

Czech Republic

COMMUNICATION - COMMUNICATION ESSENTIALS

The formal "vykání" is used when speaking with someone who is senior in rank or position or to an acquaintance. The informal "tykáni" is reserved for family and close friends. Do not use the informal or a Czech's first name before being invited to as it is considered rude and may be interpreted as a desire to humiliate the other person.

In their attempt to remain polite, many Czechs will avoid giving a negative response. The phrase "it is difficult" may be used to indicate a negative response and yet maintain a level of politeness.

Czechs do not smile as frequently as most other Europeans or American, which can make them appear cold and aloof, which is not the case. Their demeanor indicates that they are taking the business discussion seriously and are giving it their complete attention. There is no need to mirror this behavior since most Czechs understand that reflexive smiling is cultural acceptable in many other countries.

Czechs do not interrupt other speakers. Likewise, they dislike being interrupted when they are speaking. They consider people who speak too forcefully or in an overly loud voice to be overcompensating for the fact that they have nothing worthwhile to say.

Czechs use titles and surnames, even when conversing with long-standing colleagues and well known acquaintances. They do not encourage becoming overly familiar, especially in the initial stages of business dealings.

Although Czechs do not necessarily maintain eye contact continuously, they are suspicious of people who don't make eye contact.

Czechs will go out of their way to protect another person's feelings. If they lower their eyes and become silent, it means that they are uncomfortable with what you have just said. The best course of action is to re-phrase the statement and continue with the discussion.

Key Words/Phrases

- Yes: Ano
- No: Ne
- Hello or Good day: Dobry den
- Hello (informal): Ahoj! or Cau! or Nazdar!
- Good morning: Dobré ráno
- Good afternoon: Dobré odpoledne
- Good evening: Dobry vecer
- Good night: Dobry noc
- Good-bye (formal): Na shledanou
- Good-bye (informal): Ahoj or Mej se or Ahoj! or Cau!
- Please: Prosim
- Thank you: Dekuji
- Welcome: Vitáme vás!
- How are you?: Jak se mate?
- I'm fine: Mám se dobr
- Pleased to meet you: Tesi me

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE - FAUX PAS

- Avoid public displays of affection.
- Do not use the okay gesture (thumb and forefinger joined to form a circle).
- Do not ask personal questions (even though you may be asked).
- Refrain from losing your temper publicly.

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE - OTHER SITUATIONS

Greet people you meet in shops and restaurants with the appropriate greeting for the time of day. Say hello and good-bye to shopkeepers.

When taking a taxi, agree on the fare in advance and tell the driver you will need a receipt. This will help keep the fare reasonable.

When shopping, put your money on the counter; do not hand it to the cashier. Likewise, if you receive change, the cashier will place it on the counter in front of you, not in your hand.

Czechs expect proper manners at all times:

- Men go through doors before women when entering a restaurant or bar.
- When entering a store, the woman goes first.
- When going up stairs, the man follows the woman.
- If walking down the street, the man remains closest to the curb.

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE - MEETING PEOPLE

Initial greetings are formal and reserved. Most greetings include a handshake, direct eye contact, and the appropriate greeting for the time of day. Until you develop a relationship with someone, use the formal word for you ("vy") rather than the informal "ty". Likewise, use the formal greetings for hello ("dobry den") and good-bye ("nas hledanau") rather than the informal "ahoj" and "cau" respectively. Wait to be invited before using someone's first name or the informal greeting, as these are all signs of friendship. Usually the woman, the older person, or the person of higher status moves the communication towards the informal.

CULTURE OVERVIEW - CULTURAL ESSENTIALS

Planning / Practicality

Czechs regard planning as very important and strive to maintain order and structure in their lives. It is unusual to be invited to do something at the last minute. Rules and regulations allow people to know what is expected and to plan their life accordingly. Vacations and social events are planned. Over the weekend there will be a set time for doing chores and another time to relax.

Privacy Please

Given their penchant for privacy, they generally do not acknowledge strangers as they walk along the street or ride the metro. However, good manners dictate that they say "hello" to shopkeepers and offer them the appropriate greeting for the time of day. As is often the case around the world, people may be more open and approachable in rural areas.

Cuisine

There are two kinds--light and dark, with different strengths in each. Most beers are full-bodied and foamy. The most common beer is a golden lager called light ("svelte") and comes in two strengths--10 degree and 12 degree, which refer to the sugar content. The higher the degree of sugar, the stronger the beer is. There are extensive vineyards in south Moravia that produce the red and white wines enjoyed throughout the country.