

Test Your Speaking & Listening Skills

Are You English? – Quiz 3

Englishness



Discuss each situation with a partner. What would you do or say? What do you think an English person would do or say? Check the answers and discuss whether they match your perception and experience of English people:

Answers:

a) *What would you do when...?* b) *What would an English person do when...?*

An English person would:

1. enjoy it and get a warm feeling inside – it's like meeting a friend, rather than somebody giving a service.
2. look for an exit and slowly sidle towards it; somebody else better qualified will help, and they would only embarrass themselves if they tried to get involved.
3. shake hands. At subsequent meetings they do not need to shake hands.
4. unsure of whether they should kiss her on the cheek – once or twice? – they would awkwardly try to shake hands, then think better of it and just say “Hello”, without touching.
5. put on their headphones and try to pretend it isn't happening – and that they do not exist, in fact – while seething inside and swearing they will get revenge, which, of course, will never happen.
6. if they can't ignore them by walking in a wide arc around them – or even taking a different road – they would avoid eye contact and mutter rapidly, “Sorry! I'm late for work – may be later...”
7. tell them they are not sure, but they think it could be “straight on, turn right and keep going...” The shame of not being able to help them would be greater than telling a lie to somebody they will never have to meet again. Unless the person in the car turns out to be their new boss – or neighbour!
8. die inside. Then fumble in their coat pockets or bag, with panic rising inside them as they can't find it. Then hurry up the aisle guiltily and out of the theatre – and outside – with their phone still ringing loudly.
9. switch off the light and gingerly peep around the edge of the net curtains to see what is going on.
10. ask a family member or loved one to hold their towel around them like a temporary wall, so that they can get changed in relative privacy – all the while cringing inside and glancing around frantically to check whether anybody is watching.

a) *What would you say when...?* b) *What would an English person say when...?*

An English person would say:

1. “Can you...?” “Could you...?” “Is it possible for you to...?” “Would you mind...?” “Could I trouble you to...?”
“I would be so grateful if you could possibly find the time to...”
2. “Never mind. Better luck next time, old chap.”
3. “Never mind. It's OK. No, it's fine. Don't worry about it, really. I'll have to manage.”
4. “She could do a lot worse.”
5. “Never mind. It could be worse. It could be raining.”
6. (With deep irony:) “Well that went well, didn't it?”
7. “It's nice.”
8. “Typical.” They would take it as a personal insult, as if it is their destiny to be wronged by the universe.
9. “It never rains but it pours!”
10. “Typical.” It had to happen – because it was their team. (See answer to no.8.)