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Intercultural competence; care in the UK

Introducing the UK

1. Meeting and greeting
2. Relationships and families
3. Rules and manners
4. Socialising
5. Food and dining

A note on 'British' humour



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Introducing the UK

The United Kingdom is made up of four countries, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its full name is actually the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, though many people refer to it simply as the UK.

Great Britain is an island within the United Kingdom, made up of three countries, England, Scotland and Wales.

Northern Ireland is connected to the Republic of Ireland, though the Republic of Ireland is a separate state and is not part of the United Kingdom.

Although some of these countries have their own national flag, the United Kingdom is represented by the Union flag, more commonly known as the union Jack.

The population of the United Kingdom as of 2016 is 65 million. This number has increased by 10 million (over 18%) in the previous fifty years.

The United Kingdom has seen much of its growth from immigration, formerly from members of the British Empire and more recently from expansion in the European Union.

The result is that the United Kingdom is a multi-cultural society, with a large number of spoken languages, faiths and social cultures.

London is the capital city of England and also the capital city of the United Kingdom. It has a population of over eight million people.

As well as being home to the Houses of Parliament and the current UK government, London is also the official home of the Royal family. You can normally find the reigning monarch at the official residence of Buckingham Palace.

In the video we will look at aspects of the different cultures practiced in the United Kingdom, hoping to give you some valuable insights into how the locals act. It may come in useful for you during your time in the United Kingdom.

Although we are talking about the UK as a whole, when talking about the culture of the UK the term 'British Culture' is often used, even though this is technically inaccurate.



Meeting and greeting



<https://youtu.be/tnpXlR83-xU>

Saying 'Hello'

In the UK you will find that greetings are often quite short and informal, most often without any physical contact.

Don't be surprised if your friends and colleagues in the UK simply say 'hello' or 'hi' when greeting you. The greeting may even be this informal the first time you meet somebody.

Questions are often used as a greeting. You could be asked 'how are you?', 'how are you doing?', 'are you alright?', or the shorter form 'alright?'

Other questions could include 'what's up?' or 'how's it going?'

While you can answer any of these questions with a full answer, explaining exactly how you are or how things are going, the person asking the question is probably not expecting a detailed answer, it's normally just a friendly greeting. The normal response is something like 'ok, how about you?'

You may be greeted by someone stating how they feel about meeting you, using phrases like 'good to see you' or 'nice to see you'. Of course this is reserved for situations where the people greeting have met one another before.

Some greetings may be non-verbal, such as a hand raised around shoulder height with the palm facing forward. This may be used at a distance, across a road for example, or when there isn't really time to talk.

Another non-verbal greeting that is often used is a quick upwards nod of the head. This is used between people who may never have spoken before but who see one another often, such as on the train to work or at the local shop. This type of gesture could be exchanged between people over many months or even years without ever developing into a conversation or friendship.

A more formal and accepted greeting is a standard handshake. On first meeting or with someone you do not know well this will only include contact by hand, though in a more familiar situation people greeting may use their free hand to hold the arm or shoulder of the person they are greeting. This type of contact may be considered too 'forward' if you do not know the person well.

Also keep in mind that a handshake that is too firm may be interpreted as being aggressive, while a handshake that is too soft may be interpreted as weakness. Your goal should be to give a short semi-firm handshake.

The 'European' approach of kissing one or both cheeks, is becoming more common, but it is definitely not accepted by all. It can appear awkward as there is no standard in the UK for one, two or three kisses to the cheeks.

This level of physical contact is mostly reserved for family or very close friends, who may embrace and kiss one another. Initiating this type of greeting in the wrong situation could lead to embarrassment for one or both parties. The rule in this case is to wait to see how the other person approaches you in a greeting situation, you can then follow their approach.

There are of course greetings that are specific to certain times of the day. 'Good morning', 'Good afternoon' and 'Good evening' are used at the specified times as a greeting, though in reality you are wishing that the person has either a good morning, afternoon or evening.

