

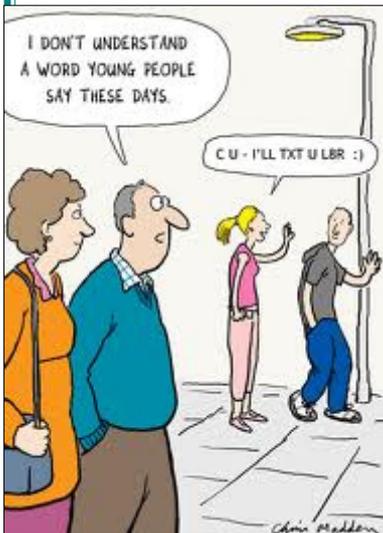
# A Lesson on English



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## Communication is Key

Life in the USA is fast, competitive and ever-changing. Communication must be equally quick and effective.



Tweets, text messages, wifi, emails that work all the time, concise phone messages, and other electronic communication tools are absolutely necessary for daily life in the USA.

3. Be in touch if you'll be late or need to change a plan. If you're more than 10 minutes late, you need to phone/text or email the other person.
4. Check your email/telephone messages frequently, and reply to other people's confirmations and new plans.
5. Always imagine what might go wrong, or be misunderstood, and then make sure to clarify these areas of potential problems.

In the USA, you can lose an opportunity by not being available at the exact moment the opportunity develops. Stay in touch, and ride the waves of change to your advantage!

**Good habits of effective communication include the following:**

1. Take the initiative. Don't wait for people to get in touch with you--they might not!
2. Double-check and confirm all appointments. Just because you know that you've scheduled a meeting doesn't mean that the other person will remember it correctly.

**Things change, and new events today can crowd out plans made yesterday.**



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*"A Lesson on English" is a series of short lessons created for people who want to become fluent in conversational English. The lessons are practical and useful for students learning English in a traditional classroom setting or on their own.*

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## Q & A in America

There are some typical questions that you may expect when you meet an American. Memorizing a response to each question will help you be well-prepared for social situations, and will be useful if your mind goes blank!

1. **How are you?---Fine!** When Americans ask "how are you?" they don't expect a sincere, detailed answer about your health, your personal relationships or your current problems. The standard answer is "fine. How are you?"

2. **Where are you from?** This question usually is a way to find out your country of birth, so your answer is "Prague," or "South Korea" or "Bangladesh," depending on where you were born. If you are currently living in another place, you can add, "but now I'm living in London" or wherever you live.

3. **Do you have a family? or Where does your family live?---**this question may be a way to find out if you're married or single, or to inquire about children you may have. Maybe the American wants a date!

4. **What do you do?---**Americans like to put people into categories based on occupation, level of income, and living standards. If you're a student, then the answer is simple. If you have a job, then you can expect more questions to pinpoint your job's salary, responsibilities and social status. For example, most Americans believe that being a doctor is a well-paying job (whereas, for example, in the Czech Republic, doctors are not at all well-paid). Being a lawyer is also respected by Americans, as many lawyers are wealthy (though some are not!). Being a professor is somewhat respectable to Americans, although it's not well-paid, but being a teacher (not at a university) is a relatively low-level job. Don't be surprised if an American asks you outright how much money you make, or how much something you own costs.

5. **Where do you live?---**as in question #4, this question is a way to locate your status. Living in a gated community in a big house is respectable; living in a rented apartment is not so well-regarded.

6. **What university do you attend? What are you studying?---**as in question #4, your university and your area of study (major) will help Americans place you socially.

7. **What do you think about President Obama?---**this question is meant to reveal your political views. Americans argue about politics, often in unpleasant ways, so it's best to have a neutral answer ("Obama seems to be respected in my home country," for example) unless you want to debate.

8. **What are your religious beliefs?---**as in question #7, you can expect a heated debate if your religion is different from the person asking the question. It's up to you if you want to engage in debate, or have a neutral answer that discourages further discussion ("I consider my religious views to be private," for example).

In general, most Americans are friendly but ignorant when it comes to visitors from other countries. They may have no idea where your country is, or what your life is like. Their questions may be clumsy, but usually their intentions are good. Carrying a map of your home is a good way to both communicate where you are from and hold a pleasant conversation about your home.