

1. The Power of Saying Hello

by [Mary Hartley](#)



The South Downs National Park Authority is running a campaign to encourage people walking, sauntering, running, picnicking or generally enjoying this lovely area of the countryside in the South of England to treat each other courteously and they suggest that we say hello when we pass by someone, say thank you when someone makes way for us or opens a gate or whatever, that we say excuse me when we...well, you get the picture.

Apparently, this is part of a general campaign to encourage people to explore the landscapes and to encourage friendly and responsible behaviour. Nothing wrong with that. It's just a shame that we need reminders to be civilised.

Greeting people we don't actually know but whom we encounter face to face as we go about our daily business is a habit with many benefits.



Social interaction is thought to be an essential component of mental wellbeing, and it makes a significant contribution to health and longevity. It makes us aware of those with whom we share our space. It acknowledges that we are not alone on the planet. It affirms the presence of another human being. It reminds us that we are all connected. To refuse to do so seems perverse and grumpy. It's as if we are saying that only those people who are privileged to be part of our close circle, only those whose names we know, are worthy of a moment's attention. It's actually a bit arrogant.

We all hate feeling ignored:

- 'Walked straight past as if I wasn't there.'
- 'Didn't even glance in my direction.'
- 'Completely blanked me.'
- 'Looked right through me.'

Although we know that the offending person might have just been miles away, wrapped up in their own thoughts, the sting is still there.

Sometimes we're embarrassed to say hello. It feels intrusive, even invasive. We wonder what the other person will think of us. We worry about seeming odd or gauche. But you know, it's a real shame if we let self-consciousness and over-analysis get in the way of healthy human interaction. And although it is something of a compromise, you can actually 'say hello' without speaking.

- Greetings can consist of any of the following, singly or in combination:
- Brief eye contact. And don't worry about the 'eye' thing, just glance at the person's face.
- A quick raising of the eyebrows.
- Something like a smile. It doesn't have to be a full-on grin, but a little stretch or softening of the mouth...
- A nod.

- An inclination of the head.
- A hand movement.
- A tip of the cap. Well, why not? If you're wearing one, of course.
- Spoken words:

○ Hi, Hello, Morning/afternoon/evening

And that's all you have to do. You don't have to stop and chat. You don't have to become best friends. Just greet and move on, or study your phone, or gaze into the distance. You've done it.

Habits are catching. Your behaviour may well encourage someone to behave in the same way. That is one of the ways in which norms are established. A little nudge in the direction of friendliness and civility can only do good.

And for the romantics out there, who knows what might come of a greeting? True, 'It Started With An Eyebrow Flash' doesn't have quite the same resonance as 'It Started With A Kiss' (thank you, Hot Chocolate), but hey...

The way someone greets you can give you a first impression. If a person says "Good morning", they may be polite. If they smile and look at you, they might be friendly. If they nod their head or wave, they could be respectful. We often think that people who greet us nicely have good manners or received a good education. On the other hand, if someone says nothing, we might think they are unfriendly or shy. First impressions are important, and greetings can say a lot!

Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Text: *The Power of Saying Hello* by Mary Hartley

Total: 50 points

A. Pre-reading Questions (10 points – 3 to 4 points each)

Answer in complete sentences.

1. How do you usually greet people you don't know?

2. Why do you think greetings are important in society?

3. Describe a time when someone's greeting made you feel better.

B. Vocabulary Match (10 points – 2 points each)

Match each word with its correct meaning. Write the letter of the correct meaning next to the number.

1. Courteously	a. Unfriendly or moody
2. Grumpy	b. Politely and respectfully
3. Intrusive	c. Awkward or embarrassing
4. Gauche	d. Rude or too direct
5. Civilised	e. Polite, well-mannered

Reading Comprehension (Multiple Choice – 20 points total, 4 points each)

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. **What is the main goal of the campaign promoted by the South Downs National Park Authority?**
 - A. To limit how many people visit the park
 - B. To encourage people to greet and treat each other politely
 - C. To reduce environmental pollution
 - D. To teach people about local animals

2. **According to the author, greeting others can:**
 - A. Be dangerous and intrusive
 - B. Waste time and energy
 - C. Improve mental wellbeing and remind us we are not alone
 - D. Replace the need for close friendships

3. **Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a non-verbal greeting in the article?**
 - A. Eye contact
 - B. Nodding
 - C. Waving
 - D. Hugging

4. **Why might someone avoid greeting a stranger, according to the article?**
 - A. They want to be rude
 - B. They feel embarrassed or self-conscious
 - C. They think greetings are illegal
 - D. They are told not to by park authorities

5. **What does the author mean by "Habits are catching"?**
 - A. Bad habits spread faster than good ones
 - B. People often copy the friendly behavior they see
 - C. It's dangerous to be too friendly
 - D. Saying hello can lead to misunderstandings

D. Reflection (10 points)

Write a short paragraph (5–6 sentences):

Do you agree that small gestures like saying hello can make a big difference? Why or why not?
