

You are going to read a newspaper article about communication. Choose from the list (A-H) the sentence which best summarises each part (1-6) of the article. There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use. There is an example at the beginning (0).

- A American "openness" can cause offence.
- B Some cultures communicate by using signals.
- C The commonest form of greeting is the kiss.
- D Using body language can say much more than words.
- E The international business community is busy learning languages.
- F The handshake is a universal form of greeting.
- G Jokes are often used to ease the formality of a situation.
- H Greeting people with a kiss can create confusion.

Watch that Handshake

In other cultures, what you do may be more important than what you say.

0 E

One of the most important aspects of doing business internationally is being able to speak other languages. For this reason, there is a current boom in language learning for business people. But unless they can speak a foreign language really well, it is best to save it for socialising.

1

But actions speak louder than words, and psychologists say that your body language is much more important than what you say. Doing the wrong thing, making eye contact, touching, using people's first names, even how you eat and drink - can all be hazardous for people who are unfamiliar with certain cultures.

2

Cultures are divided into "low context" and "high context". In low context cultures such as North America, Britain, Sweden and Germany, people say things very plainly, and rely on clear verbal communication. High context cultures such as France, Japan, Spain, Saudi Arabia, China and South Korea often use silence or hand signals to communicate, and this can sometimes be as important as speaking.

3

Shaking hands is often the most common form of greeting people, but even this can create problems. In Japan, people bow to each other. In England, people shake hands firmly - but not very often - while in places like Italy and France people shake hands all the time but not as firmly as the English. The Germans and the Danish nod their heads while they

shake hands, as a mark of respect, while people in Mediterranean countries sometimes lean their heads backwards while doing the same thing.

4

People from "low context" cultures tend to look into other people's eyes, but in "high context" cultures such as the Chinese and Japanese, this can be interpreted as aggressive behaviour. As a rule, though, close physical greetings such as kissing are not a good idea. For example, the British kiss each other once, on the right cheek, the French kiss each other twice, first on the left cheek and then on the right, but in some cultures, especially in the Middle East, they kiss up to four times and still shake hands!

5

Trying to make people from other cultures feel comfortable can be confusing as well. Americans often use first names as a way of making instant friends, but this does not always work, especially with the Germans and the English. For although all three are "low context" cultures, the British and Germans are not quite as "open" as the North Americans.

6

One thing the British and Americans do share when meeting each other, however, is the desire to break the ice by making a joke. Some cultures, especially the "high context" ones, could find this rude or disrespectful. Cultures and peoples vary so much, though, that it is impossible to please all of the people all of the time. The best thing you can do under these confusing circumstances is to be polite to everyone you meet.