

Talk Time Topic: Culture in the United States

Let's get started...

Let's start by thinking about American culture. What is American Culture? What are cultural norms? What are the cultural norms and expectations in the US for:

- conversation?
- dress?
- time?

Background:

When you go to a different country, it is important to learn the customs and cultural norms of the people in that country. The United States is often called a *melting pot*. This means that many people from different native countries and different cultures live in the United States. These people bring their cultures and customs to the US and this makes the United States multicultural and diverse. In the US, it is important to show respect for others people's cultures, but it is also very important to remember your own special culture and customs.



In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:

What are some of the cultural norms for dressing in the US?

Are they different for different ages?

What is similar to or different from your country? Does anything surprise you?

Share your partner's answers with the group.

Discussion Questions:

In your opinion, what is conservative dress? How about flashy dress? Which style of dress do you prefer? How do people typically dress in your country?

Are there differences in dress between younger and older people? Between dressing for work and dressing for fun?

What does it mean to be *culturally sensitive*? Is it important to be culturally sensitive? Why or why not?

In your opinion, does *cultural norm* mean that everybody follows the norm? Have you met or seen Americans that did not follow the norms?

What is *polite* in conversation? What is *impolite*? Think about the topics that people talk about and behavior.

What makes a good listener? What does a person who is not a good listener do?

In the US, a person who dominates the conversation is often considered impolite. Have you been in a conversation where someone dominated the conversation? How did you feel? What did you do?

In your native country, is it polite to dominate a conversation? Why or why not?

Are there any rules about who can speak in a conversation? For example, can younger people talk to older people and ask questions? Give some examples of cultural rules in your country.

What is personal space? How do you know if you have entered someone's personal space?

What is the cultural norm for personal space in America? What is the cultural norm for personal space in your country?

In the US, being on time is important – especially for work and appointments. What does it mean to be on time?

Is it important for people to be on time in your native country? When is it important to be on time and when is it okay to be late? Do people like to be *fashionably late*?

Do you think Americans are always punctual? Are they sometimes late? If so, are they late more or less than in your country?

If you *have the floor*, it is your turn to be the speaker. Let's practice this. Each person in the group should take turns *having the floor* for 30 seconds to one minute. Tell the group about a cultural difference between your country and the US.

What did you learn about cultural differences and similarities from your group?

Discuss this idiom. What does it mean? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why?

When in Rome, do as the Romans.

New words and Idioms:

Cultural norm, melting pot, conservative, flashy, style, opinions, good listener, speaker, small talk, dominate the conversation, personal space, on time, punctual, tardy, late, to have the floor, to be quiet as a mouse, "When in Rome, do as the Romans", etc.