

China



- Capital:** Beijing
- Population:** 1.2 billion (approx)
- Religion:** China is officially atheist, but its constitution allows freedom of religious beliefs, and there are Buddhists, Taoists, Confucians, Muslims, and others. There are also a few Christian churches and Islamic mosques in the major cities. Percentages for religious affiliations are not available.
- Government:** Socialist republic
- Ethnic Groups:** Han Chinese - 93%, remaining 7% are made up of 55 distinct ethnic minorities.
- Language:** Mandarin – many dialects in spoken language, but only one common written language. Most business people speak English.
- Currency:** The principal denomination is the yuan (CNY). The currency itself is known as Renminbi, or RMB. The two words - yuan and Renminbi - are often used interchangeably, with yuan used to express amounts of currency.
- China has the world's oldest continuous civilisation with recorded history beginning 4000 years ago. It covers a vast area of eastern Asia, bordered by 14 countries. The northern and western areas are arid with extreme temperature variations. The south and south east are warmer with year round rainfall. Two thirds of the population live in the low lying east.
 - Chinese society is patriarchal in practice and several generations tend to live together, although this is becoming less common. Even in China however, the family is under threat and divorce and unemployment are rising. Materialism has replaced the puritanism of the past. There is a rapidly growing business middle class, particularly in the south east.
 - China is a single party state dominated by the Communist Party. A program of economic reform is pushing the country towards a market economy. Low wage costs and booming exports are causing strong growth but inflation and industrial pollution are becoming real problems.
 - Most of China is now open to tourists and approximately 4 million visitors now arrive each year, with Hong Kong the main entry point.
 - One quarter of the earth's population lives in China, making it the most populous country in the world. As a result, the government has implemented a rigorous birth control program that limits couples to only one child.

Business and Social Etiquette

- Stick to conservative suits in subtle colours. Even casual dress should be conservative.
- Women should not wear high heels or short sleeved blouses. Modesty is the key.
- It is very important to be punctual in China, not only for business meetings, but for social occasions as well. Lateness or cancellation is a serious affront. In fact, it is probably best to arrive a little early if you are the guest.
- Business is not usually discussed during meals. Do not start eating or drinking before the host.
- You will be offered a wide range of different courses. It is courteous to sample all of them.
- Leave a little food on your plate when you have finished eating, otherwise it will be assumed that you are still hungry and you will be offered more food.
- Handle chopsticks with care: do not 'spear' the food with your chopsticks or stick them upright in your bowl of food, as this can resemble joss sticks (which are associated with death). Avoid dropping chopsticks as it can mean bad luck.
- A slight bow or nod on greeting is usual. You may be offered a handshake, but wait for the Chinese to offer their hand first. Chinese handshakes may last longer than the western style and are less firm.
- Use formal titles wherever possible.
- Avoid using many hand gestures when speaking as this may be distracting to the Chinese.
- Physical contact between men and women is highly inappropriate in public.
- It is considered offensive to point when speaking.
- If pointing at something, use your open palm.
- Either a handshake or a slight bow on greeting is usual; Chinese handshakes may last longer than the western style and are less firm.
- Business negotiations are never direct and are conducted at a slow pace.
- Business cards should be presented and received with both hands. Bring business cards with a translation printed (in Mandarin Chinese) on the reverse side. Gold ink is the most prestigious colour for the Chinese side. Never place a person's card in your wallet or put it in your back pocket. Never write on the back of a business card.
- Bring several copies of all documents to your meetings.
- Never exaggerate your ability to deliver, because the Chinese believe humility is a virtue – and also because they will investigate your claims.
- Most Chinese will not make an important decision without first consulting the stars for an auspicious day and hour.

- Be patient. The Chinese are very cautious in business matters, and will expect a strong relationship to be built before they close a deal. Expect delays, show little emotion, and do not talk about your deadlines.
- At the end of a meeting, leave before the Chinese.
- It is considered an honour to be served by one's host, and it is not customary to remain at the table once a meal is finished.
- In China, gratuities are considered an insult, although some expect tips from foreigners.
- The Chinese are loyal citizens. In communications with them it is best to avoid political discussions and any criticism of government leadership and policies. Correspondingly, it will not reflect well on you if you criticise your own government.
- For small talk in correspondence or conversation with Chinese, good topics include Chinese culture and history, and China's economic progress. You should also refer to China as 'China' or 'the People's Republic of China', not 'Mainland China'.

Gift Giving

- It is against the law to give gifts to government officials, although is acceptable in the business world
- Avoid giving a gift to an individual in public as it may embarrass them. It is preferable to give the gift in private, or make the gift to the group as a whole.
- Make sure that your gift does not have a label on it indicating that it was made anywhere in Asia.
- If your gift consists of several items, make sure they don't add up to an even number, which means bad luck. Also, the numbers four and nine are very bad luck. Numbers denoting very good luck are eight and three.
- Quality writing pens as considered favored gifts.
- Do not give the following as gifts:
 - Cutlery – signifies the severing of a relationship
 - Straw sandals, storks or cranes – associated with death
 - Handkerchiefs – symbolize sadness
 - Anything white, blue or black
 - Clocks – the word for clock is similar to the word for death
- Wrap presents carefully:
 - Do not use the colours green, white, blue or black – associated with death and mourning.
 - Lucky colours are red and gold (royal colours), yellow or pink (happy colours).
- Give and receive gifts with both hands.
- Gifts are not usually opened in front of the giver.

Language

- Family names are traditionally mentioned first, then the given name composed of one or two parts eg. Suan Imm is the given name of Lim Suan Imm. Given names should not be broken up. Many overseas Chinese have adopted Western first names or reversed the order of their name. Chinese women keep their own family names when they marry, and the Chinese rarely call each other by their given names. Use Mr, Mrs or Miss unless an alternative is offered.

English	Mandarin	Phonetics
Hello	Ni hao	Knee how
Good morning	Zao shang hao	Tzaow shang how
Good evening	Wan shang hao	Wahn shang how
Good bye	Zai jian	Dzye jee-en
Yes	Dui	Doo-ee
No	Bu dui	Doo doo-ee
Please	Qing	Ching
Thank you	Xie xie	Shee-yeh shee-yeh
You're welcome	Bu xie	Boo shee-yeh
I don't understand	Wo bu dong	Wah boo dong

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