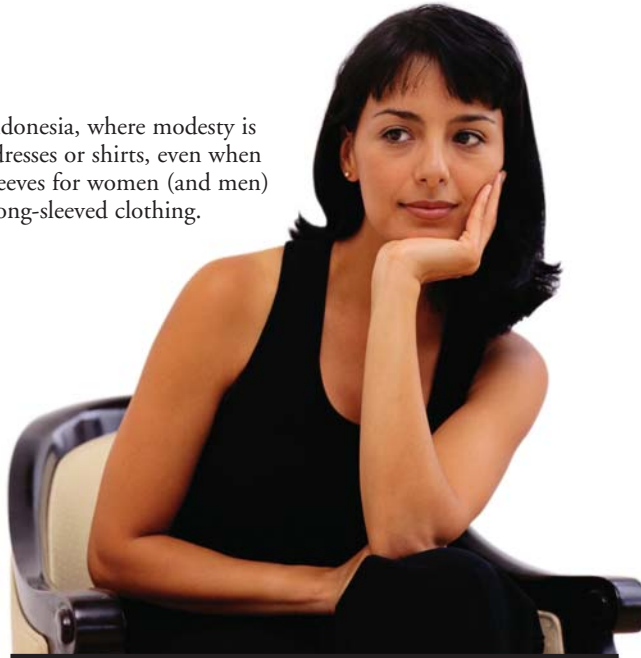


Body Language **asian style**

Asians speak their own body language—which is often contrary to Western sensibilities. What some everyday Western habits mean to Asians.

The little black dress.

If it's sleeveless, leave it at home. In Indonesia, where modesty is very important, never wear sleeveless dresses or shirts, even when it's extremely hot and humid. Short sleeves for women (and men) are frowned upon; bring lightweight long-sleeved clothing.



Add a splash of color?

Respect Asian traditions regarding the use of color, and avoid wearing or using significant colors. In China, red can symbolize the severing of a relationship. Don't wear red in public, and never write in red ink, especially a person's name. In Malaysia, green is associated with disease. White is a symbol of death in Japan.

Nod and smile.

In the West, we “nod and smile” when we don't know what's going on. However, to Asians, a nod means, “I understand.” Nodding during a conversation shows you know what's being said. However, nodding doesn't necessarily mean you *agree* with what's being said. Don't think a simple nod means “yes;” make your choices clear.



Watch your step.

Keep an eye on your feet, which should remain flat on the floor while you're seated. Never point your foot toward others, or show the sole of your shoe. In much of Asia, feet are viewed as being unclean. Likewise, crossing your legs at an Asian dinner table is extremely insulting.



Awkward silence.

In Japan, thoughtfulness is valued over constant talk. Periods of silence are a normal part of a conversation. In business, the ability to tolerate silence is crucial to your success. Never interrupt a silent pause, and stop to consider what you'll say—before you speak.

Hug hug, kiss kiss.

Asians, for the most part, do not have a touching culture. Public displays of affection are considered distasteful. Avoid touching others, especially on the head, which is revered as the seat of the soul. In Thailand and Vietnam, it is taboo to touch a child on the head.

“As the 21st century unfolds and business opportunities in Asia grow, so does the competition. In Asia, perhaps more than any other region in the world, being competitive means understanding the local cultures. Mary Bosrock provides a helpful guide to understanding Asia.”

—WALTER F. MONDALE, FORMER VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

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by Mary Murray Bosrock

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