

AUSPICIOUS 8 ETIQUETTE TIPS FOR NAVIGATING THE CHINESE MEETING



Tough rhetoric and tariffs dominate headlines as the new Commander-in-Chief charts a different course for the world's most significant bilateral partnership. But in China – where relationship-building is elevated to an art form – business can provide the counterbalance to choppy political waters. These tips will help you brush up on the basics of Chinese etiquette, whether it's your first trip or your hundredth.

1

REMEMBER YOUR "SIRS" AND "MADAMS"

Hierarchy, titles, and protocol dictate everything in meetings from the seating chart to the order of introductions.



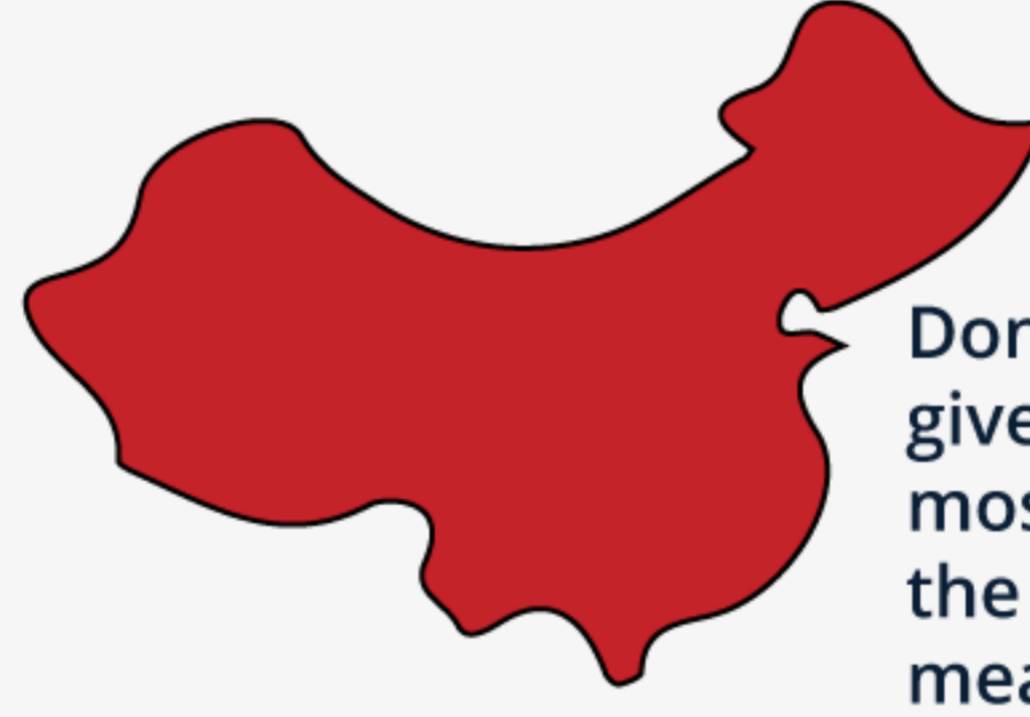
Expect the most senior person to do the talking, with colleagues occasionally being called on to fill in details.

RESPECT THE DINNER RULES

2



In China, meals have a distinct organization and flow. If you're hosting, make sure that your guests are seated according to protocol – and if you're unsure, run the seating chart by some of the working-level staff beforehand.



Don't forget the "small stuff": give the first toast, let the most important guest take the first bite, and end the meal on time.

3

CARRY A CARD

You will be asked for a business card – so come prepared! Be sure to hand over your card with both hands and with the card facing your new acquaintance.



For added points, order dual-sided cards with your information in Chinese on the back. When you receive cards, keep them close to you on a table, if possible, as a sign of respect.

4

WIN THE HUMILITY GAME

Always gesture for your Chinese counterpart to go first or take the first bite of food. Try to position your glass lower when you clink for toasts and wrap your knuckles on the table when being served tea (this is an ancient custom signifying a kowtow).



5

STAY ON THE RADAR SCREEN

Keep in touch with contacts even when you don't have a particular issue to press. Schedule time with contacts and capitalize on opportunities for well wishes – Chinese New Year is a great time to send a card or inexpensive gift



DECODE YOUR AUDIENCE

6



In the past, deciphering what your Chinese interlocutors were telling you was an art form. Today, a direct approach is more common.

The best rule of thumb is to read your audience and vary your approach as necessary. One amusing tip we've found is to check out their shoes.

7

MASTER THE ART OF GIFTING

When visiting China, you may never know when a gift is coming, so come prepared. A token item from your city – a coffee table book, chocolate, or something with your corporate logo – is a safe bet; stay away from green hats, clocks, and pens manufactured in Taiwan. When hosting a Chinese delegation at home, always have small gifts ready.



8

LEAN INTO THE PAGEANTRY



Meetings with senior Chinese leaders are designed to impress or intimidate. Be prepared for a last-minute confirmation notice, long walks to the meeting rooms, and occasional waits.

Be flexible, but also remember that your team is building ties with the working-level contacts for these meetings. They can be invaluable to you.

In China, business meetings can be an elaborately choreographed dance or an endurance test, but even an act as simple as greeting someone with a "ni hao" – no matter how awful your pronunciation – shows your counterparts that you put in the effort. With these tips, you'll be able to go far in China's coveted "guangxi" network.