

IV. Do's and Don'ts

Meeting People:

Do

- ✓ During the first few encounters, always use family names with Mr. or Ms. When meeting with officials, use their titles such as President, Director, Manager etc.
- ✓ Married Chinese women in China still keep their maiden surname.
- ✓ When you first meet or depart a brief handshake and smile will suffice.
- ✓ Hand over your business card with both hands, starting with individuals of the highest rank.
- ✓ Feel free to discuss a variety of topics. Be polite and show respect.

Don't

- ✗ Do not call people by their first name until you are asked to.
- ✗ Do not use a woman's husband's surname in combination with her own first name. However, you may address her as Mrs. (husband's surname).
- ✗ There is no need to bow. Do not embrace, hug or kiss Chinese people unless you have developed a close relationship with them.
- ✗ Do not put a card away carelessly after receiving it.

At the Dinner Table:

Do

- ✓ Dishes are always meant to be shared.

- ✓ Do ask for knives and forks if you don't want to use chopsticks. When not using chopsticks, lay them beside your dish.

- ✓ Use chopsticks quietly.

- ✓ The traditional Chinese toast is to hold up your glass with both hands and invite your friend to drink. The other person also holds up his or her glass with both hands and keeps eye contact. Both people drink at the same time.

- ✓ It is acceptable to pick up your bowl and hold it under your chin when you eat.

- ✓ Drink bottled or boiled water.

Don't

- ✗ Do not keep a dish of food for yourself unless it is individually served.

- ✗ Do not stick chopsticks upright in a rice bowl as this symbolizes serving the dead.

- ✗ Do not tap on your bowl with chopsticks.

- ✗ In a social situation, only drink after toasting or after being toasted.

- ✗ Do not feel embarrassed when other people are doing so.

- ✗ **Tap water is NOT drinkable.** This applies for the whole of China.

Gifts:

Do

- ✓ Do consult before buying flowers.
- ✓ Do write in blue or black ink for cards or letters.
- ✓ Do insist when giving gifts to Chinese people, even after they have refused.
- ✓ Do bring small gifts or presents when visiting friends.
- ✓ Do consult when choosing a gift.

Don't

- ✗ Do not buy white flowers (such as Chrysanthemums) unless for a funeral.
- ✗ Do not write in red ink as this symbolizes the ending of a relationship.
- ✗ Chinese people usually do not accept gifts immediately in order to show their modesty.
- ✗ Do not go empty handed. If someone gives you a present, it's best not to open it in front of them, or to ask before opening.
- ✗ Do not give a clock as a gift (watches are OK). The pronunciation of clock in Chinese sounds like "end of life".

Getting Around :

Do

- ✓ Do remember to bring water with you when you go out, as well as tissues in case there is no toilet paper (as is the case in most public toilets.)
- ✓ Always watch for traffic. When you take public transportation, keep an eye on your personal belongings.
- ✓ When staying in a hotel, always carry the hotel contact card with map, phone numbers etc. with you.

Don't

- ✗ Do not buy food or drinks from small street vendors. Do not talk to strangers who wish to sell something or exchange money.
- ✗ Do not be careless on the street. Chinese drivers don't give courtesy to pedestrians.
- ✗ Do not go out without knowing the details of your accommodation. Do not leave taxis without checking your belongings.

✓ **DO have this booklet with you all the time!**