

CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

There is no such thing as a 'typical Australian,' and during your time here you will come across a wide range of social customs, habits and perspectives of life that may be very different from your own culture.

Here are a few tips to help you adjust:

Addressing People

As a student it is socially accepted to greet fellow students or people the same age or younger than you by their first names. It is common in Australia for people to have nicknames, which are used amongst friends. If you are addressing people senior to you, call them by their surname with their title of Mr, Mrs or Ms, until you know them well enough to call them by their first name.

Greetings

Australia is generally a relaxed informal society, so you might hear fellow students greet each other with; 'Hello, 'Hi' or 'Hey, how's it going?' If you find yourself in a more formal environment it is customary to shake the hand of those you meet, and greet them with the formal greeting of good morning, good afternoon or good evening. However, if this is culturally unacceptable for you, let the person you are meeting know and they will generally be happy to accommodate your need. Use this as an opportunity to share your culture with the local community.

Goodbye

In an informal setting it is ok to simply say: 'See you later,' or 'See you around.' In a more formal setting or the first time you meet someone you might like to say: 'It was a pleasure to meet you,' or 'It was nice to meet you.'

Please and Thank you



When you would like something, it is customary to say please. Once you receive something or when something is provided say thank you. Australians are very big users of please and thank you. Not using please and thank you can be seen as rude or impolite by many Australians.

Slang

Australians insert slang into daily conversation, and it is done almost unconsciously. Don't panic! Here are a few examples:

- G'day: Good day / Hello.
See ya later: See you later / Goodbye
- You right?: Do you need assistance?
Good on ya!: Well done!
- It's my shout!: It is my turn to buy you a meal or drink.
If someone shouts you something it is customary to return the gesture.

Eye Contact

It is customary to engage in direct eye contact with those who are talking to you, and when you are talking to them. This is not disrespectful, but a sign of interest and sincerity. Australians will make direct eye contact with everyone they come into contact with.

Personal Space

Australians like their personal space. This doesn't mean that Australians are unapproachable, but we do like our freedom. When talking to someone, be mindful of your position. Generally an arm's length is a good distance to converse with someone, any closer both you and the person may feel uncomfortable.

Humour

Australians are known for a 'dry' or 'laconic' sense of humour, involving light hearted banter which is commonly referred to as 'stirring'. Don't panic if you don't understand Australian humour straight away, as your knowledge about the country grows, you will be joining in on the laughs! Australians humour often involves light-hearted teasing. You should not take offence.

Dress

Dress in Australia tends to be casual with jeans and t-shirts. Some work places require business attire, while occasions marked as 'formal,' will include the type of dress required.

Social Invitations

If you receive a verbal or written invitation to an event, it is customary to RSVP to the host to inform them of your acceptance or decline of the invite. If you are asked to 'join' or 'go with' a group to a social outing you are expected to pay for your own expenses.



If you are invited to a friend's house for a meal, it is customary to ask if you could contribute to the meal. This just might be something simple, like a bottle of drink or a platter of food. Some parties maybe BYO, which means bring your own food or drink. Invitations may include 'bring a plate,' meaning bring a plate of food to share with other guests.

Queuing

If you are waiting for a taxi, bus, a ticket, service, or a cashier, it is customary to wait your turn and not to push. Pushing and not waiting for your turn will not be tolerated.

Punctuality

While Australian society is relaxed, it is customary to keep your appointments and arrive on time. It is considered rude not to keep an appointment. Once you have accepted an invitation, let someone know if you will not be able to attend.

If you are running late for an appointment or occasion, always call to explain before the event.

Equality

Australians believe that everyone is equal, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or social standing. Australians enjoy equal social, legal and political rights, which are protected by the Australian Constitution.

Social Rules and Behaviours



Smoking

It is illegal to smoke in government buildings, on public transport including domestic and international flights, theatres, shopping centres, pubs, and restaurants, and indoor and outdoor public meeting places. Always ask permission to smoke.

Spitting

It is illegal to spit in public places, and is an offensive act.

Littering

If you litter you may be fined, as it is illegal in Australia to do so.

Table Manners

Australians mainly use cutlery for meals at home or in restaurants. If you are eating at a guest's house or staying in Homestay it is polite to help clear the table after the meal is finished, and offer help to clear up.

Phoning

If you need to contact general businesses in Australia, do not ring before 9am. General office hours are between 9am and 5pm. If you would like to call your Australian friends it is best to do so before 9.30pm.

Bargaining

Bargaining is not generally used in Australia, except when purchasing large items such as a car or furniture.

Home Life

It is polite to offer to assist with the washing up after a meal if eating at someone else's house.