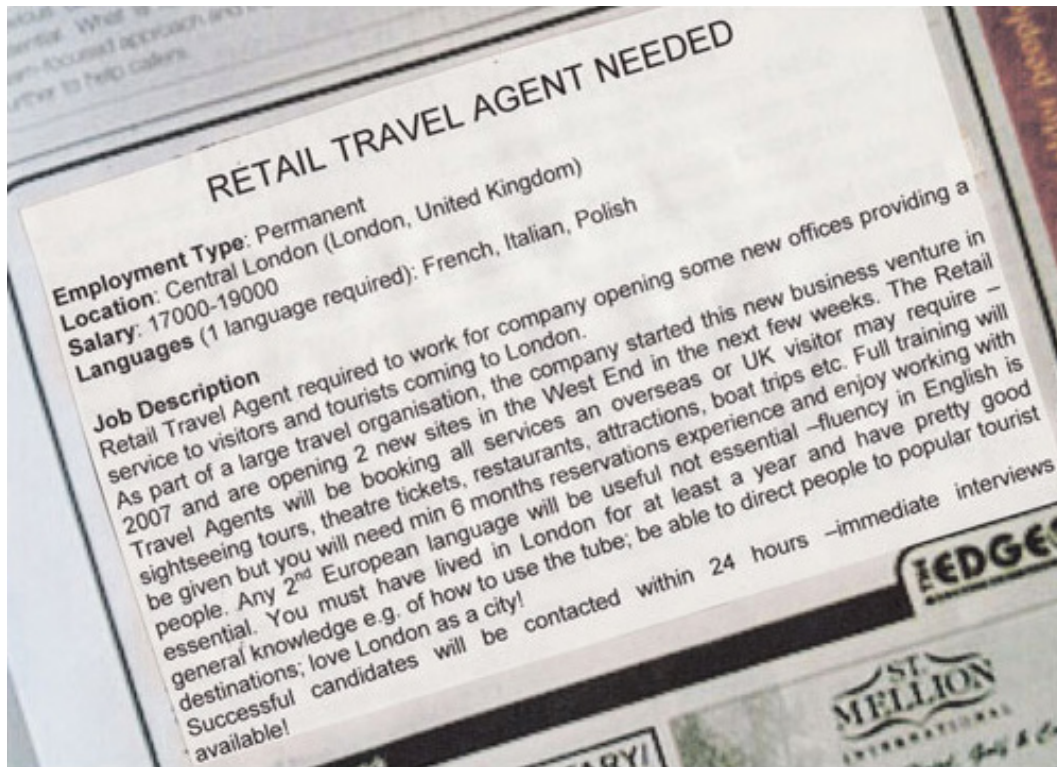
(b) If your language skills are key to a job, include this information on a section that is likely to be read first, near the top of the page.

### Activity 15 Case study

You should allow 20 minutes

Read the advert below. This is for a job in London in leisure and tourism.





Now read through the following three CVs submitted by the candidates for the job. Can you answer the following questions?

[View document.](#)

Who do you think has presented better his/her CV as a whole?

☐ Helen Hardy   ☐ Mike Smith   ☐ Stephen Watson

Which lay-out of information do you prefer? Note down the reasons behind your decision.

☐ Helen Hardy   ☐ Mike Smith   ☐ Stephen Watson

Who do you think has presented his/her languages skills better?

☐ Helen Hardy   ☐ Mike Smith   ☐ Stephen Watson

How would you improve the presentation of languages skills on these CVs?

### How to present your language skills on a CV

- If your languages skills the key to a job you're applying for, include this information on a section that is likely to be read first, near the top of the page. For instance, you could list them in the education section, or in a section of their own, titled 'Languages skills'.
- List your qualifications and other details: the educational institution where you gained them and when, details of exchanges or courses abroad, your level of proficiency in spoken and written language, an explanation of what tasks you would be able to accomplish in that foreign language (write emails, answer the phone, deal with enquiries etc.)
- Don't forget to talk too about your English qualifications, if relevant.
- If you are bilingual or near-bilingual, include that information too, even if one of your languages has been traditionally regarded as a 'minority languages'.

## Example

### **Language skills**

Fluent in written and spoken French and Spanish:

- A Levels in French (Grade A) and Spanish (Grade B) taken at the Riverside Grammar School for Girls, 2005–2007
- Course in French Language and Culture (Advanced Level) taken in the Summer University at Lille (2007). Also worked at the canteen as a waitress, gaining more language skills in a work environment.
- Also fluent in Gujarati (family language).

### Activity 16 Over to you

Now write down your language skills as if you were sending a resumé or CV.

### Activity 17 Learning opportunities in the region

You should allow 20 minutes

Use the internet to find out information about language tuition providers in your area. You may wish to investigate the following:

- colleges
- adult education centres
- universities offering language tuition to the general public
- The Open University
- private tutors.