There is an exception to this time of day greeting and that is 'good night'. Although the format is the same, 'good night' which is used any time from the evening onwards, indicates that you are parting company with the person you are speaking with, either you are leaving or they are. It is also used to indicate that you are going to bed.

Saying 'Goodbye'

When saying goodbye similar rules apply, with most people offering a gesture or verbal sign without making physical contact. 'Goodbye' or 'bye' are the most standard phrases, and they are often accompanied with a lifting or waving of the hand. Children, and some adults, may use the alternative 'bye bye', but this is generally seen as a juvenile expression.

'Good day' is an alternative expression though it is quite formal and depending on the intonation it can be used in a slightly offensive manner. For example if you have argued with someone you may say 'a good day to you too', even though you probably mean the opposite.

'Take care' is another common expression that can be used in less formal situations, particularly with friends and family. It suggests that you care about the person with whom you are speaking.

Farewell also indicates that you are leaving, but it is now quite an old-fashioned expression and suggests that the speaker is being a little dramatic, perhaps suggesting that they will never see you again.

There are a number of common and confusing expressions used in the UK that you should look out for. They tend to start with 'see you...'. They include 'see you later', 'see you soon', 'see you again' or simply 'see you'. You would not be wrong in wondering at what time later or soon they will see you, perhaps you missed an arrangement that was made, as they do suggest that you will meet again later or soon. However the person using the expression is simply being polite and will generally not have any definite plans to see you at a pre-arranged time.

If the expression is more specific such as 'see you at the cinema on Saturday' or 'see you at the restaurant at 8pm', then it is clearly an arrangement you should know about.

Terms of address

Despite people in the UK having a reputation for 'coolness', you will find some of the ways that people address you, including strangers, quite surprising.

You will be addressed with terms such as 'love', 'dear', 'sweetheart' or even 'darling'. These terms may appear to be 'over familiar', as if the person knows you well or has some strong emotional attachment to you. But don't worry, these terms are used and accepted merely as friendly replacements for your name, as in many cases the person addressing you will not know your name. These terms are more commonly heard by females, though as a male don't be surprised if a female addresses you in one of these ways.

Typically the person using such a term of address will either be older than you or in a position of service such as a shop worker or a waitress. 'What can I get you love?' is a very common thing to hear asked by an employee in a shop or a bar.

As a male you are likely to be addressed with terms that effectively mean 'friend'. The most common terms are 'mate' and 'pal', though certain regions will have their own local variants on terms for 'friend'. As a male you may also need to get used to being addressed as 'man', though surprisingly this term is not completely restricted to males, in some regions both genders are regularly referred to as 'man'.

One final term of address to be aware of is 'bro', the shortened form of brother. Again this has nothing to do with any family connection. The use of the word 'bro' is more commonly used amongst youths.

The way that you address people is just as important as how they might address you. The general rule would be to start out formally, calling an older or senior person by their title Mr, Mrs, Miss etc followed by their name, unless you are told to do otherwise. So Mr Brown may prefer you to call him Mr. Brown, while his wife Mrs Brown, may ask you to call her by her first name, Dorothy. You should also adopt this approach in a professional situation.

In certain work situations you may be expected to use a certain form, in which case you should follow the rules.

You can also use the formal terms of address of Sir, Madam, or even Miss, though in most situations this is considered a little too old fashioned.

Many school children will address their teachers as Sir or Miss, though it may surprise you to hear university lecturers asking their students to address them by their first name.

Exercices for meeting and greeting



EXERCISE 1 – Listening skills

Circle the correct answer.

- 1) What is the formal method of greeting someone in the UK?
 - A. A quick upwards nod of the head.
 - B. A handshake.
 - C. A raising of the arm to shoulder height.

- 2) When would you greet someone by saying 'good afternoon'?
 - A. Before 12pm.
 - B. After 12pm.
 - C. During the evening.

