

PHILIPPINES CUSTOMS

Greetings:

Initial greetings are friendly and informal. Handshakes are typical, but verbal greetings are acceptable alone. To show additional respect or enthusiasm, one places the free hand on top of a handshake or uses it to pat the other person's shoulder.

Between women or between men and women, a *beso-beso* (kiss to each cheek) is common. Common informal greetings include *Saan ka pupunta?* (Where are you going?) and *Saan ka galing?* (Where have you been?). A typical response is *Diyan lang* (There, only). *Kumusta ka na?* (How are you doing?) is more formal. *Anong balita?* (What's new?) and *Ayos ba tayo 'dyan?* (Is everything all right?) are used among friends. Just as common are *Hi* and *Good morning*.

Young adults commonly address older adult strangers as *tita* (auntie) or *tito* (uncle). The elderly might be called *lola* (grandmother) or *lolo* (grandfather).

Gestures:

Hand movement is not excessive in conversation, but Filipinos do use various hand and body gestures to communicate.

Raising the eyebrows can mean “hello” or “yes.” To beckon, one waves all fingers with the palm facing down. A quick head nod can mean “I don't know.” Filipinos often point by puckering the lips. A shoulder shrug with open palms facing up means *Bahala na*, a common expression meaning, “Accept what comes and bear it with hope and patience.” A widely opened mouth means “I don't understand.”

Holidays:

Public holidays include New Year's Day, Easter (Thursday–Sunday), Bataan Day (9 Apr.), Labor Day (1 May), National Heroes Day (6 May), Independence Day (12 June), All Saints' Day (1 Nov.), Bonifacio Day (30 Nov.), Christmas, and Rizal Day (30 Dec.).

Christmas is the most celebrated holiday; decorating begins as early as September. The Christmas season extends through 6 January (Three Kings Day) and is a time of family reunions and great merriment.

On Christmas and New Year's Eve, people light fireworks to celebrate the season and banish the old year's evil spirits. Windows, doors, and drawers are opened to let out the bad spirits and welcome the good. For luck, people hang thirteen ripe, round fruits at their doorway, wear clothes with circular prints, and carry money in their pockets.