

Getting used to Canadian social Customs

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Greetings

- Upon meeting each other for the first time, men always shake hands, firmly. Women often shake hands with people they meet, but it is not universal.
- Good friends, family members, or people in a romantic relationship might give each other a hug or even kiss upon meeting one another.

Uses of names

First names are more readily used in Canada than in other countries.

- You should say "Mr" (for men) or "Ms" (for women) and the person's last name when talking to people in position of authority, your professors, or your elders, unless they ask you to call them by their first name.
- Some Canadian women prefer to be called "Ms" (pronounced "mizz") rather than "Miss" or "Mrs".

Friendliness and friendship

Canadians often communicate with touch, by putting a hand on somebody's shoulder to express warmth of feeling. Often they will hug when meeting. These friendly gestures are common and should not be interpreted as intrusive or disrespectful.

- Even if North Americans tend to touch each other more than in some other cultures, they usually maintain a relatively large physical distance between one another during conversations or social meetings.
- Men and women often have long-term platonic relationships, which can surprise some foreign visitors. People of the opposite sex might go to the movies, a restaurant, a concert, or other event together without ever being romantically involved.

Social invitations

If you have accepted an invitation or if a meeting has been set, Canadians usually expect you to arrive at the agreed location at the right time. North Americans tend to be quite punctual. If you have to cancel an appointment or know that you will not be able to be on time, you should call your friend or host to cancel or reschedule.

- If you are invited to a person's home for a party or dinner, it would be a good idea to ask if this will be a formal, semiformal, or casual occasion, since the way you dress can be considered important for certain events.
- When formally invited to someone's home, it is considerate to bring a gift to your host. Common gifts are a bottle of wine, a box of chocolates, or flowers. No gift is expected when friends visit each other casually.

Personal Hygiene

Canadian Culture

Canada has a pluralistic nature: two-fifths of Canadians have ethnic origins other than English, French or aboriginal, and roughly one-half of the country's population is first-generation immigrants. Canada is officially bilingual. Though most Canadians speak English, about one-fifth speak French.

The country's aboriginal population is growing at nearly twice the rate of the overall population. It represents about 4% of all Canadians and includes First Nations (Indians), Métis (people of both aboriginal and European ancestry) and Inuit (people of the Arctic).

Canadians live in North America and enjoy friendship and shared ties with their closest neighbour, the United States. But they are Canadians, not Americans, and have a unique culture with deeply rooted traditions, customs and values.

Canadian behaviour

Below are some general hints as to how Canadians behave with others and what you should expect while in Canada:

- When confronted with a problem, many Canadians directly approach the cause of it with the hope of resolving it to the mutual satisfaction of all parties involved. In Canada, that behaviour may be considered honest, forthright and appropriate. Outside Canada, the same approach might be considered too blunt and even rude.
- Canadians tend to be friendly, peaceful and have a sense of individualism.
- Individual rights and freedoms are highly treasured values for Canadians, have shaped their culture and are enshrined in a Charter to protect those values from violation.
- Canadians speak their minds and voice opinions, though remain open to ideas from others. They respect authority, but it must be fair, honest and accountable.
- Canadians respect differences in gender, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, physical or mental abilities, and sexual orientation. Men are not considered superior to women, nor are women expected to allow sexist comments or attitudes to prevail, particularly in a university, college or business environment.
- Very few Canadian families have maids, cooks or servants. Everyone in is expected to do their own work and help with chores. Thus, your room will not be cleaned unless you and your roommate do it.
- Religious beliefs are considered a private matter and your religious beliefs and customs will be tolerated.
- Canadians take the obligations and responsibilities of citizenship seriously, but don't take themselves too seriously.
- You are likely to find Canadians to be open and interested in you and your country. If you return this friendliness with interest in North America and Canadians you will quickly make friends. Students who insist upon always pointing out ways in which their home country is better might soon find themselves alone. Canadians are proud of their country like everyone around the world.

Typical problems and concerns

Language problems

Living in a society where you have to use English on a daily basis can be challenging at first. Some language problems you may encounter when you first arrive are:

- You may not understand the local accent right away. Regional accents vary greatly in Canada. Give yourself time to get used to the local accent.
- Canadians might not understand you right away. You will also have your own accent. Speak slowly and don't be shy about asking others to speak slowly if you are having a hard time understanding them.
- Canadians use a lot of slang in their speech and it might take you some time before you understand all of it.
- Humour and sarcasm are an integral part of Canadian English. This should be interpreted as a sign of friendliness, not disrespect.
- Canadians use lots of abbreviation in their speech (for example, TA for Teachers Assistant or Poli Sci for Political Science). If you don't understand something, simply ask the meaning of it.

Give yourself time to adapt to the language, and don't be afraid to make mistakes! This is all part of your learning experience.

Homesickness

Homesickness is a predictable problem faced by most students at one point or another. It may occur at the beginning or even well into your year. Two key points about homesickness:

- Homesickness will pass. Be patient. Give it at least two weeks. If you are feeling sad, explain what is happening to your friends. Do not hide in your room; if you do, the homesickness will only worsen. Find your counsellor on staff with whom you can talk about homesickness or other problems.
- Homesickness might be made worse by frequent, long telephone calls home. Most homesick students feel more homesick after a call home than they did before they picked up the phone. Try to limit yourself to one call home every week. Also, do not spend every free minute writing letters home. The sooner you integrate into the university experience, the sooner your homesickness will pass.

Culture shock

Most people travelling outside of their own countries experience a level of culture shock - the process of adjusting to a new country and new culture that might be dramatically different from their own. Like homesickness, culture shock will lessen over time. The way you feel will stabilize and settle as you make friends, improve your English and begin to understand the culture more fully. Be patient. You will get used to life in Canada. And remember that you are not the only one experiencing these feelings.

Problems can be solved only if others know about them and can help you. You have a number of sources for help, including:

- Your Home stay family
- Study Group international student support staff
- The University's International Student Services

- Your chosen Consultancy firm in Bangladesh

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