- 3) How might a child in the UK address you when departing?
 - A. Bye bye.
 - B. Take care.
 - C. Goodbye.

- 4) In a professional situation how should you address older people?
 - A. By their first name.
 - B. 'love' or 'darling'.
 - C. By using Mr or Mrs followed by their family name.

- 5) If someone says 'see you later', what do they normally mean?
 - A. We will meet later today.
 - B. We will meet again tomorrow.
 - C. It carries no specific meaning to a time or day.



EXERCISE 2 – Discussion activities

1) Working in groups, discuss the different ways that you might greet the following people in the UK:

A close friend

Your professional superior (your boss)

A co-worker, the first time you meet

An elderly person

Someone you see each morning on the train

2) Working in groups, discuss when someone might use the following expressions in the UK, consider who they might be talking to:

See you later

Good night

How is it going (how's it going?)

A good day to you too!

Take care

Extended activity: To extend the above activities as a way of consolidating understanding, create short role play scenarios that incorporate the use of the cultural language above.



EXERCISE 3 – Cultural comparison

Think about how people in the UK greet one another and compare this with the cultural behavior in your own country. Think specifically about the three topics covered, 'saying hello', 'saying goodbye' and 'terms of address'.

Write a short account that compares the way that people in the UK meet and greet and the way that people in your country do so. In each case try to identify common or similar practices as well as all of the differences.

When your writing is completed exchange it with a classmate and then read their cultural comparison.

Finally you should discuss your classmate's and your own work as a way of deepening your understanding of cultural practices in the UK, and appreciating how cultural differences exist.



Vocabulary

The following vocabulary is taken from the video script. Complete the definitions for each word. Keep in mind that the definitions for this exercise may not always be literal. You should provide definitions based on the video script.

Word	Your definition
Hello	
How's it going	
Mate	
Good bye	
Hi	
Good afternoon	
Nice to see you	
Bye bye	
See you	
Good night	
Bro	

Relationships and families



<https://youtu.be/8S57Za4Klx0>

In UK societies it is not uncommon for men and women to share many roles in society and in the home. In many households you will find men sharing the domestic jobs such as washing dishes, cooking, cleaning and laundry with their partner. It is worth noting that this has not always been the case and with older couples you may find that the distinction between what is considered the man's jobs and the woman's jobs is very clear. For example, you can find some older men that have never cooked or cleaned for themselves.

Despite this transition towards equality, it is not yet complete and the reality is that women generally undertake the majority of domestic duties in the home.

Most women in the UK also work outside of the home in regular jobs, whether they are full-time or part-time. There are far more women working part-time in the UK than there are men and this creates a gender 'pay gap', meaning men typically earn more money than women. A lot of work is ongoing to address this imbalance but like domestic jobs in the home, true equality is yet to exist.

In relationships there are some unwritten rules about how people display their affection for one another. It is common and socially acceptable to see couples walking hand in hand or with arms around one another. Some mild kissing may take place, often referred to as a 'peck' on the cheek or the lips. However it is not socially acceptable to kiss passionately in public and amongst strangers. It is not illegal to do so but this type of action may attract some unwelcome looks or comments. You are more likely to see teenagers behaving this way than older adults.

Although there is a move towards gender equality in the UK, it is still common to see a man open a door or pull out a chair for a woman, and less common to see a woman doing the same for a man. It is also more common for a man to ask for a date than it is for a woman to do so.

It is unusual to see people of the same sex holding hands in the UK, as the common interpretation will be that they are a gay couple, whether they are or not. Female friends may do so on occasion, but very few male friends would hold hands.

There are laws in the UK to protect the rights of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender people against discrimination, which means that in theory people can be open about their sexuality. Same sex marriage is legal and practiced in the UK. Despite these laws, social attitudes to same sex relationships are very mixed in the UK. While the situation is improving rapidly, some same sex couples are subjected to negative comments and attitudes.

