

Hand Gestures

Appropriate Hand Gestures

- To wave goodbye or hello to someone, raise your hand and wave it from side to side, not front to back. Wave the whole hand, not just the fingers.
- Waving the hand front to back or the fingers up and down means "no", "stop", or "go away".
- Holding your hand up with the palm facing forward but no movement means "stop".
- Holding your hand with the palm toward your body and wagging the fingers toward the body means "come here".
- Holding your hand with the palm up with all fingers curled and repeated curling and uncurling the index finger means "come here".
- If you want to point at an object, extend the index finger and use it to point at the object. It is not polite to point at people.
- If you want the waiter to bring the check, make a writing gesture with one hand as the pen and the other hand as the paper.
- If you just want the waiter to come, make eye contact and raise your hand.

Appropriate Hand Gestures



OK Sign



Clenched
Fist



Peace Sign



Pointing



Stop



Stop



Thumbs Up



Thumbs
Down



Hailing
A Taxi

Inappropriate Hand Gestures

- The middle finger is insulting in America. Raising the middle finger usually referred to as “the finger” is seen as highly offensive and provocative. Avoid using it, even when pointing to objects or scratching your face.
- Placing the flat palm of your hand into the crease of your other arm while simultaneously making a fist with the opposing hand has a similar meaning to the middle finger. This gesture is rather dated but nonetheless insulting.
- Point the index finger upward and the thumb out to the side can be an insulting gesture to some Americans. Although playfully utilized by youth, this gesture signifies the term “loser” and can be insulting.
- Flicking one’s hand under the chin has a similar meaning to the middle finger, except the offender is telling the receive to do it to himself. Although this gesture is dated, it is nonetheless insulting. When scratching your chin and neck, separate your fingers and go up and down. It is impossible to mistake your intent this way.
- Never show your fist with the middle finger extended. This is an insult.
- Shaking a closed fist at someone is also rude, especially if it is in their face, and is an expression of anger.
- It is not polite to pick your nose or chew your fingernails in public.
- Likewise, it is not polite to pick your teeth (with or without a toothpick) in public.

Inappropriate Hand Gestures

