

Language Links

Corporate meeting planner

If you're a naturally shy person, it can be hard to speak confidently in public. Fortunately, there are plenty of confidence tricks you can use to make sure your shyness doesn't prevent you from taking part in a meeting:

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♥ prepare what you want to say in advance so you know you won't forget anything important

♥ practise in front of a mirror the day before

♥ jot down notes about what you want to say

♥ know what phrases you can use to introduce your main points

♥ prepare answers to possible questions people could ask you

♥ worry less about perfect English, but more on your ideas

♥ maintain eye contact with all participants

♥ remember the importance of body language: nod to show you agree, frown if you don't understand, and smile when you meet people

♥ ask the chair for help, if necessary

♥ check and confirm important information with other meeting participants

It's a lot to remember, but try one of these ideas per meeting, and you'll soon find you get more out of business meetings.

By
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Adapted from : <http://www.improvespokenenglish.org>

Culture Corner

DOING BUSINESS IN SINGAPORE

Singapore has come a long way since its first official elections in 1959. Realising that the island had nothing to offer apart from its inhabitants, successive governments have worked miracles in creating a modern, vibrant and successful economy.

In addition to economic success the island is also a fine example of harnessing multiculturalism and creating a relatively tolerant society. Singapore is an amalgam of an indigenous Malay population with a majority of third generation Chinese as well as Indian and Arab immigrants. As a result it is very difficult to generalise about the country as a whole. The following guide to doing business in Singapore shall offer some introductory tips.



Communication

When doing business in Singapore you will notice the people are a very polite and as a result their communication style can come across as quite vague or confusing. This has evolved due to the need to maintain face and respect relationships. For example, even if someone disagrees with you they would **never** outrightly say "no". They may even use the word "yes" but it could mean anything from "I agree" to "I'm not sure" to "no". As Singaporeans communicate implicitly it is up to the other party to read between the lines to make sense of what is being said.

Similarly when asking questions Singaporeans will use a "yes/no" formula, as in "Would you like to have dinner or not?" Although this may come across as slightly rude it is in fact the opposite. The question is being asked in such a way that it does not impose any obligation on the person to give an answer in any particular way, in other words "Whatever you are comfortable with".

When doing business it is not uncommon for Singaporeans to laugh or smile in seemingly inappropriate points in meetings. Again this relates back to protecting face and maintaining harmony. A smile may actually hide shyness, anger or disapproval whereas a laugh could be disguising anxiety.

Business Meetings

Business people in Singapore are cautious. They like to make sure they are doing business with the right person(s) who also offer the best deal. As a result it is necessary to take things slowly, spend time establishing a good relationship and demonstrating your capabilities.

Maintaining face is critical. Ensure you are polite and professional at all times. As with the above, try not to be too direct in asking questions or giving answers. Rather than say "no" to a request rephrase it as "I will try," "I am not sure" or "We'll see". Losing your temper is a serious no-no. Always speak in gentle tones and remain calm even when under great pressure. This will gain you much more respect than becoming animated and 'passionate'.



By
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Adapted from : <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/etiquette/doing-business-singapore.html>

Here's the Answer

EXPRESSIONS OF QUANTITY : SPECIAL CASES



Q: I don't know when to use a singular verb or a plural noun for percentages, few, majority, and number.

A: Subject-verb agreement is generally quite straightforward in English. Here are a few that are useful for academic writing or presentations.

With fractions, percentages and indefinite quantifiers (e.g., *all, few, many, much, some*), the verb agrees with the preceding noun or clause:

With a **singular** or **non-count** noun or clause, use a **singular verb**:

Half of *what he writes* **is** undocumented.

Fifty percent of *the job* **is** routine.

With a plural noun, use a plural verb:

One-third of *the students* **have** graduate degrees.

Half of *his articles* **are** peer-reviewed.

Fifty percent of *the computers* **have** CD-ROM drives.

All *the studies* **are** current.

The words *majority* and *minority* are used in a variety of ways:

When *majority/minority* mean an **unspecified number** more or less than 50%, use a **singular verb**:

The *majority* **holds** no strong views.

A *small minority* **indicates** it supports the proposal.

When *majority/minority* mean a **specific percentage**, you may use **either a singular or a plural verb**:

A 75% *majority* **have/has** voted against the measure.

A 10% *minority* **are/is** opposed to the measure.

When *majority/minority* refers to a **specified set of persons**, use a plural verb:

A *majority of Canadians* **have** voted for change.

A *minority of the students* **are willing** to pay more.

Expressions using the phrase *number of* depend on the meaning of the phrase:

They take a singular verb when referring to a **single quantity**:

The number of *students registered in the class* **is** 20.

They take plural verbs when they are used as **indefinite quantifiers** (see rule 1 above):

A number of *students* **were** late.

By
Napassawan

Bits and Pieces

How to Read Body Language



Be aware of nervous gestures:

♥ If someone brushes their hair back with their fingers, this may be preening, a common gesture if the person likes you, or their thoughts about something conflict with yours. They might not voice this. If you see raised eyebrows during this time, you can be pretty sure that they disagree with you.

♥ If the person wears glasses, and is constantly pushing them up onto their nose again, with a slight frown, that may also indicate they disagree with what you are saying. Look to make sure they push up their glasses with an intent, not casually adjusting them. Look for pushing on the rim with two fingers, or an extra motion of wiggling the side of their glasses. The frown or raised eyebrows should tip you off. (Note: A frown may also indicate eyestrain, and constant re-adjusting of glasses could be the result of an improper fit. The distinguishing feature is whether they are looking directly at you while doing it.)

♥ Lowered eyebrows and squinted eyes illustrate an attempt at understanding what is being said or going on. It's usually skeptical. This is presuming they are not trying to observe something that's far away. (Note: A squint is another possible sign of vision issues.)

Watch their feet:

♥ A fast tapping, shifting of weight, laughing, or movement of the foot will most often mean that the person is impatient, excited, nervous, scared, or intimidated.

♥ The meaning of feet tapping can usually be discerned depending on the context; if you are currently talking and they are tapping their feet, that is an indication of a desire to leave (though usually this behavior manifests when the person is anxious to get somewhere specific, such as a meeting, rather than because of what you're doing specifically). Slow shuffling on the other hand, indicates boredom with the current situation. If during flirtation your legs/feet touch, tapping can generally be interpreted as nervous excitement. This is because if they were uncomfortable, they would discreetly move away from the contact, a much more subtle escape than indirectly trying to tell you to move away.

♥ Note though that some people with ADHD will constantly jiggle their legs. It doesn't mean anything, it's entirely subconscious and, while eccentric, it is difficult to stop. Some people also do it out of habit.

♥ If the person is sitting, feet crossed at the ankles means they're generally at ease.

♥ If while standing, a person seems to always keep their feet very close together, it probably means they are trying to be "proper" in some way. Sometimes feet together means that they are feeling more submissive or passive.

♥ Some people may point their feet to the direction of where they want to go or sometimes their interest.



By
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