Most adults in the UK choose to get married, though it is not uncommon for couples to live together and raise a family without being married. While this situation is not something that is approved of by all people, older people may think it is wrong, it is generally accepted socially and it does not create significant problems for children.

The divorce rate in the UK is over 40% and many children will be raised by a single parent. In most cases of divorce involving children, the children remain living with the mother. It is common for divorced fathers to look after their children on the weekend and you will often see fathers with their children in parks and shopping centres at weekends. While a high divorce rate is not something that anyone wants, divorce in the UK does not carry any social stigma of significance, meaning that it is an accepted part of UK life.

Many adults remarry after divorce and so the concept of the 'step-family' is a reality for many people in the UK. Many children live in family homes with step-brothers, step-sisters, step-fathers and step-mothers, to whom they do not have any biological relationship.

The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies, with almost 3% of women aged 15 – 19 giving birth every year. This often results in teenagers setting up homes with their own children at a relatively young age.

In contrast to this situation there has been an increase in the average age that UK adults leave their parental home. This is largely due to the rapidly increasing cost of housing in the UK and changes in the way that banks lend money for house purchases. It is far more likely that men will live longer with their parents than it is for women.

Exercises for families and relationships



EXERCISE 1 – Listening skills

Circle the correct answer.

- 1) What is the divorce rate in the UK?
 - A. 5-10%
 - B. 20-30%
 - C. 40-50%

- 2) If a couple live together, who is more likely to do most of the domestic duties?
 - A. Woman
 - B. Man
 - C. Equally shared

- 3) Why don't many UK couples kiss passionately in public?
 - A. It is illegal
 - B. It is not socially acceptable
 - C. It is too cold

- 4) If two adults of the same gender are holding hands in public, what is the general interpretation?
 - A. They are friends
 - B. They do not wish to lose one another
 - C. They are a gay couple

- 5) If someone's mother is divorced and then marries another man, what will the new husband's relationship be to this person?
 - A. Step-father
 - B. Second-father
 - C. Step-brother



EXERCISE 2 – Discussion activities

1) Working in groups, discuss what is meant by ‘gender equality’ in the UK. Consider specifically what it means in relation to the following contexts:

In the home

In the workplace

Social behavior

Age

2) Homosexuality is legal in the UK, though negative attitudes towards ‘gay’ people still exist.

In your group discuss why you think this is the case. Try to determine the main reasons for different people having negative attitudes.



EXERCISE 3 – Cultural comparison

1) How does the UK's approach to gender equality compare to the approach in your own country? Remember that although the UK is seeking gender equality in all aspects of society, it has yet to be achieved. Think about how the attitudes towards gender equality in the UK compare with attitudes to gender equality in your own country / culture.

Write a short piece that presents your ideas. Share this text with a classmate and discuss both of your responses.

2) The UK has a relatively high divorce rate, leading to the creation of many step-families and situations in which children only live with one of their biological parents.

Write a short piece that compares this situation to the situation in your own country / culture. Share this text with a classmate and discuss both of your responses.



Vocabulary

The following vocabulary is taken from the video script. Complete the definitions for each word. Keep in mind that the definitions for this exercise may not always be literal. You should provide definitions based on the video script.

Word	Your definition
Equality	
Part-time	
Peck (on the cheek)	
Gay	
Attitude	
Divorce	
Step-family	
Stigma	
Passionate	

Rules and manners: video script



<https://youtu.be/-C8wjaOMVeE>

In the UK there is very strong commitment to rules and regulations, with UK citizens often being the subject of jokes from European neighbours.

The 'queue' in UK cultures is almost sacred and UK citizens will dutifully stand in line one behind the other for long periods if necessary. They will often do this without speaking or making eye contact with those around them.

