



Do's and don'ts in Austria

Meeting people

There are two ways of approaching people in the German language – formal and informal. The English “you” is either “du” – if you know someone very well and are kind of friends with that person – and the formal “Sie”. This you commonly used if you either are not very well acquainted, if it is a workmate who is no close friend or if it is a person you want/have to pay respect to. The formal address of course is only used for grown ups. Children are always addressed as “du” and they always address grown ups (excluding family and friends) as “Sie”.

Greeting is a common practice in Austria, especially in rural areas. You say “Guten Tag” or “Grüß Gott” (formal) or “Servus” resp. “Griß di” in the informal way. “Auf Wiedersehen” is the formal phrase for saying good bye.

“Bitte” means please, “danke” thank you.

Greet and thank when entering/leaving a shop and at all other occasions when you interact with people.

When you greet people you shake hands and maintain eye contact while doing so. Young people and close friends sometimes also kiss each others cheeks (first left, then right). Women kiss each other, women kiss men, but men never kiss men.

Gender

If you want to address someone directly, you use “Frau” in front of the family name, i.e. “Frau Meier”, gentlemen are referred to as “Herr” (Herr Meier).

Punctuality

Punctuality is a big deal in Austria. If a meeting is announced for 10.00 o'clock, it is supposed to begin at 10.00. So people are expected to be at the meeting point in time.

Invitations

The Austrians take much pride in their homes in most cases and they invest a lot of energy and money in keeping their houses nice and neat. Only close friends and relatives are invited into the house, so it is an honor if you are, too! If you enter a private house in most cases the hosts expect you to remove your shoes. If you may keep on your shoes, you will be told extra.

Invited for lunch and dinner you usually should bring a small gift – flowers, sweets or a bottle of wine. And - you are expected to call if you are running late. Being later than 15 minutes might upset your host.

Table manners

Table manners are continental – the fork is held in the left and the knife in the right hand while eating. Put your napkin in your lap as soon as you sit down and do not begin eating until your host or hostess says “Mahlzeit” or “Guten Appetit”.

The host gives the first toast. Everyone lifts and clinks glasses, looks the person making the toast in the eye and says “Prost”.