

# Special Report: Cultural Nuances of Business Meetings in E. Asia

Brought to You by Asian Language DTP – Your Solution for Business Success in East Asia

It's not hard to make a great impression on your trip to E. Asia but you've got to be prepared. Armed with the valuable pointers in this report and professional double-sided Asian-language business cards, you're sure to get the most out of your time in Asia. This Special Report contains summarized information from our Asian Business Training Program, which can be purchased on our website but which is also free with your paid business card order.

## Business Card Exchanges

1. Cards are exchanged at the beginning of a meeting; make sure you have enough available for everyone.
2. It is best to stand up when exchanging cards with those of higher rank.
3. Facing your counterpart, bow slightly and hand your card (with the Asian-language side pointing up!) either with your right hand or both hands. The same rule applies when receiving a card from someone else.
4. Take time to review your counterpart's card carefully. You might want to speak his/her name and position to be sure of correct pronunciation. If the meaning of his/her job position is in any way unclear, it would not hurt to ask for an explanation. Basically, you want to show interest in and respect to the other party.
5. DO NOT shove the card into your back trouser pocket!!
  - a. If you are meeting in passing, then you may just carefully place the card in a shirt pocket or in a wallet or notebook.

### Don't forget the business cards!

Without Asian-language business cards, you won't be able to make the best impression on your trip. Asian Language DTP offers the best value for money anywhere on business cards in Japanese, Chinese and Korean. Full details are available on our site at:

[www.asianlanguagedtp.com](http://www.asianlanguagedtp.com).

- b. If you are seated at a meeting, place the card gently on the table in front of you. Look at it often during the meeting in order to refer correctly to your counterpart's name and position. If you are meeting more than one person and have received multiple cards, arrange them neatly in front of you.
6. E. Asians hand out their business card at the drop of a hat. Don't be left out! Give your card to anyone that you'd like to hear from again. You'll likely go through a lot more cards during your trip to Asia than you would back home.

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## Business Meeting Etiquette

1. Casual American-style attire is still uncommon in the E. Asian business place. You should dress appropriately for the occasion when meeting your counterparts on business.
2. When sitting down to a business meeting with your Asian counterparts, the seating arrangement will be determined by the status of the participants. Do not just sit anywhere; as the guest, you will be directed to the appropriate seat.
3. As a general rule, the highest ranking person from the host side will sit at the head of the table. Then, other people will take their seats starting from the seats closest to him and working to the other end of the table. Those of higher status sit closest to the "head honcho".
4. You should stand at your seat and wait for the top guy to tell you to be seated. Then, when the meeting is finished, wait until he has stood up before standing up yourself.
5. Non-alcoholic drinks will probably be served at the beginning of the meeting and they will be distributed in the order of descending importance of recipients. You may want to wait for the top guy to drink from his glass before starting on yours.
6. Gifts are always appreciated. Consider bringing a small souvenir that represents well your hometown to give to your host. Don't be surprised if your hosts give you something from their country too. If the gift is wrapped, don't open it until you leave. If the gift is not wrapped, make sure to express copious appreciation (whether you like it or not). Ask some questions about the gift to show interest.

7. You may want to take notes during the meeting. This will show that you are interested and will be appreciated by your hosts. However, you should make certain never to write anyone's name in red ink (even your own) and so carry a black or blue pen.

## Social Interaction

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1. Your hosts may bring up the idea of getting together socially later. This may be a sincere invitation to dinner; it may just be polite banter. Do not be offended if an invitation turns out to have been just talk and don't aggressively bug your counterpart about when you can get together. He may not say "no" directly so you might need to read from his body language what he really wants.
2. If you do go out for dinner, keep in mind that "going Dutch" is not normal in Asia. If you're the buyer, you'll likely be in for a free evening of entertainment. If you're the seller... well, if you were a local, you'd probably be picking up the tab. However, it's not quite this simple since your hosts may still insist on paying because you are a visitor in their country. Also, it is normal for the inviting party to pay.
3. In all cases, if your host is planning to bear the dinner expenses, make at least a meek attempt to pay. Don't worry... he won't let you. But even your insincere attempt to pick up the tab will have looked good. And, you can offer to pay for his dinner when he visits your home country.
4. Asians are unlikely to invite you into their homes. It is normal for dinner meetings to be held in restaurants. Also, it is common to extend an evening's entertainment by going out to a coffee shop (or a second round of drinking) after the meal. If your host has paid for the meal, you might want to consider being even more pushy about paying for the coffee or drinks. But be careful! In some settings (especially where hostesses are involved), drinks can get very expensive.
5. Asians are liable to ask you questions that make you uncomfortable, such as your age. You don't have to answer, but at least be gracious about it. They are certainly not trying to be offensive; it's just that some questions you would consider rude back home are not necessarily impolite in the country you are visiting.
6. Asians love to drink alcohol with and after dinner. If you don't drink... well, that's a strike against you. You should try to drink. But if drinking is completely out of the question, make up an excuse and be ready to explain it several different ways and times. Your hosts may push you to drink and you should be careful not to get angry.

### Print this report out!

You'll be able to refer to it on your trip. Or, distribute copies to colleagues who can use this valuable information on their upcoming trip to Asia.

7. Tipping is not customary in Asia and you don't have to do it.
8. When eating with your hosts, try to eat some of everything and look like you are enjoying the food. If there are certain kinds of food you don't like, it would be helpful to alert your hosts to this before they choose the restaurant or the meal. They'll appreciate hearing that you like their food.

Like what you've read here? Did this report help you  
through a particular situation in E. Asia?

We'd like to hear about it!

E-mail us your story at: [sbammel@asianlanguagedtp.com](mailto:sbammel@asianlanguagedtp.com). Thanks!