It seems that no matter how long the queue or waiting time...UK citizens will generally comply in silence

You may not appreciate how committed UK citizens are to queues until somebody attempts to 'queue jump'. Suddenly you will see otherwise quiet and mild mannered people become agitated or even angry very quickly. The queue jumper will soon be told that the people in the queue do not appreciate such actions and they will be instructed to join the back of the queue. It has often been said that this level of direct confrontation with strangers in public, is out of character for most UK citizens.

However, despite a level of protest, if the queue jumper persists and does not go to the back of the queue, he/she is more likely to get away with their action than in many other countries. There is a point at which most UK citizens will stop protesting for fear of embarrassing themselves.

You will find that UK citizens are quite proud of their orderly queues, seeing other more random methods as being inferior and somehow less dignified.

What is often referred to as the 'reserved' nature of UK citizens is demonstrated by the unwillingness to complain or make a fuss. Sometimes this is referred to as the British 'stiff upper lip'. You may hear UK people complaining about the quality of the service of food in a restaurant, but when the waitress asks if everything is ok, you will hear replies of 'oh yes, perfect', 'yes the food is delicious'.

Of course this attitude works in reverse, and direct criticism to a UK citizen may be taken very personally and cause more offence than you intended.

In a library you are expected to follow the silence or quiet rules, in cinemas you should not answer mobile phones, and if the sign says 'do not walk on the grass', then you are advised not to walk on the grass.

Of course in many cases not obeying the rules will not present too many problems for you, but it is worth considering that UK citizens will generally think less of you for not following the rules, as they do.

UK citizens are also considered to be very polite, and in fact some may say that they are often too polite. Phrases like 'thank you', 'please', 'sorry' and 'excuse me' are used all of the time in conversations. The frequency with which they are used may surprise you, even in a simple exchange they can be used many times. Though more surprising may be the response you get if you accidentally stand on someone's toe, as in most cases they will say 'sorry' to you.

Saying please when asking for something is expected, and saying thank you when receiving it is also expected. Generally speaking you will find this level of politeness returned by most people that you speak with. To not use please and thank you as often as UK citizens may be regarded as a little rude.

You should be aware of the way people in the UK regard time and punctuality. If an appointment is made for 9am you will be expected to attend at 9am and not 9.05 or later. If you are late for a meeting and you cannot provide a good reason then your host may consider that you value your time more than you value theirs.

This preoccupation with time can be detected in the way UK people talk about time, using expressions like 'saving time'.

Appointments are important to people in the UK and if you arrive to see someone without an appointment, particularly in a professional context, do not be too offended if they refuse to see you. Make an appointment.

If you are given a deadline in your professional life then UK people will expect you to meet it, otherwise people may question your capabilities.

Exercises for rules and manners



EXERCISE 1 – Listening skills

Circle the correct answer.

- 1) What are UK citizens well-known for?
 - A. Being confrontational
 - B. Being rude
 - C. Queuing

- 2) The reluctance of UK people to make a complaint is often referred to as the British...?
 - A. Stiff upper lip
 - B. Hard head
 - C. Politeness

- 3) When you see an instructional sign in the UK, what should you do?
 - A. Ignore it
 - B. Do what it says
 - C. Do what your friend does

- 4) How is a UK person likely to respond if you accidentally tread on their toe?
 - A. Report you to the police
 - B. Shout at you
 - C. Say 'sorry'

- 5) What time should you arrive at your 9am appointment?
 - A. 9am or before
 - B. Around 9am
 - C. Some time during the morning



EXERCISE 2 – Discussion activities

1) Working in groups, discuss why you think orderly queues are so important for people in the UK. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of queuing?

2) Many people in the UK do not complain for fear of embarrassing themselves or creating unnecessary problems.

Working in a group discuss the disadvantages to this approach. What situations can you think of in which 'not' complaining about a service could create subsequent problems.

3) Working in groups discuss why people in the UK will think less of you if you do not follow the rules as they do.



EXERCISE 3 – Cultural comparison

1) Write a short piece that compares the attitude towards rules and manners in the UK and the attitude towards rules and manners within your own country / culture. Within the text consider how you can adjust your own attitude to rules and manners to integrate effectively within UK culture.

