

Listening
Part One

Aspects of Chinese Culture

1 Listen to the recording and fill in the gaps.

Presents

Use both hands to give and _____ (1) a present. In fact, when handing anything to a 'superior', use both hands; if using one hand, make sure that it is your right hand. It is polite to refuse presents a few times so be prepared for a bit of verbal volleyball. If _____ (2) gives you a present (in a formal situation), it is considered rude to open it on the spot in front of the gift-giver; instead, it should be put aside and _____ (3) later.

Personal Questions

Chinese people – acquaintances, strangers, and co-workers alike – ask many questions which would be considered too _____ (4) by western standards. They may touch on your salary, the cost of your possessions, your marital status, various details concerning members of your family, your age, and your blood _____ (5). It is seen as being friendly so try not to be offended and feel free to ask questions in return.

Flattery, Modesty and Face

Chinese culture stresses harmony over debate, modesty over confidence, and the _____ (6) over the individual. You should give frequent praise, refute any flattery you receive, and be careful with offering unsolicited opinions. The cliché that Chinese culture is a culture of 'face' is very much true. Face means showing _____ (7) and, more importantly, never embarrassing anyone. Part of making sure people don't 'lose face' is avoiding blunt _____ (8) to requests, whether those requests are reasonable or not.

Taboos/Superstitions

Chinese superstitions are often related to homophones (words that are _____ (9) the same way but have different meanings). The number 'four' sounds like the word for 'death' so it is considered an _____ (10) number; consequently, hospitals don't have a fourth floor, instead calling it the fifth floor. In a similar fashion, the Chinese word for umbrella sounds like the word for 'to break apart' so it's bad luck to lend an umbrella to a friend; it is a sure omen that you will never see each other again. This is _____ (11) important for dating couples the first few times they go out together. If you like your new friend, take the time to escort him or her with the umbrella out to the bus stop or taxi. Similarly, giving a clock as a present is a big *faux pas* as the phrase 'to give a clock' sounds like 'to attend a _____' (12). Some colours are also considered unlucky in certain situations. Never give white flowers (white is associated with funerals), nor give money in white envelopes.

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1. Are any of these cultural practices and ideas similar to those in your culture?
 2. What are some common superstitions in your country?
 3. What do's and don'ts should visitors to your country be aware of?