



## INFORMATION SHEET - Academic Year 2018/2019

### INDONESIAN CULTURAL DOs AND DON'Ts

#### What is considered bad manners for local people? What should I avoid doing?

Indonesian people are very friendly and generally tolerant of people's religious and cultural backgrounds. The following are some general guidelines to help with living here.

1. Introduction of people in Indonesia can be pretty similar to the introduction on the West. For example, handshakes are usually an adequate way of introduction. You should have in mind that both hands should be used when shaking, with no grasping. However, since there is a large number of Muslims in the country, you may want to know that Muslim women find it more acceptable to keep a distance from the person they are introduced to. That does not mean that they will ignore your attempt to greet them, but in most cases, they will just nod, smile and clasp their hands.
2. Just smile! People from Indonesia, especially on the island of Java, appreciate the polite smile of foreign people they are introducing, and they will certainly give you a smile back. Friendliness is in their nature, so you should just be relaxed.
3. When you are approaching older people, it is considered as a really polite gesture to bend down a bit. Not all of the people actually do that, but it shows your respect and older people will appreciate it, especially if they notice that you come from another country.
4. When you are talking to someone, you should use following titles which will make you sound more respectful and polite: BAPAK for men; IBU for women; MAS for boys; MBAK for girls
5. Never start a conversation with local people with your hands placed on your hips. It is considered as an insulting act and people will think you disrespect them. In addition, you should never touch other people's heads, because Indonesian people find it rude.
6. Writing letters in Indonesia using the red ink is a gesture that symbolizes anger and the ending of a friendly relationship, so, if you are not angry, you should avoid the red color.
7. Once you arrive at their home, it is good to know that, you have to take your shoes off before entering someone's home, as a sign of appreciation and respect.
8. You should not be angry or offended if they start asking personal questions. They don't do it to make you feel uncomfortable, but to show that they are interested in having a friendly relationship with you. You are not obligated to answer any of them.
9. If you are in need of pointing something with your fingers, don't do it with your right index finger, especially not if you are pointing at people. You should use the thumb of your right hand, while folding other fingers into a relaxed fist, so that it looks politer.
10. There are some basic rules that should be respected while you're moving through the public places of Indonesia. For example, don't get surprised or angry if a person of the same sex tries to hold your hand in public places, since it is just a way of showing a friendly relationship. On the other hand, it is not usual or encouraged for people to demonstrate affection in public, since it is also considered as insulting behavior, especially in sacred places.
11. You should always use your right hand when eating, gifting or receiving a gift.
12. You should not reject a meal or drink if it is offered to you. It is polite to accept it. In addition, have in mind that Indonesian Muslims don't drink alcohol nor eat pork meat.
13. You should not be placing your feet up on the chairs or tables.
14. Do not use your left hand to pass things to another person. Use your right hand or even both hands.
15. Romantic kissing in public is definitely not acceptable, along with other shows of public affection to your romantic partner.
16. Feet belong on the floor, not on tables or chairs, and tables are also not for sitting on.
17. People should dress modestly. It is generally not appropriate for males to be bare-chested in public or for females to have bare shoulders.
18. Touching another person's head is not permitted. It is a sign of disrespect of that person.
19. Pork is also seen as unclean and not to be eaten especially for Muslim people. A local maid will cook it for you but definitely won't want to eat it.