On completion of your writing, share a copy with a classmate and discuss any adjustments either of you feel you should make within a UK context.



Vocabulary

The following vocabulary is taken from the video script. Complete the definitions for each word. Keep in mind that the definitions for this exercise may not always be literal. You should provide definitions based on the video script.

Word	Your definition
Queue jump	
Confrontation	
Embarrass	
Reserved	
Complain	
Obey	
Criticise	
Punctual	
Appointment	

Socialising: video script



<https://youtu.be/K5mQTAgyFtY>

Historically the British pub has been central to the lives of many people in the UK. While this has changed in more recent years as people have more options for socialising and many people are pursuing healthier lifestyles that sitting in a pub promotes, it is still a significant aspect of the culture.

Pubs are still used regularly as meeting places for friends and you should not be surprised if someone asks you to meet them at a pub. In fact, they will normally specify meeting inside a pub, as it is socially acceptable for both men and women to enter a pub on their own. Sitting at a bar or table waiting for friends is not uncommon, though the person waiting tends to avoid making unnecessary eye contact with strangers in the pub, often focusing on their mobile phone until friends arrive.

The UK has a reputation for 'heavy drinking', meaning many people consume large amounts of alcohol, often without eating. In fact some people will arrive at a pub after their dinner and remain for 3 – 4 hours steadily consuming alcohol. Being seen drunk, or intoxicated with alcohol, is not something to be proud of but it also not particularly shameful either. Do not be surprised to hear some people boasting (even exaggerating) about the amount of alcohol they consume and how drunk they have become on different occasions.

If you go to a pub you will be offered alcoholic drinks by friends. You shouldn't feel under any undue pressure if you do not wish to drink alcohol, as refusing alcohol in favour of a soft drink is not considered rude.

If a stranger offers to buy you a drink then it is acceptable to refuse politely if you do not wish to accept. Buying a stranger a drink is often interpreted as a sign to initiate a conversation, something that you may or may not wish to happen.

If you are in a pub with friends you may become part of a 'round'. A round is where each person in the group takes it in turn to buy drinks for all of the friends. If there are five people in your round you could quickly end up having drunk five drinks or more.

Night clubs offer a different version of the pub. They serve alcohol but usually play music and allow dancing, and generally stay open later. Night clubs are most often attended by younger people, though of course you will always find exceptions.

What is often surprising for people new to the UK, is the very revealing clothes that people wear, particularly young women. Even in the coldest months you will see young women in short skirts and dresses with exposed legs, shoulders and waists.

Visiting friends at their homes is a common social pastime. On arrival you will probably be offered a drink, even some snacks, but you will normally be disappointed if you expected a meal unless this was specified in advance as an 'invitation to dinner'. If you were not invited to dinner specifically, your host will assume that you ate before you arrived.

If you are invited to dinner then it is common to arrive with a small gift such as flowers or chocolates. You may arrive with a bottle of wine though do not be surprised if this is not shared at the meal, as your host may have already arranged the drinks. It would be considered impolite if you asked to take the bottle of wine back home with you.

At dinner it is considered polite to offer some help to your host, such as serving or clearing the dishes away. It is not as important for your host to allow you to help as it is for you to make the offer. Not offering may appear impolite.

Exercises for socialising



EXERCISE 1 – Listening skills

Circle the correct answer.

- 1) Which is the more common place for friends to meet in the UK?
 - A. Library
 - B. Park
 - C. Pub

- 2) Are people in the UK proud of getting 'drunk' (intoxicated with alcohol)?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Sometimes

- 3) Is it acceptable to refuse alcoholic drinks in a pub?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

- 4) If a stranger offers to buy you a drink, what does it normally mean?
 - A. They have a lot of money
 - B. They would like to speak with you or get to know you
 - C. They have made a mistake

- 5) If you are invited to dinner at a friend's home in the UK, which of the following would be suitable as gifts?
 - A. Bottle of wine
 - B. Puppy
 - C. Flowers



EXERCISE 2 – Discussion activities

- 1) Working in a group discuss the advantages and disadvantages of socialising in pubs in the UK. Try to consider as many different aspects of this leisure pastime as possible.

