Read the following magazine article. Then, at the end of it write T (true) or F (false) according to the main ideas presented.



Being Polite from Culture to Culture

1 Most people want to be polite and behave well around others. Being polite means knowing how to greet and talk to people. It means using good **manners** when eating. It means knowing how to give and receive gifts **appropriately**. Polite **behavior** in one country, however, may be impolite in another part of the world. Travelers need to understand the cultural differences in politeness so that they don't cause embarrassment.

2 For instance, when people meet, they often shake hands. How long should a handshake be? Should you hold the other person's hand gently or **firmly**? In the United States, people prefer to shake hands firmly for a few seconds. In some Middle Eastern countries, people hold the person's hand gently for a longer time. Handshaking varies around the world.

3 What about eye contact[1]? In some countries you show **respect** when you look someone directly in the eye. In other parts of the world, to look at someone directly is rude. To be respectful, a person looks down at the ground.

4 There are also cultural differences in the way people use personal space[2]. When two people are talking, should they stand close together or far apart? Exactly how close should they stand? In North America, for instance, people usually stand about an arm's length



In some countries making eye contact shows respect.

apart during a conversation. However, in some countries in the Middle East and Latin America, people stand closer. It can be **awkward** if one person likes to stand close and the other person likes to stand farther apart.

5 Three authors wrote a book *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands* about cultural differences. In their book, they discuss greetings, gift-giving, and time. Around the world cultures have different ideas about giving gifts. In the United States,



Being polite means knowing how to give and receive gifts appropriately.

if someone gives you a gift, you should open it while they are with you. That way they can see how happy you are to receive it. In China, you should open a gift after the person is gone.

6 Another cultural difference is time. If someone invites you to dinner at their house at 6 p.m., what time should you get there? Should you arrive early, late, or exactly on time? In Germany, it is important to arrive on time. In Argentina, polite dinner guests usually come 30 to 60 minutes after the time of the invitation. When traveling, remember that each country has a different definition of being on time.

7 A final area to be careful about is body language, including **gestures**. Is it acceptable to touch a person on the shoulder? How do you wave goodbye or hello? How do you gesture to someone to "come here"? All of these can be different from one culture to another. In Thailand, it is rude to touch someone on the head with the palm of the hand. The gesture for "come here" in the U.S. is only used for calling animals in some other countries.

8 If you are going to live, work, or study in another country, it is important to learn the language. But it is also important to learn about cultural differences. This way, you can be polite and **make a good impression**. People around you will feel comfortable and respected. Politeness and good manners can be good for making friends, good for traveling, and good for business, too.

Main Ideas

Read the statements. Write *T* (true) or *F* (false).

___ 1. Polite behavior is the same everywhere.

___ 2. People make eye contact in different ways in different cultures.

___ 3. Most people are comfortable with same amount of personal space.

___ 4. Being on time is important in every culture.

___ 5. Some gestures are polite in one country and rude in another.

___ 6. It's only important to know what is polite in your own country.