

Commonly confused nouns: *habits*, *customs* and *practices*

1 Tick the correct sentence in each pair.

- 1 a As a tourist, you should show respect for local behaviour.
b As a tourist, you should show respect for local customs.
- 2 a They encourage the practice of teachers reading aloud to young children.
b They encourage the habit of teachers reading aloud to young children.

A **habit** is something a person does regularly in a particular way as part of their everyday life, often without thinking about it:

*After a while, separating rubbish for recycling just becomes a **habit**.*

*People's **eating habits** have changed. Families no longer eat meals together.*

A **custom** is something people in a particular country or of a particular religious or ethnic group do because it has been part of their culture or way of life for many years:

*He studied Maori culture and **customs**.*

*The **custom of decorating** eggs goes back hundreds of years.*

A **practice** is a method of doing something which is usually used, especially in a particular country, industry, etc. In this sense, *practice* is a countable noun.:

*The report condemned **the practice of keeping** prisoners in chains.*

*Modern **agricultural practices** are to blame for the decline in wild flowers.*

Someone's **behaviour** is the way they behave generally or on a particular occasion.

Behaviour is usually an uncountable noun and has no plural form:

*The appalling **behaviour of** a minority of fans ruined the event for everyone.*

2 Correct the mistake below.

It is a British habit for a man to carry his new wife into their new home.

It is



3 Underline the best noun to complete each of the sentences below.

- 1 The people of the island are proud of their history and *customs/behaviours*.
- 2 It is now a common *practice/custom* to allow calculators in maths lessons.
- 3 Parents need more control over their children's viewing *habits/practice*.
- 4 In accordance with Muslim *custom/habit*, he was buried within hours of his death.
- 5 He's picked up some bad *behaviours/habits* from his new friends.
- 6 We hope to end the *habit/practice* of employing children to work in the mines.
- 7 It is sometimes difficult to keep local *habits/customs* alive in a global age.
- 8 Should you reward children for good *behaviour/habit*?