- 2) Working in a group discuss the way that UK people (particularly young women) dress when they attend pubs and nightclubs. Consider any negative consequences this type of decision making may have.

- 3) Working in groups discuss the type of dinner party that you would provide for your UK friends. Consider the type of food that you may serve and any other forms of entertainment.



EXERCISE 3 – Cultural comparison

1) Write a short piece that compares attitudes towards alcohol in the UK with attitudes towards alcohol from your own country / culture.

2) As we have heard it is not uncommon for young people (particularly women) to wear very revealing clothes when socializing, even when the weather is quite cold.

Write a short piece that compares this approach to clothing to approaches within your own country / culture.

3) Discuss with a partner the differences between how UK people host guests in their home and how this is done in your own country / culture.



Vocabulary

The following vocabulary is taken from the video script. Complete the definitions for each word. Keep in mind that the definitions for this exercise may not always be literal. You should provide definitions based on the video script.

Word	Your definition
Pub	
Night club	
Reputation	
Intoxicated	
A round	
Initiate	
Revealing	
Pastime	
Invitation	

Food and dining: video script



<https://youtu.be/4HrAwBqIZk4>

The typical eating pattern for a UK citizen is three meals a day, breakfast in the morning, lunch during the middle of the day and dinner in the evening. This sounds quite simple until you learn that people from different parts of the UK have different names for the same meals. In some parts of the UK the standard three meals are breakfast in the morning, dinner during the middle of the day and tea in the evening.

When people first encounter this difference they reasonably expect tea to be a drink rather than a meal. So if you are asked if you would like tea in the evening, keep in mind that the person asking you may be referring to a meal rather than a drink.

You may also here people talk about 'elevenses', which is a mid morning coffee break, afternoon tea which is taken between 3 and 4 pm, often with a light sandwich or biscuit, and supper which is a snack taken before bedtime.

The 'full English' breakfast of sausage, bacon, eggs, beans, mushrooms etc is relatively famous and considered to be the standard breakfast eaten in the UK. However if you were to eat so much fried food everyday you would soon become quite unhealthy. In fact only two thirds of people in the UK manage to take breakfast at home, with cereals or toast topped with jam or marmalade being the most common meals, particularly on working days when people tend to have less time.

Although you will see many coffee shops in the UK, the more traditional cup of tea is the most common drink to have with breakfast.

Typically breakfast is the smallest meal of the day, with lunch being slightly larger and the evening dinner being the largest meal of the three.

As most people are away from their homes during the day, at school or work, they often eat what is called a 'packed lunch', pre-prepared and taken with them in the morning. Lunches often consist of some sandwiches with cheese or cold meats, though healthier options may include salads and yoghurts. Don't be surprised in a work environment to see people opening plastic containers at lunchtime, which they may proceed to eat directly from.

The evening meal is still the main meal for UK people, though it is not always eaten in the way you might expect. Some families do eat together sitting around a table, but others will be just as comfortable sitting in soft chairs with trays on their laps, normally watching television together. If people in the family arrive home at different times it is not uncommon for each person to sit and eat their dinner alone in front of the television.

Most people will eat their evening meal between 5 and 7pm though there is not a standard time and so there remains a degree of flexibility for people.

Many people in the UK do not cook in the traditional way and the supermarkets prove this. You can find almost any meal pre-prepared and packaged in a supermarket, ready to be heated in a microwave or oven and then served. Fresh ingredients and vegetables are available of course, but many do not see the point of wasting time. In fact if you do want to cook with fresh ingredients, the supermarkets sell chopped vegetables and prepared meats to save time.