Are there any courses that were of interest to you?

What method of learning would you prefer (evening class, private tuition, online learning, etc.)?

How long would you have to study to achieve the level you want?

## 5 World tour

This section aims to expand your knowledge of other countries around the globe. It will help you gain an insight into the variety of cultures on our planet.

### Activity 18 Continents and their countries in the world

You should allow 15 minutes

(a) Have a look at this map of the world and try to identify all the continents.



(b) Can you name at least three countries per continent?

### Answer

#### Answers

(a) The continents are:

1. Europe
2. America
3. Africa
4. Asia
5. Oceania.

(b) The PDF document below provides a list of all the countries in each continent.  
[View document.](#)

### Activity 19 Flags of the world

You should allow 5 minutes

Look at the images of flags below and try to match them with the countries they belong to.

The countries

- Greece
- Nepal
- Mexico
- Chile
- Morocco
- China.

The flags

Associate the following flags to the country they represent



### Answer

#### Answers

The PDF file below includes the answers.

[View document.](#)

### Activity 20 Identifying countries

You should allow 5 minutes

Now try to identify the countries from Activity 20 on the map below.



Rights information: No source for map

### Answer

#### Answers

Provide version of map with the countries shaded in and labelled. Not provided in course materials, but can be provided if necessary.

### Activity 21 Identity card of a country

You should allow 60 minutes

Now choose a country from the list in [Activity 19](#) and find out as much information as you can about it. Include the following facts:

- capital city
- official language
- currency
- population
- traditions

- festivals
- dress code
- food.

[View document.](#)

## 6 Let's eat!

This section aims to make help you become aware of the variety of food in the UK and the world.

### Activity 22 The Great British Menu

You should allow 15 minutes

Make notes on what foods you would consider as traditionally British. Write down examples of starters, main courses and puddings.

Here is an example of a typical British menu.

[View document.](#)

### Activity 23 Food from around the world

You should allow 10 minutes

Link the following foods to their countries of origin, and definitions.

Food		Origin		Definition
Goulash	<input type="checkbox"/>	Russia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Pieces of fish on rice
Shish Kebab	<input type="checkbox"/>	Japan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Barbecued mince meat
Korma Curry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Turkey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Steamed dumplings
Couscous	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malaysia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Stew flavoured with paprika
Dimsum	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hungary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Fried rice dish with egg
Sushi	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Africa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Soup made beetroot
Nasi Goreng	<input type="checkbox"/>	China	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Spices with cream and meat or vegetables
Borscht	<input type="checkbox"/>	India	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Steamed semolina with spiced vegetables

### Answer

Answers

Food	Origin	Definition
Goulash	Hungary	Stew flavoured with paprika

Shish	Turkey	Barbecued mince meat
Korma Curry	India	Spices with cream and meat or vegetables
Couscous	North Africa	Steamed semolina with spicy meat
Dimsum	China	Steamed dumplings
Sushi	Japan	Pieces of fish on rice
Nasi Goreng	Malaysia	Fried rice dish with egg
Borsht	Russia	Soup made from beetroot

### Activity 24 Traditional food from abroad

You should allow 15 minutes

Choose one of the five countries listed below, and write down at least three foods or drinks that you associate with that country.

- France
- Italy
- Spain
- Germany
- Mexico.

### Activity 25 Foreign delicacies – points of view

You should allow 15 minutes

Across the world, there are some dishes that might appear unusual, such as insects, snails, monkeys, etc. Have you heard of food from around the world that you would not eat? Write these down and provide reasons for your decisions. You may want to discuss your views using the Comments section below.

### Activity 26 Things aren't always as they seem

You should allow 15 minutes

Have another look at the Great British Menu.

[View document.](#)

Can you think of any reasons why a tourist might not want to eat anything on the menu? Again, you may want to discuss your views using the Comments section below.



## 7 Etiquette please!

This section aims to show you how crucial it is to have an understanding of different etiquettes when meeting someone from another culture. The activities will also provide an opportunity to research etiquette around the world.

### Activity 27 What is etiquette?

You should allow 10 minutes

Make some notes on how you would define etiquette, and why you think it should be important.

Look at the checklist below. In what areas should you observe an appropriate etiquette?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greetings         | <input type="checkbox"/> Business cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dining            | <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuality    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gender difference | <input type="checkbox"/> Queuing        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age difference    | <input type="checkbox"/> Humour         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gifts             | <input type="checkbox"/> Dress code     |

All of the options should have been ticked, depending on individual cultures. For instance, some cultures might value gift-giving more than others.

### Activity 28 British etiquette

You should allow 15 minutes

The document below contains a BBC news article. Read through it and think about whether you were aware of all the differences mentioned.

[View document.](#)

Can you think of any examples of customs in the UK where etiquette is essential, and that you would find offensive if not respected? You may want to discuss your views using the Comments section below.

