GENERAL

an introduction to vietnamese etiquette the dos and don ts

Published: September 19, 2026 | Index ID: #-

An Introduction to Vietnamese Etiquette: The Dos and Don"ts

Traveling to Vietnam, whether for business, leisure, or a long term stay, offers a vibrant tapestry of culture, history, and hospitality. One of the most rewarding aspects of immersing yourself in Vietnamese life is learning how to navigate the subtle social cues that guide everyday interactions. From the way you greet a senior to the manner in which you plate your food, etiquette in Vietnam is woven into the fabric of daily life. Understanding these dos and don’ts not only shows respect for your hosts but also enriches your experience, helping you build genuine connections in this dynamic Southeast Asian nation.

Greeting Etiquette

Formal Greetings: The Handshake and the Bow

In Vietnamese culture, a firm handshake is the most common greeting, especially in business settings. When meeting someone for the first time, a slight nod or a gentle bow of the head acknowledges respect and attentiveness. For more formal occasions, a slight bow while holding your hands together in front of your chest—known as the “Vietnamese bow”—is a courteous gesture.

Using Titles and Honorifics

Vietnamese society places great emphasis on hierarchy and respect. When addressing someone, it is customary to use their title followed by their surname. For instance, a university professor would be addressed as **Giáo s** (Professor) + surname. Avoid using first names unless you have been invited to do so, as it can be perceived as overly familiar.

When to Offer a Handshake

- Business meetings and formal introductions
- Receiving a gift or a document from a senior
- Parting ways after a social gathering

Dining Etiquette

Setting the Table

In Vietnamese households, the eldest family member usually takes the first seat at the table. The host will often serve the first dish as a sign of respect. When dining in a restaurant, it is customary to wait for everyone to be served before you begin eating.

Using Chopsticks Properly

While chopsticks are widely used, there are a few key points to keep in mind:

1. Never stab food with chopsticks.
2. Do not point chopsticks toward others.
3. When you finish eating, place your chopsticks neatly across the bowl or plate, not on top of it.

Food Sharing and Portion Control

Vietnamese meals often involve communal dishes. It is polite to share a variety of items, ensuring that each person receives a balanced selection. If you are offered a dish that you cannot finish, it is acceptable to politely decline or ask to have it saved for later.

Toasting and Drinking Etiquette

When toasting, the host typically initiates the gesture. When you raise your glass, make eye contact with the host, and avoid clinking glasses in a rushed manner. If you are offered a drink, accept it with a polite nod or a slight smile.

Gift Giving

Choosing the Right Gift

When visiting a Vietnamese family or business, a small, thoughtful gift is appreciated. Popular options include:

- Quality tea or coffee
- Local crafts from your home country
- Elegant stationery or office supplies for business contacts

Presentation Matters

Wrap your gift in neat, neutral packaging. Avoid bright colors or overly elaborate designs, as these may be interpreted as ostentatious. Present the gift with both hands, a sign of respect.

When to Give a Gift

- During a business meeting as a token of appreciation
- At a family gathering or dinner party
- When visiting a new home or office

Business Etiquette

Meeting Protocol

In a corporate setting, punctuality is highly valued. Arrive a few minutes early to demonstrate professionalism. When introducing yourself, offer a firm handshake and state your name and company clearly.

Communication Style

Vietnamese business communication tends to be indirect and polite. Avoid direct confrontation or harsh criticism in front of others. Instead, use diplomatic phrasing and offer constructive feedback privately.

Dress Code

Business attire should be conservative. Men typically wear suits or dress shirts with slacks, while women opt for suits or modest dresses. Avoid bright or flashy colors; navy, charcoal, and dark green are safe choices.

Business Cards

Exchange business cards with both hands and take a moment to study the card before putting it away. This shows respect and interest in the other person’s role and organization.

Social Norms and Everyday Interactions

Respect for Elders

Elders are revered in Vietnamese culture. When speaking to an elder, use a respectful tone and avoid interrupting. If you are invited to sit near or behind an elder, do so with humility.

Public Displays of Affection

Public displays of affection are generally frowned upon, especially in rural areas or older generations. A gentle kiss or a handhold is acceptable in urban settings, but it is best to keep it discreet.

Handling Money and Transactions

When paying, it is customary to place money on the counter rather than handing it directly to the cashier. This gesture reflects humility and respect for the transaction.

Using the Left Hand

The left hand is considered less clean in Vietnamese culture. Avoid using your left hand to pass objects, serve food, or pay. This small courtesy goes a long way in showing respect.

Non Verbal Communication

Eye Contact

Maintaining moderate eye contact conveys attentiveness. However, prolonged staring can be seen as aggressive. Adjust your gaze to match the social context.

Body Language and Posture

Sitting with your feet flat on the floor is considered respectful. Avoid crossing your legs, as it can appear informal or disrespectful in certain contexts.

Gestures to Avoid

- Pointing your feet at people or objects.
- Using hand gestures that mimic the “thumbs up” sign, which can be offensive.
- Fist clapping or vigorous hand movements during conversations.

Religious Etiquette

Visiting Temples and Shrines

When entering a Buddhist temple or shrine, remove shoes and wear modest clothing. Avoid pointing your feet toward the altar and keep your voice low during prayers.

Respecting Religious Practices

During religious festivals such as Tet (Lunar New Year) or Mid Autumn Festival, observe local customs. Offer respectful greetings, refrain from loud conversations, and participate in traditional activities if invited.

Travel Etiquette

Street Etiquette

Vietnam’s bustling streets require a calm, patient attitude. Always cross streets at designated crosswalks and listen for traffic signals. When riding a motorbike, use hand signals to indicate turns.

Accommodation Etiquette

When staying in a homestay, follow the host’s house rules. Offer to help with chores, and respect their schedule for meals and rest.

Environmental Respect

Vietnam has a growing eco tourism industry. Dispose of waste properly, avoid littering, and respect protected natural areas. Carry a reusable water bottle and refill at designated stations.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Using your phone loudly in public places.
- Insisting on speaking English if the person can converse in Vietnamese; a few basic phrases can go a long way.
- Showing disinterest during a conversation by looking away or checking your watch.
- Accepting a gift with only one hand; use both hands to show appreciation.

Conclusion

Mastering Vietnamese etiquette is more than learning a set of rules—it's about embracing the values of respect, humility, and community that define Vietnamese society. By paying attention to greetings, dining customs, business protocols, and everyday interactions, you'll not only avoid cultural faux pas but also forge lasting relationships. Whether you're sipping coffee in Hanoi's Old Quarter or negotiating a contract in Ho Chi Minh City, the thoughtful application of these dos and don'ts will leave a positive impression and enrich your journey through Vietnam.

Baca Juga (Artikel Terkait)

- **advanced engineering electromagnetics solution manual edition hardcover by balanis constantine a published by wiley**
  URL: http://www.denniswildberger.com/advanced-engineering-electromagnetics-solution-manual-edition-hardcover-by-balanis-constantine-a-published-by-wiley.pdf
- **advanced engineering electromagnetics solutions manual**
  URL: http://www.denniswildberger.com/advanced-engineering-electromagnetics-solutions-manual.pdf
- **advanced engineering electromagnetics wiley 1989 grading**
  URL: http://www.denniswildberger.com/advanced-engineering-electromagnetics-wiley-1989-grading.pdf
- **advanced engineering fluid mechanics by biswas**
  URL: http://www.denniswildberger.com/advanced-engineering-fluid-mechanics-by-biswas.pdf

Tags: #introduction #vietnamese #etiquette