There is a growing awareness of the need to eat healthily in the UK, with government campaigns and encouraging television programmes, though change is slow and there is still a lot of unhealthy food being eaten.

The traditional dishes of roasted meat and vegetables, and fish and chips, are still eaten, though the UK has developed a more adventurous taste, with Chicken Tikka Masala being one of the most commonly eaten meals in the UK.

Exercises for food and dining



EXERCISE 1 – Listening skills

Circle the correct answer.

- 1) What is an alternative term to 'dinner' in some parts of the UK?
 - A. Food
 - B. Snack
 - C. Tea

- 2) What name can be given to a mid morning coffee break in the UK?
 - A. Elevenses
 - B. Coffee time
 - C. Brunch

- 3) What are the most common breakfast meals in the UK?
 - A. Full English breakfast
 - B. Cereals or toast
 - C. Fish and chips

- 4) What do people in the UK call the portable lunches that they take to work or school?
 - A. Carry snack
 - B. Mobile dining
 - C. Packed lunch

- 5) UK supermarkets sell pre-chopped fresh vegetables to save time for their customers:
 - A. True
 - B. False



EXERCISE 2 – Discussion activities

- 1) Working in a group discuss how people in the UK consume their main meals of the day, with each meal getting larger throughout the day. Think about the health implications of this approach while also considering why it is this way.

- 2) Working in a group discuss how the UK practice of families eating separately could impact on social and cultural cohesion.

- 3) Working in groups discuss why the government of the UK feel it is necessary to take action in promoting healthy eating amongst its citizens.



EXERCISE 3 – Cultural comparison

1) Write a short piece that compares attitudes towards cooking and diet in the UK compared to attitudes towards cooking and diet in your country / culture. Make a note of any things that you find particularly unusual.

2) The UK has a very varied appetite for different foods, resulting in the idea of a traditional national dish becoming less obvious

Write a short piece that describes why this is the case and compare it to the situation in your own country / culture.

3) Discuss with a partner the different meals and names for meals eaten through the day, until you feel that you both understand the different names. Discuss how this pattern of eating compares to patterns in your own country / culture.



Vocabulary

The following vocabulary is taken from the video script. Complete the definitions for each word. Keep in mind that the definitions for this exercise may not always be literal. You should provide definitions based on the video script.

Word	Your definition
Elevenes	
Sandwich	
Cereal	
Marmalade	
Packed lunch	
Traditional	
Campaign	
Adventurous	
Roasted	

A note on British humour: video script



<https://youtu.be/0wrvh1qDXAg>

The UK people like to think that they have a good sense of humour, though it is fair to say that not everyone will get the joke in what is called 'British humour'.

Making a joke or sharing a joke with others is an important part of UK culture and it is used for a range of different things. It can be used to promote togetherness, as a way of criticising someone without being too offensive. It may be used to bring up a controversial or unusual idea, or even to show that you like or dislike someone.

Most subjects are considered appropriate for jokes and you will hear people joke about many subjects, including themselves and you.

British humour is often described as being 'dry'. UK people have a tendency to make jokes while keeping a very neutral or serious expression on their face. Many visitors to the UK are caught out by this type of humour, often believing to be true what has been said as a joke. Sarcasm is also part of British humour, when someone says the opposite of what they actually mean. For example you might be told you have done a 'good job there', when the person really means that you have not done a good job.

A similar approach to humour is to understate what you actually mean, when something like 'not bad' actually means 'very good'.

While humour is a big part of communication for UK people and you are welcome to join in, keep in mind that humour should not be cruel or overly offensive.

You will notice that British humour is predominantly verbal, meaning that the joke is often in the creative use of language rather than visual humour. Most of the successful comedians in the UK are known for their clever use of language to make people laugh.

Don't be put off if you don't get all of the jokes that people make in the UK, as understanding language at this high level takes time. People will normally make allowance for those that are not native speakers of English.