### Activity 29 Quiz

1. In the Middle East, what should you avoid when dining?
  - b. Using your left hand
  - c. Finishing all the food on your plate
  - d. Making a mess
5. In France, after each course, you should wipe your plate with a piece of bread.
  - f. True
  - g. False

8. People of the same sex walking hand-in-hand is a criminal offence in China
  - i. True
  - j. False
11. In Turkey, a flick of the head upwards means:
  - l. Yes
  - m. No
  - n. Go away
15. In Japan, before accepting a gift it is polite to refuse at least once or twice before accepting.
  - p. True
  - q. False

### Answer

#### Answers

1. (a) Using your left hand
2. (a) True
3. (b) False. It is actually seen as a gesture of friendship
4. (b) No
5. (a) True

### Activity 30 Cross-cultural differences

You should allow 60 minutes

Choose a country that you are familiar with and write down the cultural differences it has with the UK. Concentrate on differences in dining, greetings, gifts, business cards and customs. Present your findings in the form of a 'dos and don'ts' poster.

Use the internet to research the different cultural differences. You may find the following sites helpful:

<http://www.sideroad.com/>

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html>

Here are some customs that you may have included.

- In China, it is considered bad luck to drop your chopsticks.
- In Saudi Arabia, gifts should only be given to the most intimate of friends.
- Bananas are eaten with a knife and fork in Bolivia.
- In Hong Kong, if you are given a business card and don't offer one in return, you can close up business immediately.
- In Greece, it is considered acceptable to arrive 30 minutes late at a dinner party.
- In Sudan, people invite guests to lie down and rest when they arrive at their house.
- In Germany, you should use a person's title and their surname until invited to use their first name.
- In Brazil, gifts are opened when received, unlike in Japan.

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## 7 Etiquette please!

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- You should remove your shoes if you are invited at a Moroccan house.
- You shouldn't stand with your hands on your hips in Vietnam.

## 8 24!

This section aims to show you how daily routine changes from one culture to another.

### Activity 31 Routine in the United Kingdom

You should allow 10 minutes

Make some notes on the following questions.

1. What are considered usual working hours in the UK?
  2. Can you describe the typical eating pattern (e.g. time, food and place) in the UK?
  3. Can you list the general opening times (UK) of the following different shops?
    - restaurant
    - supermarket
    - banks
  4. Can you list all the UK bank holidays? Do they always fall on the same day of the week?
- 
1. Usual working hours are between 9:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
  2. Most people have breakfast in the morning, which can consist of cereal, toast or a cooked breakfast, accompanied by a drink of tea or coffee. Lunch is normally taken around midday, and usually consists of sandwiches or a light meal and a drink. Dinner is an evening meal, and is normally the main meal of the day. This may consist of a light starter, a main course and a dessert.
  3. Restaurants are normally open at lunchtimes, between midday and 2:00 p.m., and then again in the evenings, from around 5:00 p.m. until approximately midnight. Large supermarkets can be open 24 hours. Others may be open during normal working hours. Banks have stricter opening times, normally opening their doors at around 9:30 a.m. and closing between 4:30 and 5:00 p.m.
  4. A list of UK bank holidays can be found on the Directgov website.
  5. Bank holidays normally occur on a Friday and/or Monday.

### Activity 32 Your daily routine

Print out the calendar below, and fill it in according to your daily routine for a normal day.

[View document.](#)

### Activity 33 Around the world

Now that you've seen how much daily routines and customs vary from one person to another, have a look at the statements below and try to match them to a country.

#### The statements

1. Children get their Christmas presents on 6 January.
2. Shops are shut on Sundays.
3. National Day is on 3 October.
4. The legal working week is Saturday to Wednesday.
5. There is a term that refers to death by overworking in the workplace.

#### The countries

- Japan
- Germany
- France
- Saudi Arabia
- Spain

#### Answer

##### Answers

1. Spain (Epiphany or *Día de Reyes*).
2. France.
3. Germany: 3 October has been a national holiday since 1990 and commemorates German reunification.
4. Saudi Arabia.
5. Japan: Karoshi can be a very common problem among Japanese workers, and is brought on by high amounts of stress from working 46-hour weeks. Many people feel saddened by having little time for their families, which adds to the work time stress. To counter this, many workplaces hire actors to play the roles of visiting family members to lift their employees' morale.

#### Activity 34 Your turn

Using the internet, can you establish the daily routine of the country of your choice, highlighting the differences with the UK? Note down the differences in:

- working hours
- bank holidays
- daily routine.

## Conclusion

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This free course provided an introduction to studying Languages. It took you through a series of exercises designed to develop your approach to study and learning at a distance, and helped to improve your confidence as an independent learner.

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Foreign etiquette guide for firms from BBC News, published 2006/02/08: <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

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