READING ▶1:11



We talked to June Galloway about her book,
Get off on the Right Foot: Don't Let the Wrong Gesture Ruin Your Day.

English is the world's international language. But in your book, you've focused on non-verbal communication. Why is that so important?
Well, gestures and other body language can have different meanings in different places. Something that you think is friendly or polite could come across as very rude in another culture. I've described many of these customs and cultural differences so my readers don't get off on the wrong foot when they meet people from places where the culture differs from their own.

Can greeting someone in the wrong way really lead to misunderstanding?
In some cases, yes. The firm handshake a North American expects may seem quite aggressive in other places. And a light handshake—which is normal in some countries—may seem unfriendly to a North American.

In what ways can hand gestures lead to misunderstanding?
Well, as an example, we assume all people indicate the numbers one to ten with their fingers the same way. But in fact, they don't. While North Americans usually use an index finger for "one," most Europeans use a thumb. North Americans extend all ten fingers for "ten." However, Chinese indicate the numbers one to ten all on one hand. For example, an extended thumb and pinkie means "six," and a fist means "ten." Imagine how confusing this can be when you're trying to communicate quantities and prices with your hands!

What other gestures can cause confusion?
Take the gesture for "come here," for example. In North America, people gesture with the palm up. Well, in southern Europe, that gesture means "good-bye"! And in many Asian countries, the palm-up gesture is considered rude. Instead, people there gesture with the palm down.

I've heard that, in Japan, pointing with the index finger is not polite. Is that right?
Yes. Japanese prefer to point with the palm open and facing up.

Surely there must be some gestures used everywhere, right? What about the thumbs-up sign for "great"?
Sorry. That's extremely rude in Australia and the Middle East. This is why it's so important to be aware of these cultural differences.

Art

A IDENTIFY SUPPORTING DETAILS Check the statements that are true, according to the article. Write ✗ next to the statements that are not true. Explain your answers.

- ☐ 1 In most of Europe, a thumb and an index finger mean "two."
- ☐ 2 In North America, a thumb and a pinkie mean "two."
- ☐ 3 Japanese point at pictures with an open palm facing up.
- ☐ 4 To be friendly, North Americans greet others with a light handshake.
- ☐ 5 Everyone uses the thumbs-up sign for "that's good."

> "True. Galloway says most Europeans begin with the thumb. So the index finger is the next finger after that."

LIVEWORKSHEETS

A **NOTEPADDING** Answer the questions. Explain what happened. Write as many details as you can.

Have you ever been someplace that was really fascinating?

Have you ever eaten something that was really strange or disgusting?

Have you ever done something that was really thrilling or frightening?

LIVEWORKSHEETS