



Unit 1

British manners

International cultural knowledge – British manners

1 Complete sentences 1–3 with a, b or c.

QUIZ

- 1 When you see a queue at a bus stop in Britain, you should ...
 - a) go to the end and wait until the bus comes.
 - b) go straight to the front of the queue.
 - c) wait until the bus comes and then go to the front.
- 2 British people switch their mobile phones off ...
 - a) in the cinema.
 - b) in the restaurant.
 - c) on the bus.
- 3 If you accidentally walk into someone in Britain, he/she will ...
 - a) say sorry.
 - b) say nothing.
 - c) shout at you.

Manners

GENERALLY, British people are renowned for being polite. But some older people in Britain think that people's manners are worse than they were in the past. When children were sitting at the dinner table fifty years ago, they could not put their elbows on the table or speak with their mouths full. Sometimes, the youngest children were not allowed to speak at all. But today, conversation at the table is normal.

Although manners at home have changed, public manners are still important to most British people. They are famous for their ability to queue for a long time, and become very unhappy if somebody 'jumps' the queue. British people are often too polite to complain about bad behaviour, but will not hesitate to say something about queue-jumping. The weird thing is that even when they complain, British people sound like they are sorry and say something like "I'm very sorry but I think I was here first."



When it comes to apologising, the British go further than almost any other nation. It's normal to say sorry if you bump into somebody with your supermarket trolley, but British people often say sorry back to the person that hit them! Now that really is polite!

The etiquette changes as the world changes. A good example of this is how people use their mobile phones. Most people agree that talking loudly about boring business or family problems on a mobile phone while on a train or bus is rude. But many people still do it, and although the other passengers roll their eyes and look angry, very few Brits say anything to the person on the phone. Then there is the question of when to switch your mobile off. In a cinema? Yes, definitely. In a business meeting? Yes, probably. At a business lunch? Well, possibly.

2 Read the text and check your answers to the quiz questions in 1.

WORD BOOSTER

Match the words and definitions.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1 renowned | a pause before doing something |
| 2 etiquette | b known for a particular skill or achievement |
| 3 hesitate | c moving in front of other people in a queue |
| 4 queue-jumping | d say that something is bad or unfair |
| 5 complain | e rules for being polite in social situations |
| 6 roll your eyes | f move your eyes to show that you are not happy about something |

3 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the false sentences.

- 1 Fifty years ago, children were allowed to talk with food in their mouths.
- 2 Most British people don't hesitate to queue-jump.
- 3 The British never apologise in supermarkets.
- 4 There are no rules about mobile phone use on a train.

4 Answer the questions.

- 1 Are you surprised by any of the old or new British customs? Why?
.....
.....
- 2 How similar are the British customs to the ones in your country?
.....
.....