

## Relationship between Students and Faculty

The relationship between students and faculty in the United States is more informal than in most other countries in which a teacher is more distant from students. Faculty members have a greater interaction with students in contrast to countries in which it is difficult to get in touch with the teacher after class. The idea of office hours is also something that is not common in other countries. Teachers in the U.S. are required to have a specific number of hours in a week in which a student may discuss his/her problems. If a student is uncomfortable asking questions about course work in class, these office hours can be very helpful. Also, teachers take into consideration the limitations of students and act accordingly.

The student/faculty relationship in the U.S. is a more unconventional and casual approach in which students can address their issues in a comparatively more relaxed way. The classroom atmosphere is much more casual. Sometimes, students are allowed to carry food and drinks into the classroom to serve the needs of a mobile American society. This is much different from countries in which the students are not allowed to do anything in the class except study.

Students in the U.S. participate actively in class. They provide verbal feedback to the teachers inside and outside of the classroom. In fact, teachers vigorously encourage this interaction as this helps students to have a better understanding of the topic. Students can disagree with the professor and participate in a healthy debate. The approach is unconventional, but it does not affect this consummation of knowledge in any way.

## American Culture and Customs

This is a very exciting, and perhaps anxious time for those who have never traveled or lived in the United States. Moving and leaving behind close friends and family can be very stressful, and immersing oneself in a new culture can be even more so. Many newcomers will be adjusting to a new language, culture and a distinctly different way of life.

Having an understanding of American culture will help in the transition to life in the United States. The following generalizations on American customs are offered as a guide for adjusting to life in the U.S. There are many regional, ethnic and individual differences within the U.S., so please keep an open mind and learn from each person you meet. A selected bibliography is listed at the end of this section, which provides valuable information on American culture and culture shock.

### Greetings

Americans often greet each other with a “hi” or “how are you.” This is not a question, but a statement. During introductions people will often shake hands. Embraces or hugs are generally reserved for greeting family members or very close friends.

### **Appointments**

Time is very important to Americans and people are expected to arrive at the precise time an appointment is scheduled.

### **Gestures and Nonverbal Communication**

Many Americans move quite frequently while conversing. People generally like to maintain about one arm length of distance between themselves and the person with whom they are speaking. Eye contact is generally direct.

### **Hygiene**

Americans, as a general rule, are very concerned about hygiene issues. Body odor in particular is a very sensitive issue. Most Americans bathe daily and use an antiperspirant/deodorant to reduce perspiration and odors. Covering odor with a perfume or cologne will tend to offend Americans. Strong musk and perfumes are just as overwhelming as heavy perspiration.

### **Tipping**

When eating in a restaurant it is customary to leave money (a ‘tip’) for the waiter or waitress who served you. The amount is generally about 15-20 percent of the total bill. It is paid separately and in addition to the amount for the meal. It is also customary to tip bellmen in hotels (about 50 cents per bag) and taxi drivers (10–15 percent of the bill). Do not tip government employees and school officials. These are considered bribes and are punishable by law.