

Unit 3 - Skills Practice



The objectives for this unit are:

- reading: read a text about making cultural mistakes when visiting other countries.
- writing: write a covering letter for a job application.

Unit 3 - Skills Practice - Reading

The following words and phrases appear in the text you are going to read in this section:

gaffe an embarrassing mistake made in public
He made a terrible gaffe in front of his bosses.

splinter a small, thin, sharp piece of wood or glass that has broken off a larger piece
I've got a splinter in my finger and I can't get it out.

bestow (formal) give something to somebody, especially to show respect
She was bestowed with gifts at her retirement party.

blunder make a stupid or careless mistake
The government blundered in its handling of the crisis.

repast (formal) a meal
The repast was fit for a king.

paramount more important than anything else
Innovation is paramount in our business.

overbearing trying to control other people in an unpleasant way
I don't like the way she talks to people. It's very overbearing.

chagrined (formal) feel disappointed, humiliated or annoyed
I felt chagrined when he told me he was too tired to come to my party.



In Japan it's rude to remove splinters from your wooden chopsticks by rubbing them together. In Belgium, air kisses, a common greeting, come in threes, so you shouldn't turn away before the last one is bestowed. And imagine the trouble you could get into in Bulgaria, where nodding your head up and down means 'no'.

The small gaffes travellers make often pass unnoticed – or uncommented upon – because people everywhere are increasingly aware of the strange habits of foreigners. But sometimes worlds collide when travellers misstep, negatively affecting the way foreigners are viewed and treated and exposing fundamental differences between 'us' and 'them'.

When this occurs, we experience 'profound discomfort, without knowing where it comes from,' says Raymonde Carroll, author of *Cultural Misunderstandings: The French-American Experience*.

The French, for example, ignore strangers and don't smile at foreigners in the street. This behaviour, which can make visitors to France feel unwelcome, reflects the value the French place on close relationships. They reserve their smiles for people they know, she says.

Travel author and television host Rick Steves has observed Americans blundering in Southern Europe and Ireland because of differences in the way that time is perceived. 'We treat it like money, to be saved, spent, and wasted,' he says.

'But there, time is to be enjoyed.' This may explain why many Americans interpret the service in European restaurants as aggravatingly slow, or even disrespectful. European waiters leave people alone to enjoy their meal instead of rushing them. 'In Europe, slow service is good service,' says Steves.

Food and eating can be cultural land mines. The Italians, for instance, are 'very peculiar' about food, says Flavio Frontini, who was born in Bologna and teaches Italian at Glendale Community College. 'Italians have specific hours in which to consume their drinks,' Frontini says. They drink cappuccino only at breakfast; after that, it must be espresso, following, not during, the repast.

In Russia cold weather and hard times are at the root of misunderstandings between tourists and locals.

'Leaving your overcoat on indoors is a huge mistake,' says Greg Tepper, founder of Exeter International, a Florida-based agency that specializes in travel to Eastern Europe and Russia. 'It implies that your hosts do not properly heat their homes.'

Saving face and behaving with humility are paramount in China, Japan and Korea, but it can be hard for travellers to know how to respect these virtues. Talking about your position and

accomplishments at a party may be perfectly normal in the US, says L. Robert Kohls, author of *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, but it's considered to be overbearing in the Far East. 'In the US, we build ourselves up in order to get ahead, but you're certain to get off on the wrong foot if you do it in Asia,' he says.

Mexicans are a little like Asians when it comes to self-expression, says Carl Franz, author of *The People's Guide to Mexico*. 'To most Mexicans, our Yankee tendency to get straight to the point comes across as aggressive, rude and very heavy-handed.'

You can learn about such differences through reading or by talking to people who have recently been in the country you're planning to visit. Developing communication skills also helps avoid misunderstanding, but it's even better to understand, in a

general way, why cultural mistakes arise.

Travellers make them, Carroll says, 'by thinking the world is everywhere as they know it.' It is only natural for a person born and raised in a certain place to believe that his or her ways of behaviour are the correct ones or the only ones that exist.

Then we smile at someone on a Paris street, and when we are ignored, we feel chagrined or insulted. But those kinds of moments can be a great opportunity. When they come, Carroll says, we should stop, focus and try to turn distress into discovery. Because every time we discover something about other people and other

cultures, we also learn something about ourselves. It's the differences between people that show us who we are and speak to us of our place in the world.

Consequently, we can only go abroad well prepared and well meaning, with an open mind and accepting that mistakes do, and will, happen.

Learning to avoid cultural gaffes: Read the text and check your understanding I

Read the text and match the typical behaviours with the parts of the world.

European Countries	Far Eastern Countries	United States

- | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| talking about yourself | coffee at certain times | slow restaurant service | fast restaurant service | enjoying your time |
| giving three kisses | being humble | talking directly | ignoring strangers | |

Learning to avoid cultural gaffes: Read the text and check your understanding II

Read the text again and choose the correct answers.

Raymond Carroll says that 'profound discomfort' comes from...

