

TAIWAN CUSTOMS

Greetings:

Asking others if they have eaten (*Chyr bau le meiyou?*) is a common Chinese greeting that stems from the tradition to never let anyone go hungry; it was always polite to ask if others had eaten and offer them a meal.

Today it is used simply as a "How are you?" The greeting *Ni hau ma* (How are you?) is somewhat formal; it is used when people have not seen one another in a long time.

More common greetings are *Ni hau* (Hello), *Zao* (Morning), and *Ching tzuo* (Please sit); the latter is spoken to visitors in the home. After initial greetings, polite questions may follow. Adults often ask young people about their schoolwork; the elderly appreciate inquiries about their health.

When being introduced, Taiwanese nod the head and smile. They may also shake hands, although handshaking is most common in business and on formal occasions. A slight bow shows respect. Acquaintances and close friends grasp each other's hands to show hospitality, sincerity, and warmth.

Gestures:

One points with the open hand, not the index finger. Putting one's arm around the shoulder of another usually is inappropriate. Winking is impolite.

Shaking one hand from side to side with the palm forward means "no."

Winking is impolite. One gives an object to another person, especially an older person, with both hands. In conversation, one refers to oneself by pointing to one's nose.

Holidays:

Official holidays include the ROC's Founding Day (1 Jan.), Memorial Day (28 Feb.), Tomb Sweeping Day (5 Apr.; held on the anniversary of Chiang Kai-shek's death), and Double Ten National Day (10 Oct.).

Buddhist holidays are set according to the Chinese lunar calendar.

The New Year (in spring) is celebrated with fireworks, feasts, worship at temples, and ancestor veneration. Elders give children money in special red envelopes. The summer Dragon Boat Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival are the other two most important annual celebrations.