

Don't be Fishy!

Instructions: Read the material and make notes of important points, answer questions, and be ready to discuss this topic.

When you meet a new classmate, teacher, or industry professional, the first thing you're probably going to do is stick out your hand for a handshake. But be forewarned – not all handshakes are created equal. Researchers at the University of Manchester studied handshakes and determined that many people don't like having to shake hands with people who have sweaty palms, limp wrists, hard grips, or lack eye contact. The researchers also came up with key things to make a handshake professional and unforgettable. You should shake with your right hand, use a complete grip and firm – but not too hard – squeeze, and have a cool and dry palm. “Fishy” handshakes are to be avoided. Handshakes should last no more than three seconds and should have about three shakes with a medium level of vigor.

Though different cultures have different preferences for greeting people, handshakes have been around for centuries. Ancient Greek sculpture and texts show evidence of people shaking hands. Some researchers believe the handshake was introduced into the western world by Sir Walter Raleigh. It is believed to be an indication that the hand holds no weapons.

Today, handshakes are used in many different venues. Athletes and coaches shake hands before and after games to display good sportsmanship. Secret handshakes can be common in sororities, fraternities, and other clubs or groups. In Arabic-speaking countries, people use the greeting “peace be upon you” when shaking hands. Moroccans of the same gender typically kiss one another on the cheek or place their palm on their heart while giving a handshake.

Consequently, there are also some cultures which do not use handshakes at all. In Turkey, shaking hands is not the primary greeting among men except in business situations. Instead, they kiss each other twice on the cheek.

Orthodox

Jews and Muslims have unique customs for shaking hands – men and women do shake hands with members of the same sex, but touching of any kind, including shaking hands, is prohibited between members of different sexes.

Review

1. People don't like to shake hands with others who have _____, _____, _____, or _____.
2. What hand should you squeeze with?
3. How long should a handshake last?
4. Who is believed to have introduced handshakes to the western world?
5. What is a handshake an indication of?
6. In what organizations are secret handshakes used?
7. What greeting is used with handshakes in Arabic-speaking countries?
8. Name three cultures that have restrictions on the use of handshakes.
9. How do Moroccans greet each other?
10. What university studied “the perfect handshake?”

Handshakes should be firm and last about three seconds, according to new research from the University of Manchester.
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History Connection

Choose one country and research the ways people greet each other in casual, business, and formal settings. Write a one-page paper about these customs. In the paper, explain the role of handshakes in these cultures and why they are– or are not – used on a regular basis.