- A. being ignored.
- B. discovering new things.
- C. making errors in public.
- D. nodding your head in Bulgaria.

What does Rick Stevens think people from the United States should do in Europe?

- A. Be more relaxed about time.
- B. Stop leaving tips for waiters.
- C. Visit fewer restaurants.
- D. Waste less money.

Flavio Frontini says Italians...

- A. do not eat much for breakfast.
- B. don't like talking about themselves.
- C. have very specific eating and drinking habits.
- D. wear their coats indoors.

People in Far Eastern countries tend to...

- A. be arrogant.
- B. be modest.
- C. like parties.
- D. talk about themselves.

The author believes that travel is...

- A. a chance to practise new behaviours.
- B. a way to make new friends.
- C. an opportunity for us to grow.
- D. the only way to learn about other cultures.

The author wants travellers to...

- A. accept their mistakes.
- B. pay more attention to the local people.
- C. travel less.
- D. visit the United States.

Unit 3 - Skills Practice - Writing

The following words and phrases appear in this section:

Covering letter/cover letter (BrE/AmE) a letter containing extra information that you send with something, such as a job application.

Send a CV and covering letter to the following address...

Farewell the act of saying goodbye to somebody.

She said her farewells and left.

Relish to get great pleasure from something.

Teaching children with disabilities is something she relishes.

Proficient able to do something well because of training and practice.

I'm a proficient user of Microsoft Excel.

Covering letters: Read the text and check your understanding

Read the job advert and covering letter and complete the sentences. You must write one to three words in each space. Sometimes there is more than one correct answer.

45 Western Avenue
Reading RG5 8YY
Telephone: 07799 456 987
Email: g.adams@edc.com
20.11.14

Ms Janet Turner
Greenacre Babywear
4 Broad Street
Reading, RG1 7FT

¹Ref: GJT 03 Retail Administrator

²Dear Ms Turner,

³I am writing to apply for the position of Retail Administrator as advertised in The Guardian on 19th November.

⁴As you will see from my CV, I am presently employed as a sales assistant for a fashion retailer. In my current role I am responsible for ensuring that my section of the store is well stocked and beautifully presented, allowing me to provide high levels of customer service as well as enabling me to maximize sales. I particularly enjoy managing stock levels and ensuring that the store operates as efficiently as possible. I would relish the opportunity to work for Greenacre because of the company's excellent reputation, commitment to eco-friendly products and forward-thinking approach.

⁵I am well organized, work well in a team, and have experience of managing and ordering stock for my section using the company stock control system. I have recently gained an IT qualification, so am proficient with a variety of software. I am also highly numerate, achieving a grade A for mathematics GCSE. I feel I would be a valuable addition to the team at Greenacre.

⁶I have enclosed my CV for your consideration and am available for interview at any time on Tuesdays. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

⁷Yours sincerely,

Georgina Adams

Greenacre Babywear Retail Administrator

Greenacre is looking for an **energetic and efficient** Retail Administrator to maximize sales through effective management of stock – making certain that there is consistently the required level of stock availability. Applicants must be **highly organized, numerate, and have experience** with stock control systems and Excel.

Ref: GJT 03

To apply, please send your CV and covering letter to Janet Turner, Greenacre Babywear, 4 Broad Street, Reading, RG1 7FT.

- 1 Janet Turner expects applicants to send a CV and a [redacted].
- 2 All applicants should know how to use [redacted] and Excel.
- 3 Georgina Adams currently works in the [redacted] industry.
- 4 She thinks Greenacre has a good [redacted].
- 5 Georgina says that she works well [redacted].
- 6 She can only attend an interview on a [redacted].

Covering letters: Match the paragraphs to their functions

Match the functions on the right to parts 1-7 of the covering letter.

1 Part 1	greeting
2 Part 2	why I am good for the job
3 Part 3	reference
4 Part 4	why the job is good for me
5 Part 5	farewell
6 Part 6	further action
7 Part 7	reason for writing

Covering letters: Complete the phrases

Complete the sentences with the correct words. You must only write one word in each space.

- 1 I am writing to [] for the position of Retail Administrator.
- 2 I am presently [] as a sales assistant.
- 3 In my current role I am [] for ensuring that ...
- 4 I particularly [] managing stock levels.
- 5 I would [] the opportunity to work for Greenacre.
- 6 I have experience of [] and ordering stock.
- 7 I am [] in a variety of programmes.
- 8 I feel I would be a valuable [] to the team at Greenacre.
- 9 I have enclosed my CV for your [] .
- 10 I look [] to hearing from you soon.

DPY Media - Advertising Sales Executive

Renowned business-to-business media company requires ambitious, results-driven Advertising Sales Executive to expand our client base and build on existing relationships with key clients. Educated to degree level, you will have a proven track record in advertising sales and excellent negotiation skills.

To apply, please send your CV and covering letter to Robert Akers, DPY Media, 101 Rushey Way, London, W5 6NQ.

Covering letters: Practice

You have seen the following job advert in a national newspaper. Write a covering letter to apply for the position using the phrases you have learnt in this section.